# THE APPLICATION OF A FOREIGN POLICY APPROACH TO NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT
*Domestic policies in Nigeria incorporated national integration as a core objective, yet there pervades a palpable air of attenuating sense of nationhood in Nigeria. Apparently, ethnic national consciousness trail and frustrate all legitimate efforts at achieving national unity and development. The letdown is a problem of deliberate or oblivious neglect of the significance of international norms and obligations and the non-conformity of domestic policy planning and implementation with best practices. This study sets out to examine the relevance of international milieu obtained through foreign policy or diplomacy in Nigeria's quest for cohesion. Instrumentalist Nationalist theory was adopted to explicate the causative factors for the failure of integration. Findings are that due regard is not accorded to the flux in the international atmosphere, in other words emphasis is not duly placed on the foreign scene for acquaintance and conformity of domestic policies with the international milieu, conditioned by growing institutions, laws and conventions which themselves have continued to transform along the nuances in global challenges. Data, mostly collected from secondary sources through validated instruments were analysed using the qualitative technique. It is strongly recommended that recourse must be made to the foreign policy sphere for purposeful integration and national development.*

**KEY WORDS**: *National Integration, Foreign Policy, Diplomacy, Human Rights, Democracy.*

## INTRODUCTION
Nigeria since independence is challenged with the problems of poverty, technological backwardness, divisive ethnic and religious strife, criminality and terrorism, mis-governance and deepening rot in national infrastructure and violent conflicts (Iheanacho, 2014; NBS, 2018) often ascribed to artificially drawn colonial boundaries which sometimes traverse 'national' lines. It is however contestable whether artificial boundaries attributable to colonisation is eccentric in view of the existence of fewer states with natural boundaries; and the existence of multi-national societies in the advanced world. Akinyemi (2001)

Nigeria's multi-nationality had been acknowledged far back as the colonial period, leading to the 1954 Lyttleton Colonial Constitution which introduced Federalism as an integrative mechanism. Bakari, (2017) The colonialists must have been swayed by the opinion that such a system of government was necessary to preserve both integration and stability in a deeply divided society like Nigeria. This argument does not undermine the fact that in Nigeria prior to the European conquest and colonisation, the various nationalities have related in the form of trade and cultural exchange to the point that Nigeria is assumed not to be by 'accident'.

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After independence, Nigeria under Gowon embarked upon the creation of twelve states and the dismantling of regional structures in May, 1967. The Land Use Decree was further enacted. Onifade & Imhonopi (2013) further highlighted the creation of the National Youth Service Corps scheme through Decree No.24 of May 22, 1973 and the Principle of Federal Character which was later enshrined in the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria towards improving inter-cultural appreciation, exchange and distribution. (Ugoh & Ukpere, 2012 in Onifade, 2013:78) The National Policy on Education is another unifying factor (see Akpan, 1990 in Onifade, 2013:78; FRN 1981 & 1998) Reform of revenue sharing formula, the establishment of Unity Schools run by the Federal Government and the introduction of unified Local Government system in Nigeria were all geared towards integration. In spite of these laudable initiatives and those of the succeeding governments in Nigeria, there is apparent lack of cohesion among the people and commonness.

The division among nationalities in Nigeria became visible when the three geopolitical and major ethnic regions (prior to independence) began to create dominant political parties without any common heritage of ideology to which national policies must conform. (Philips, 1964) Successive republics in Nigeria have not differed from the 1959 political trend where the Northern People's Congress (NPC) dominated the north, the Action Group (AG) dominated the south west, the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) controlled the south east. During the Second Republic, the National Party of Nigeria was a northern party, the Unity Party of Nigeria controlled the western region while the National People's Party was predominantly an eastern party. Despite the military incursion on the formation of political parties during the botched Third Republic, the National Republican Convention was a northern dominated party, while the Social Democratic Party featured mainly in the south. At the inception of the current dispensation, the All Nigeria People's Party and People's Democratic Party similarly showed regional dominance in the north and south respectively, thereby deepening the endless yearning for unity and legitimacy. (Bakari, 2017)

