

NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY, ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES MONITORING GROUP AND REGIONAL SECURITY IN WEST AFRICA.

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Abstract

The study examined the role of Nigeria in security stability in the West African Sub-region. Nigerian's foreign policy is based on three basic pillars; the concept that Nigeria is an African nation; it is part and parcel of the continent of Africa. Nigeria's foreign policy thrust was considered Afrocentric in nature. Nigeria spearheaded the formation of ECOMOG and played a major role in the restoration of peace and stability in Liberia, Sierra Leone, among others. Over 70 percent of the ECOMOG commandants were drawn from Nigerian troops. In February 1995, Nigeria provided 4,908 troops out of 8, 430 troops organized into ten battalions. However, some countries in the West Africa viewed Nigeria's involvement of its human and material resources in ECOMOG as having a hegemonic undertone. The study adopted a Regional Security Complex theory as its theoretical construct. The study relied on a qualitative method of data gathering technique. The study revealed that by active participation in ECOMOG activities, Nigeria maintained its hegemonic image without losing legitimacy for involving itself in another state's affairs before the international community. The paper concluded that Nigeria intervention in the regional collective security architecture of West Africa helped establish and project her image in diplomatic circles.

Keywords: ECOMOG, foreign policy, Nigeria, regional security, West Africa

Introduction

Globally, institutions of government have become very crucial in the process of policymaking and enforcement. Kofele-Kale (1981, p.197) posit that "in all states, to a greater or lesser degree, foreign policy emerges out of an institutional process and in most cases, it is extremely rare for foreign policy decision-making to be the responsibility of a single individual or a small group." Nigeria's foreign policy is Afrocentric in nature. The idea of collective security spearheaded by Nigeria in the West Africa sub-region is to maintain peace and stability, which is key to achieving a fruitful regional integrative scheme. Several scholarly articles have indicated that Nigeria shouldered the burden of ECOMOG in West Africa (Agbo,2008). Nigeria championed the initiative and timely intervention of crisis in Liberia using the ECOMOG platform. Regional collective security is predicated on contiguity and propinquity. The formation of ECOMOG was considered novel in numerous respects, especially concerning the provisions of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, which conventionally approved the intervention of regional and sub-regional organizations to enhance global peace and stability through collective security. The United Nations Charter provides the legal framework for the conduct of all Peace Support Operations (PSO). Article 19, 21 and 22 of the ECOWAS Protocol relating to the mechanism for conflict prevention, management, resolution, peacekeeping and security stipulated the formation and duties of ECOMOG in a peacekeeping

operation. Given the above, the alteration in ECOWAS Protocol to include collective security and management of conflicts in the sub-region was innovative.

Arguably, Nigeria's involvement in ECOMOG was driven by its foreign policy thrust of afrocentricism predicated on humanitarian response calls (Rich, 1999; Ero and Suzanne Long, 1995). Hence, the United Nations Field Security Handbook (2005) and Borton (1996) argued that collective security can be discussed under the umbrella of humanitarian response. The formation of ECOMOG was predicated on humanitarian calls based on an increase in death rate, forced migration, abuse of human rights, and other forms of human security threat to the livelihood in Liberia. Both as a donor and facilitator, Nigeria's efforts were not only based on the African philosophy of communalism built on the moral belief of 'brother's keeper' to intervene and restore sustainable peace in the West African region but its scope and base value. That is, endowed with both natural and human resources to steer collective security. The establishment of ECOMOG undoubtedly upholds the thesis of regional security (Joensson, 2010; Alder, 2005; Annan, 2000; Barnett, 2006). ECOMOG was a home-grown strategy used by Nigeria to resolve the conflict situation in West Africa in the 1990s, although undoubtedly diplomatically lined through its foreign policy(s) (Francis, 2009). In the light of the above, when viewed within the standpoint of critical survival strategies that nations deploy to survive in the competitive global system, it is without contradiction to argue that Nigeria support for ECOMOG was to further her hegemonic tendencies enshrined in foreign policy(s) thrust since her political independence in 1960. This assertion collaborates Kwaja (2017, p.67) position that "there was the fear by smaller countries of the dominant role of Nigeria in ECOMOG. Some feared that ECOMOG was a kind of imperial excuse by Nigeria to interfere in the internal politics of smaller states."