The bigoted political configuration and ideological persuasions promote the absence of national cohesion, poor governance and "bad" politics in Nigeria, known as the 'personalized' nature of rule. The failure of the state to promote and protect human rights, the penchant for resort to ethnic cleavages as a form of

withdrawal from centre and nationalist protest intensified the struggle for the control of state power and resources by the privileged few. In order to sustain itself in power, the state has interfered excessively in both domestic and international trade and economic activities to the extent there is lack of assured stability in policies, which discourages foreign investment. The tendencies arising from state involvement is ineptitude, corruption and sit-tight syndrome that has affected democratic progress in Africa; this is attended by rising conflicts especially in Nigeria. (NBS, 2018)

A prognosis into whether the domestic policies are inadequate, whether it is the implementation process that is faulty or whether it is the State that is conceited and insincere about carrying out policies capable of enhancing cohesion educes a quest into the relevance of foreign policies in national integration. Nigeria enunciated the defense and promotion of national sovereignty; promotion of the rights of the black people; promotion of African unity and equality among others as the principles guiding her foreign policy (Femi Otubanjo, 1989:4). African countries have considered the alternative of economic cooperation, integration or the pooling of economic sovereignty as a strategy towards transforming their economies or improving their standards of living. (Asante S.K.B., 1985) The question is why has Nigeria failed to seize opportunities abiding in foreign bilateral and multilateral cooperation to enhance unity and development? A clarification of few concepts before attempting a theoretical explanation of the plausible factors, character and effects of the absence of national consciousness in Nigeria is informative. Efforts are made to establish possible linkages between the concepts, leading to conclusion and recommendations.

## CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS
### National Integration

National Integration can be viewed as the harmonious co-existence of diverse social groups (Bello, 1987). It can also be viewed from the perspective of the unison of all the component parts of a state irrespective of the natural or contrived differences or other forms of identity. From the perspective of what constitutes a nation, national integration refers to the affective feeling of identity with a background delimited by common culture. For want of space, we may not consider the philosophical basis of nationhood, but it is necessary to highlight the facts that integration does not preclude the existence of other primordial identities, however such identities are subsumed in national ethos. National integration drives

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genuine national development by thawing the ice of self interest and personal aggrandizement which has eaten deeply into the national fabric and accentuated narrow cleavages and its sustenance.

## Foreign Policy

Foreign Policy has been defined as "the content or substance of a nation's efforts to promote its interest vis-a-vis other nations" (Chandra, 1983). It is also aptly defined by George Modelski as "the systematic activities evolved by (states) for changing the behaviour of other states and for adjusting their own activities to the environment" (Chandra, 1983:1). The import of this definition inheres in its acknowledgement of the task of adjusting the home state's own activities to the international environment or milieu where its own policies are targeted. In order to put it more comprehensively, it is the total perception or feeling of a state about itself relative to others, and how the state wishes that other states relate with it. Apart from the domestic factors which condition a State's behaviour, international law, institutions, codes and conventions help to shape a State's domestic policies and behaviour. It can be seen as an interaction between forces originating outside the country's borders and those working within them.

## Diplomacy

Diplomacy has been defined variously as the art of representation, effectuation of the purpose and tasks of the sending entity or State (Gasiokwu, 2004). Diplomacy is a living concept, an art acknowledged to be 'as old as mankind' and 'as the earth' itself, which will exist till 'the world comes to an end' (Gasiokwu, 2004:5). Within this context therefore, can diplomacy arguably be said to predate modern state formation or in the other way round can it plausibly outlive the organic state? From the modern state context, diplomacy refers to a vehicle designated for the conveyance of a state's interests or national interest encapsulated in foreign policy to the sphere of effectuation; and as the means of acquainting the home state with valuable data on developments at the foreign landscape towards aligning domestic policies with the international milieu as may be required from time to time.

## Democracy and Human Rights

Democracy has been described in the following words of J.J. Rousseau:

'it is not expedient that he who makes the laws should execute them, nor that the body of the people should divert its attention from general considerations in order to bestow it on particular objects.