Undoubtedly, ECOMOG received a widely rated acceptance and high profile for its role in democratic governance, peacekeeping, while also playing a critical role in the collective security management in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Politically and within Nigeria, Nigerians questioned the government's sensitivity and imperative for embarking upon peace support operations and expanding the nations limited resources to fund ECOMOG operations, when ordinary Nigerians needed a better standard of life. Some argued that Nigeria under President Ibrahim Babangida decided to participate in ECOMOG to maintain Nigeria's regional hegemony and power by recruiting other smaller states to join it in a peacekeeping operation. Given the above, the study examines Nigeria's foreign policy thrust with a focus on Nigeria's hegemonic tendencies through regional security in West Africa Sub-region.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Foreign Policy

Foreign policy has been defined by various scholars in different ways that almost makes it not to have one acceptable definition. Hence, Dauda (2015) disclosed that foreign policy just like any other social science concept has defied one universally accepted definition notwithstanding many attempts have been made by scholars to define it. Chafe (1994) argued that the primary requirement for debating anything is to first and foremost understand the actual thing being talked about. To Northedges (1968), foreign policy is defined as the interplay between the outside and inside. Universally, a country's foreign policy is designed to promote and defend its national interests. Therefore, "foreign policy is the product of an interaction between the decision-makers of that state and the environment in which they are placed. There is a close relation between domestic policies and foreign policy of a nation as foreign policy is the reflection of domestic policy of that region" (Ahmed, 2019, p.5). From the technocrat's point of view, foreign policy is defined as a strategy with which institutionally designated decision-makers seek to manipulate the international environment to achieve a certain national objective (Chibundu, 2003). Uhomoihi (201, p.8) defined foreign policy "as a system of activities

evolved by states for changing the behaviour of other states and for adjusting their activities to the international environment...”

Regional security

International security forces through the United Nations and international governmental organizations is the concept of collective security (Rourke and Boyer, 2004). The notion of collective security in the 19th century was first embodied in the Covenant of the Leagues of Nations and also replicated in the Charter of the United Nations. Article 1 of the United Nations compelled all members "to maintain international peace and security"; Article 24 gave the Security Council the "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security"; in Article 25, all members "agree to accept and carry out the decisions" of the Security Council. Article 42 gave the Security Council the mandate to "take action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security". Collective security is founded on four basic tenets. First, all countries forswear the use of force except in self-defense. Second, all agree that peace is indivisible. An attack on one is an attack on all. Third, all pledge to unite to halt aggression and restore the peace and all agree to supply whatever material or personnel resources necessary to form a collective security force associated with the UN or some other IGOS to defeat aggressors and restore the peace (Chigozie and Ituma, 2015). The philosophy behind the establishment of collective security is to maintain global peace multilaterally. Asogwa (1999) argued that collective security aims at establishing a mutual responsibility and pooling the resources of several states to maintain international peace. Collective security is a multilateral organization set up by sovereign states to establish and maintain global peace by the concerned action and agreement of all nations (Barry, 1996). Though, the concept of collective security is not new. Over time, the concept of collective security has evolved and became institutionally predicated on an understanding of all against anyone rather than a known unilateral and traditional idea of resisting aggression. The reason why collective security fails sometimes, especially at the international scene is the unwillingness of countries to subordinate their sovereign interests to collective actions. The governments generally maintained their right to view conflict in terms of their national interest and support or oppose UN actions based on their nationalistic point of view.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts a Regional Security Complex theory as its theoretical construct. Regional Security Complex theory was coined and developed by Barry Buzen and Ole Waever and later advanced in 2003 to describe structures in international relations. The theory argued that international security is surveyed from a regional standpoint, and relations among state actors are often predicated on geographically clustered arrangements. The regional security complex is viewed from its distinct and stable arrangement of security interaction among state actors. Though, varies on various degrees anchored on national interest. It is pertinent to note that the interaction among member states who have relative homogeneity of the same region are very high compared to members of RSCs outside the geographical cluster. Regional security is geographical and usually consist of neighbouring sovereign states that are distinct in natural barriers such as desert, ocean, and mountains, among others (Buzan and Wæver, 2003). A region "chooses the actors; the actors do not choose the region" (Buzen.1983,p.113). This suggests that the RSCs primary focus is on playing a dominant role in local matters and equally defining national security priorities in international disputes. Morgenthau (1946) argued that the diplomacy of collective security must aim at transforming all local conflicts into world conflicts. If this cannot be one world of peace, it cannot help being one world of war. The theory is relevant to this study because it explains the relationship among the West African

countries towards the formation of ECOMOG to forestall security threats in the West Africa Sub-region. ECOMOG is a product of ECOWAS Protocol anchored on contiguity and propinquity. There is no successful regional security organization without endowed state actor(s). The fulcrum of Nigeria's foreign policy is Afrocentrism, which was made clear through Alhaji Tafawa Belewa's speech in the United Nations General Assembly in 1960. Every successive administration in Nigeria has continued the Afrocentric foreign policy thrust, which has provided the platform for hegemonism as alleged by many scholars.

Nigeria's Foreign Policy thrust and its hegemonic undertone in West Africa

Retrospectively, Nigeria's foreign affairs are traced to several signed treaties between British and Delta inhabitants between 1830-1885. These treaties aimed to end the slave trade. However, after the Berlin West African Conference of 1886, the British formally occupied Nigeria in 1900 and took control of administration after the amalgamation in 1914. The British ruled Nigeria from 1900 -1960 when Nigeria gained political independence. On the 20th of August 1960, Prime Minister Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Belewa submitted a Foreign Policy Statement to the House of Representatives (Parliament) in Lagos for debate and approval. In the statement under reference, the prime minister categorically stated:

Very particular attention will be devoted to adopting clear and practical policies as regards Africa. [We will aim to] assist any African country to find a solution to its problems and to foster the growth of a common understanding among all the nations, and especially among the new nations of the continent...The difficulties which will confront us in promoting the friendly association of independent countries in Africa are fully appreciated, but we believe that they can be overcome if a start is made by emphasizing and building upon the culture and economic links which already exist (cited Ogele and Okutalukwe, 2020,p.577)

Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Belewa statement in the House of Representatives (Parliament) in Lagos was a clear understanding of Nigeria's Foreign Policy direction as a new independent state. The statement of Sir Belewa was developed in the speech made during the 16th Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly by Hon. Jaja Wachukwu, Minister of Foreign and Commonwealth Relations on the 10th October 1961. He stated that:

Our Foreign Policy is based on three basic pillars; the concept that Nigeria is an African nation; it is part and parcel of the continent of Africa, and therefore it is so completely involved in anything that pertains to the continent, that it cannot be neutral and must never consider as a neutral country. We are independent in everything but neutral in nothing that affects the destiny of Africa. The moment Africa is affected, we are involved. We want to make this clear, Nigeria finds itself involved in anything affecting the African continent anywhere, [and] in any square inch of African territory- we are involved. We cannot be neutral, so that neutralism used in a broad sense, should exclude our country when it comes to Africa affairs. And being a member of the African community and feeling completely bound to its destiny and accepting our involvement in everything that pertains to it all questions of Africa must be considered as questions about Nigeria. The peace of Africa is the peace of Nigeria. Its tribulations are our tribulations and we cannot be indifferent to its future (cited Chibundu,2003)

Every successive federal government since the end of Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Belewa's regime to date has continued to demonstrate a strong commitment to the guiding principles of Nigeria's foreign policy thrust centred on Afrocentrism. Nigeria and other countries in the West Africa sub-region have devoted considerable human, material, political and diplomatic resources to their solution of crises in the sub-region, starting from Liberia, Sierra Leone,

Guinea-Bissau, among others for peaceful resolution of their conflict. President Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida was explicit in his speech that:

"[In] a sub-region of 16 countries where one out of three West Africans is a Nigerian, it is imperative that any regime in this country should relentlessly strive towards the prevention or avoidance of the deterioration of any crisis which threatens to jeopardize or compromise the stability, prosperity and security of the sub-region...We believe that if [a crisis is] of such level that has [sic] the potentials to threaten the stability, peace and security of the sub-region, Nigeria in collaboration with others in this sub-region, is duty-bound to react or respond in appropriate manner necessary to ensure peace, tranquility and harmony (cited Tuck,2000)

Nigeria contributed immensely to the peacekeeping operations in other African Sub-regions, even while her relationship with other countries in the international community was stretched thin leading to the institution of the ECOWAS monitoring group (ECOMOG). This contribution from Nigeria to peacekeeping cannot be overemphasized. ECOMOG being a brainchild and agent of the state was used to restore peace, a social culture, in a conflict-ridden society and region. Most conflicts in West Africa grew, intensify, and widening by drawing in other interested parties. The phenomenon implies that deepening and spreading or generating secondary conflicts within the main parties and outside sympathizers may intensify the conflict (Ogele, 2020). However, the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapon (SALW) was attributed to the increase in conflict West African Sub region (Ogele, Egobueze, and Owabie,2021). Nigeria's involvement in foreign policy objective of collective security and protectionism of the black race have no socioeconomic and political undertone but was borne out of magnanimity and humanitarianism to ensure peace, stability and prosperity of countries involved. The establishment of ECOMOG during the regime of President Babangida was a clear demonstration of the unflinching leadership to regional peace and security. It is on record that ECOMOG spearheaded by Nigeria succeeded in putting an end to the Liberian war in 1997, monitored the process of transition to democratic rule. Though the contributions of other nations vary in troops and finance. Nigeria provided the bulk of the force. Historically, Nigeria demonstrated its commitment to collective security by enforcing this ECOWAS Protocol on Peacekeeping in Liberia and Sierra Leone without recourse to human and capital resources involved. Nigeria's magnanimity was pointed out in Tuck (2000, p.5) that "the economic and political costs to those involved also contributed to divisions. As the operation became progressively more dangerous, costly and protracted, the willingness of ECOWAS states to support potentially dangerous options was often reduced correspondingly. The Senegalese contingent, for example, was withdrawn after initial casualties caused the Government to forbid its contingent to engage in combat operations without significant Nigerian support." Furthermore, in demonstrating Nigeria's commitment to strengthening collective security, Tuck further gave a breakdown of "the contributing nations and troop strengths varied, but included at one time or another Nigeria, which provided the bulk of the forces....In February 1995, for example, the force consisted of 8, 430 troops organized into ten battalions; of these troops 4,908 were Nigerian, 1,028 were from Ghana, 609 from Guinea, 747 from Tanzania, 760 from Uganda, 359 from Sierra Leone, and ten each was provided by Gambia and Mali. The force peaked at a strength of around 16, 000 in 1993 and by early 1997 consisted of around 11,000 troops" (Tuck,2000, p.7). In the same vein, Nigeria championed the reinstatement of the Legitimate Government in Sierra-Leone even though Nigeria had an existing bilateral defense agreement with Sierra-Leone. Nigeria already had 900 troops in Sierra Leone when the coup took place. Nigeria was to reinstate President Kabbah. Though Nigeria involved several troops from Ghana and Guinea to have the face of the regional force. Rourke and Boyer disclosed that troops from the Economic of West African States (ECOWAS) helped returned

Liberia to some semblance of normalcy after a particularly horrendous civil war and were also able in 1998 to restore a measure of unfortunately temporary peace in Sierra Leone (Rourke and Boyer, 2004). Despite Nigeria's level of commitment to restoring peace in Liberia, Nigeria was criticized for unilateral replacement of the ECOMOG Force Commander Arnold Quainoo, a Ghanaian with the Nigerian Joshua Dogonyaro (Tuck, 2000). The underpinning reason was borne out Anglophone and francophone dichotomy in ECOWAS. Besides, "there was also the fear by smaller countries of the dominant role of Nigeria in ECOMOG. Some feared that ECOMOG was a kind of imperial excuse by Nigeria to interfere in the internal politics of smaller states" (Kwaja, 2007, p.67) "Historical evidence has proven that there is no such thing as a gift without an ulterior motive in international relations" (Ogele and Adamu, 2021, p. 14). The Nigerian influence within the operation grew, it became increasingly difficult to isolate ECOMOG from Nigerian domestic politics. Nigeria has emerged as a Sub-regional power in African, hence, accused of being the hegemon. The table below indicates the ECOMOG Commander dominated by Nigerians.