Nothing is more dangerous than the influence of his private interests on public affairs; and the abuse of the laws by the government is a less evil than the corruption of the legislator... A people which would never abuse the government would likewise never abuse its independence; a people which governed well would not need to be governed'. (Wordsworth 1998 ed)

The Nigerian example of democracy is as may be inherited, the domineering attitude of the State, unlike democratic societies whose features rest with the spirit and intendment of laws and policies rather than the rules themselves. (Montesquieu, cited in Springer, 2011)

Human Rights has been defined variously as those demands which individuals make on society as a form of statutory obligation accruable to man by virtue of his nature and existence in society, some of which are realistic while others are aspirations to be fulfilled in the future. Express provisions pertaining to the entitlement of man to these rights are enshrined in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1979 and 1999, the Organisation of African Unity's Charter on Human and People's Rights, and the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights. It is notable that most infringements on human rights are committed by the State, therefore, for the identity and moral habits of citizens to conform with the norms prescribed by the State, the State itself must be seen to be of a sound political culture in Machiavelli's, (1984) position. (cited in.Springer, 2011)

## THEORETICAL CONCEPTIONS

Whether the narrow pursuit of ethnic national identities in Nigeria which has negatively conditioned central national integration qualify to be referred to as Nationalism remains cardinal in this study. If the response is in the affirmative, then we briefly probe into the labyrinth of a few nationalist paradigms. Some of the existing Nationalist appeals are either Primordialist or Instrumentalist paradigms, but how adequately they mainstream the causes and nature of the centrifugal forces in Nigeria's integration is our quest. National integration can arguably be impelled by nationalism, but depicting the point of intersection between nationalism at the ethnic level and nationalism at the broader level of state remains a pristine endeavour.

Primordialism consists of subjective assumptions that group identity is fixed and that in all human societies, primordial and rabid solidarity

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emanates from sanguine, cultural and geopolitical tendencies. (Llobera, 1999). Geertz, 1973 (cited in Llobera, 1999) believes that bonds arising from these primordial elements are deep, coercive and a result of a long process of unification. Llobera (1999) further states that primordial realities emerging from ethnic identity is deeply rooted in the common historical experiences of human beings to the extent of being practically a given. Primordialist approaches contend that ethnic bonds are 'natural', fixed by the basic experiences that human beings undergo within their families and other primary groups. Edward Shils, (cited in Llobera, 1999:142) earlier expressed similar idea that in family attachments there is a significant relational quality that can only be called primordial. He explains that this is because there is an ineffable significance attributed to the ties of blood (Shils 1957:142).

According to Llobera, (1999) Sociobiologists take this perspective a step further by asserting that the biological character of ethnicity provides a bare account of why humans might have evolved group-interested identifications and behaviours. O'Leary (2001) has posited that nationalism is a form of ethnic identification, a group-interest motivated belief, similar to xenophobia. Nations therefore, are extended families, really so, or imagined as such naturally disposed towards ethnic nepotism, and preference in favour of their own kin. These paradigms adequately explain that holding other factors constant, the likelihood of conflict or cooperation can be predicted by reference to how closely related people are. The greatest exception to the Socio-biologist Nationalism arises from its failure to adequately explain how and why these identities have taken a nationalist form in modern state narratives or can be extrapolated to 'the nation.' (O'Leary, 2001) It remains nebulous therefore under which environmental, economic, political or ideological conditions the centrifugal elements emerge.

The Instrumentalist Theory drives this study mainly because it explains both the genesis and maintenance of nationalism by the interests it is alleged to serve. This group also referred to as the School of Elite Theorists suggests that elites use and abuse the identities and ideas of the masses on behalf of, and because of, the interests of elites, especially through the 'invention of traditions' (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). Some Instrumentalists insist that ethnic affiliation is simply a ploy to promote economic interests, and that individuals are ready to change group membership if that suits their sense of security or their economic interests. Nationalism's social power derives from the ability of motivated elites to use cultural appeals to cloak their ambitions to capture state power or a share of state resources. Instrumentalist conceptions suitably explains the divisive role of ethnicity as the major factor for the disunity that pervades the Nigerian polity, though not without its own exception because 'Ethnicity scholars' believe is also dynamic in view of the possibility of an individual belonging to more than one ethnic group at a time and the tendency of ethnic groups as collective entities to adjust according to changing conditions. (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983)

Instrumentalist Marxists portray the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie, in particular, as likely carriers of nationalist ideologies because nationalism profitably cloak their class interests as general welfare, and because they have much to lose from the erosion of local cultures – allegedly unlike the proletariat. These views are not without exceptions; both the elites and the masses despite class limits have interests (genuine or otherwise) which may not entirely be insensitive to the interests of lower social hierarchies. The impact of ideas and doctrines in persuading people about their interests and what is right is not given adequate attention, and identities are generally taken for interests. (Ringmar, 1996).

## THE NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND FOREIGN POLICY NEXUS

No nation is an island of its own, they relate and interdepend on each other because of the dynamic nature of humanity and the uneven endowment in terms of natural and human resources and wealth. Nations are bound to learn or become sources of information for others as human society continues to grow and come in contact with challenges individually and collectively. In a globalised world where the boundaries of states are traversed by the free movement of persons, capital, information and services, the degree of interdependence of nations has increased, for which the UN Secretary General has urged nations to address the common challenges of development, security and human rights. (Adebusoye, 2009) Yet, the world's greatest challenges reside in the underdeveloped axis, evidently aggravated by the negative impacts of the integration of the weak and poor economies into the rich and strong Northern economies on unequal terms of exchange. The assimilation of the global economy has therefore thrown up an inextricable link between the challenges of cohesion, political development, security and human rights in both the developed and the underdeveloped worlds.

The major channel for cooperation and exchange of information between sending and receiving states and the international community generally is the diplomatic channels. On the other way round, ingenious attraction of remittances from the rich to the poor states can be achieved through the instrumentality of the diplomatic channels. Along with the wave of globalisation and modernity has come the wave of democratic change and the mantra of good governance which has assumed the universal norm and best practices that are inevitable to nations that wish to remain relevant in world polity. To this extent the UN at its millennium summit in the year 2000 launched the Millennium Development Goals Programme (MDGs) which necessitates the developing countries implementing national development action with development assistance from the developed countries by 2015. Due to the unending crises in Africa and Asia especially and the failure of developing countries to meet the target year, a new initiative known as Sustainable Development Programme was launched with a target of year 2030.

Prior to the investiture of the millennium development programmes, the United Nations apart from the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights (1948) had initiated seven conventions towards the establishment and promotion of global standards and norms:

| Treaty | Date |
| --- | --- |
| International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) | 1965 |
| International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) | 1966 |
| International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) | 1966 |
| Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) | 1979 |
| Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) | 1984 |
| Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) | 1989 |
| International Convention on Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICMRW) | 1990 |

*Source: UNFPA, 2004.*

Beside these, various Conferences and Committees have held towards the effectuation and monitoring of the provisions of these treaties, most of which are binding on United Nations members. In the year 1999, the United Nations formally recognised the universal right of every individual to democracy, a composite instrument that recognises the rights of individuals to choice of governmental system through democratic means; political participation; universal suffrage; transparent and accountable government institutions; freedoms of opinion, expression, thought, religion and conscience and to seek, receive and impart information; rights to the rule of law and legal protection of citizens' rights; and to equal access to public service.

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) succeeded by the African Union had also established conventions and protocols, most notably the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1981) and its protocols (2016); Protocols against Terrorism and Corruption; and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007); the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) 2003 and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) 2001 initiatives. Nigeria as a State has on its part had domesticated or ratified most of the UN and AU treaties and similarly enshrined some of the provisions of these international conventions in its constitution (1979 & 1999. Chapters Two and Four of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic especially contains the distinct forms of rights. However, Nigerian leaders have neglected or refused to align their domestic or national policies and practice with the wave of international suasions.