Table 1. Indicates the ECOMOG Commandants that served between 1990-1999

Commander	Country	Title	Dates
Lt-Gen. <u>Arnold Quainoo</u>	Ghana	Force Commander	July 1990 – Sept. 1990
Maj-Gen. <u>Joshua Dogonyaro</u>	Nigeria	Field Commander	Sept. 1990 – Feb. 1991
Maj-Gen. <u>Rufus Kupolati</u>	Nigeria	Field Commander	Feb. 1991 – Sept. 1991
Maj-Gen. <u>Ishaya Bakut</u>	Nigeria	Field Commander	Sept. 1991- Oct. 1992
Maj-Gen. <u>Tunji Olurin</u>	Nigeria	Field Commander	Oct. 1992 – Oct. 1993
Maj-Gen. <u>John Shagaya</u>	Nigeria	Field Commander	Oct. 1993 – Dec. 1993
Maj-Gen. <u>John Mark Inienger</u>	Nigeria	Field Commander	Dec. 1993 – Aug. 1996
Maj-Gen. <u>Victor Malu</u>	Nigeria	Force Commander	Aug. 1996 – Jan. 1998
Maj-Gen. <u>Timothy Shelpidi</u>	Nigeria	Force Commander	Jan. 1998 – Mar. 1999
Maj-Gen. Felix Mujakperuo	Nigeria	Force Commander	1999

Source: Wikipedia

Nigeria previously played stronger role in resolving regional crises

Hegemonic ambitions became even more explicit following Nigeria's transition from military to civilian rule in 1998-99. During the administration of a former president, Olusegun Obasanjo, in 1999-2007, Nigeria was at the forefront of regional efforts to make military coups unacceptable, to end civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia and to resolve territorial disputes peacefully, as Mr Obasanjo did with Cameroon over the Bakasi peninsula. The Obasanjo presidency also worked to strengthen regional organisations and UN peacekeeping agencies, to which Nigeria was a major supplier of peacekeepers.

At present however, Nigeria is losing its capacity to effectively exercise regional political and security leadership, and there is no replacement for it in sight (as France is increasingly cutting back its security engagement too), owing to increasing instability at home, the effects of which are often exported to other ECOWAS countries. Nigeria's government is increasingly able to assert its dominance over only "core" Nigerian regions and cities of imperative economic or political importance. Meanwhile, the peripheral regions of the country, such as the bandit-stricken north-western state of Zamfara, or the north-east, where conflict rages with Islamist groups, will become increasingly lawless over the course of 2022-26. At the same time, the country's entrenched economic problems show little sign of generating the kind of prosperity that would help to achieve social peace and provide Nigeria's youth with better alternatives to joining militant groups or criminal gangs.

Conclusion

The paper examined the role of Nigeria in regional security in the West African Sub-region. This is predicated on the fact that Nigeria declared her interest as a regional power in Africa through Afrocentric foreign policy since 1960. The Nigerian hegemonic tendencies manifested in her role in the security stability in the West African Sub-region through her involvement in ECOMOG. Nigeria intervention in the regional collective security architecture of West Africa helped establish and project her image in diplomatic circles. By actively participating in ECOMOG, a regionally and (eventually) internationally sanctioned operation, Nigeria strived to maintain its hegemonic image without losing legitimacy for involving itself in another state's affairs. The uniqueness of ECOMOG and its operations however lies in the novelty of a Sub-regional organization that was primarily established to promote economic cooperation and integration getting involved in security issues in the stead of older organizations with more direct collective security mandates.

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