Much as our quest for grants in aid are duly associated with collateral adjustment in domestic policy, it infers that the international milieu influences national policies, integration not an exception. Democracy, good governance and the deepening of its practice enhances a sense of belonging irrespective of ethnic descent. The free will of people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and participation in democratic processes may be guaranteed, especially since these standard norms traverse ethnic and State boundaries. The free access of individual to their rights and aspirations attenuate primordial attachments and foster a greater sense of belonging.

## FACTORS AFFECTING NATIONAL INTEGRATION

The most notable factor that affects national integration in Nigeria is the adulteration of democracy by the elites, to suit their narrow interests. Democracy does rest on the pillars and principles of human rights and freedoms; the rule of law and constitutionalism anymore. The failure of the elites to entrench democracy has robbed Nigerians of the sense of belonging. The Nigerian citizen has lost the true sense of respect for genuine ethical norms and standards. Loyalty is rather bigoted in favour of ethnic nationalism, leading to corrupt tendencies. Priorities are misplaced in governance, leading to weak institutions and domineering attitude. Resources are frittered away without due commitment to development aimed at giving the people custody of sovereignty through elections where votes must count. The absolute nature of Nigerian leaders divides Nigerians further.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is common knowledge that in spite of the adoption of national integration as core objective in national codes, there is a palpable degenerating sense of nationhood in Nigeria. The failure of national policies to enhance desired nationhood provokes the intense desire to explore, adopt and conform with international treaties, norms and obligations. The statutory task of the foreign policy entities is to take foreign policy decisions, carryout the policies and align or adjust domestic policies in conformity with the international milieu including the policies of other states and actors. There is palpable failure to utilise the international milieu as a prism to appraise or peer review the relevance and success of integration efforts, especially on the sides of the commitment of governments to democratic principles, the rule of law and respect for the rights of all citizens enshrined in international conventions.

Gasiokwu (2004) held that diplomacy is an indispensable tool for directing both the domestic and foreign affairs of the state. This study observed that adequate attention is not paid towards the import of reviewing domestic integration and other policies against the background of the nuances in the international environment and norms.       Nigeria's avowed commitment to the leadership of Africa especially towards the policy of bringing all territories to a state of 'responsible independence' and its non alignment for example has been overtaken by the complete independence of African territories and the demise of the 'Cold War'. In the same context, world

over, the question of identity and sovereignty have been traversed by emerging global challenges and the development of international humanitarian law, institutions and conventions. The sovereignty of States and the question of domestic jurisdiction is traversed by the very principles upon which the United Nations Organisation is anchored; secondly by the nature of the powers and responsibility vested in the United Nations Security Council; and thirdly by the obligation and responsibility laid upon states to undertake to comply with any measure deemed necessary by the UN Security Council in order to maintain international peace and security. (O'Brien)

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking inspiration from the universalisation of the human person as provided in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR, 1948), human rights must be made accruable to all humans irrespective of colour, sex, race, religion. The question of citizenship should be reviewed to make every Nigerian a Nigerian entitled to all due rights and freedoms irrespective of the state of origin. The exigencies and the nuances of modernity requires the transformation of national policies along the dictates of the evolving global demands and best practices to curb the ever changing pattern of unforeseen security and development challenges mostly hinged on the absence of democracy, skills and development.

Democracy must be deepened as to make the will of the people the fountain of power, with the rule of law as the guiding principle and institutions strong enough to entrench the common will. The institutions of State must be responsible to the sovereign will of the people rather than becoming the instruments for protection and enforcement of the will of the leadership. Ballots and votes must be protected and respected as the symbol of sovereignty, whose breach must be deemed to be a treasonous felony. The huge resources of the Federation must be concentrated on providing adequate skills through education and infrastructure. Critical infrastructure like rail lines must be built to link all commercial nerve centres in order to reduce the cost of transport, cost of production and the prices of goods and services. Government interference in economic activities must be reduced to encourage investment.

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