

The Nigerian State and the Problematic of Nigeria's Big Brother Role in Nigeria's Foreign Intervention Missions

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Abstract

Nigeria's foreign or external intervention policy is an important aspect of Nigerian's external relations whose primary focus is on the African continent. Within Nigeria's foreign intervention outreach, Nigeria relates as a Regional Power within the West African Sub-Region and as a Big Brother Nation and as a 'Giant of Africa' within the African continent. The reasons for this pride of place are arguably fascinating. Although Nigeria also has several external relations with the rest of the world, its role as a Big Brother Nation in Africa consist in an attachment to ensuring several fundamental objectives, chief among them of which are those of the following, namely, the political independence of African states from colonialism, the unity and mutual coexistence of African states, the political stability of the continent and the socio-economic and political progress of Africa. Achievement of these external objectives and missions has historically been an uphill task, and in consequences, some of the challenges or problematic of Big Brother Nigeria in leading the rest of Africa towards these objectives have been those of the following: the problematic of intelligence, strategic inefficiency, corruption, political and economic instability, and the dwindling image of the country in the global community. The current paper is aimed at making a future-shaping critique. The paper by nature is a critical survey. Thus, while it adopts the method of textual analysis, the significant of the paper lies in the fact that the paper as a whole is a contribution to contemporary debates on foreign policy and Nigeria's foreign intervention policy development.

Keywords: *The Nigerian state, Problematic, Nigeria's big brother role, Foreign intervention policies, Foreign missions*

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Background to the Study

The Nigerian State as a Big Brother Nation in Africa and the rest of the World

The Nigerian State is one of the countries in the Lower Niger with a unique status in all of Africa. With its vast expanse of land largely situated at the Gulf of Guinea, Nigeria is bound to the North by Niger Republic and by the Republic of Chad, to the East by the Republic of Cameroon, to the West by the Republic of Benin and to the South by the Atlantic Ocean (Uya). Divided into 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria is blessed with rich human and natural resources. Its large chunks of human and natural resources have been a major source of the country's strength in Africa and a major factor which has enthroned Nigeria over the rest of Africa as a 'Giant of Africa'. Its booming crude oil reserve is not only a source of internal conflict. It is Nigeria's chief export and the country's number one source of economic and political power within the international community (Elaigwu). With a population of about 200 million spreading over 250 tribes with more than 750 different languages, Nigeria is a force to reckon with (Oyovbaire). Sources have explained accordingly that until Nigeria's amalgamation by Sir Frederick Lord Lugard in 1914, the respective communities which now make up contemporary Nigeria all had their respective political consciousness including traditional systems of carrying out political and external intervention in external crisis involving neighbouring states and brother states which they choose to protect and defend (Omotola).

Nigeria, globally known to be the 'Giant of Africa' (Holmes) this pride of place is due to a variety of reasons. Part of the reason is that when compared with other African countries and with other Third World Nations globally, Nigeria's teeming population, its huge economic potentials, the country's rich human and natural resources, Nigeria's large chunks of crude oil deposit, its extensive and combat-ready Army, stand out to distinguishes Nigeria as a true 'Giant' (Suberu). The country is, therefore, one with an interesting combination which gives it all the powers it needs to wield over any other nation of the world as a Big Brother Nation or as an intervening power in the crisis of other nations. According to the CIA World Fact Book, Nigeria has the 'third largest youth population' in the world third only after India and China. This means that Nigeria does not only have one of the most dynamic electoral college to practice global politics but also a teeming population large enough to produce a standing Armies for any form of military intervention over-night. Yet, politics in Nigeria seems to be synonymous with 'old age', 'senility' and 'decayed brains'. Thus, if not by looking holistically at all the factors that establish Nigeria as a Big Brother Nation in Africa, how else is one to account for the fact that, despite political instability in Nigeria, Nigeria's falling currency, political and economic corruption, limitations in the country's foreign intelligence, the British Broadcasting Corporation BBC, deemed it fit to rate Nigeria among other nations of the world as an 'One of the Emerging World Power of the 21st Century'. Economically, Nigeria overtook South Africa in 2015 to become the biggest economy in Africa and the 20th largest economy in the world (Fact Book). It is therefore not surprising that most of West Africa, if not all of Africa as a continent, is already depending on Nigeria for most of their needs (Udeh).

This automatically puts Nigeria on notice. Whenever there is a problem for external intervention in any of the African countries, be it military or diplomatic request for external intervention, all eyes automatically look up to Nigeria. And whenever the international community is in need of either strategic or diplomatic support from Africa, much of their considerations have been Nigeria. The situation, according to Jason Robinson, is that Nigeria's foreign relations as a whole exist at five different but interconnected levels. First, Nigeria's relations with its immediate neighbours on Nigeria's borders, such as: Chad Republic, Benin Republic, Cameroon and Republic of Niger. Second level is the level of Nigeria's external relations with other West African States as it is already reflected in its membership of the Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS. Third level of Nigeria's external relations is that of Nigeria's diplomatic or external relations with the African continent as a whole. This is clearly spelt out in Nigeria's membership of the Organization of African Unity, OAU, and that of the African Union, AU. At the fourth level, Nigeria bears external or foreign relations with certain special countries, either due to economic interests or colonial history, such as: Britain, the United States of America and China. At the fifth level, Nigeria's foreign relations are with the rest of the world .

Of all five levels of Nigeria's external relations, Nigeria has not only historically maintained a predominant focus on the third level of the country's foreign relations which has to do with Nigeria's relations to the African continent as a whole. More than this, all other external relations at the other four levels have historically been maintained by Big Brother Nigeria as political platforms to enable the country to establish and consolidate its external intervention objectives at this third level as a springboard to its other relations to the rest of the world. This being the case, the current paper is positioned to highlighting Nigeria's external intervention to other African countries, not only in preparation to discuss the Big Brother role played by Nigeria in it. More than this, the paper focuses on Nigeria's external intervention to the African continent bearing in mind that it is this level of Nigeria's foreign relations by means of which anyone can comprehensively understand the complete dynamics of Nigeria's external relations the rest of the world and to the universe as a whole.

The Concept of External Intervention and Nigeria's Big Brother role in Africa's Problems

Foreign or external intervention refers to the use of discretionary powers of a government in one state or society to address a problem or problems in another state or society, bearing in mind that such a state or society with crisis calling for intervention, must be foreign to the intervening power (Coyne). In addition to this, Coyne has noted that in all these, the aim of every foreign or external intervention policy of any state or nation is to create an alternative state of affairs in the recipient nation. Yet, the disturbing fact as Coyne makes it appear to be is that the new state of affairs is always expected to be created and when eventually it has been created, it is exclusively created from the perspective of the intervening power or nation. Therefore, the first problematic or challenge of foreign or external intervention globally is to be seen from the foregoing that, foreign policy intervention for the most part, is an emotional thing rather than a political reality. Sometimes the Big brother nation intervenes, not primarily to end the crisis in another nation but for a mere show-off or pure expression of might over a weaker nation. This can, henceforth, lead to a variety of socio-political problems, and in some

cases, it can proceed to polarize or even heat up the polity than what the case was before intervention by a Big Brother Nation.

Accordingly, Lanchovichina and Suleiman, have noted that whenever a Big Brother nation intervenes in any foreign problem without motives which are genuine, this can lead to a diversity of unintended evil consequences. Some of these unintended consequences are those of polarization of the communities and post-intervention conflicts in the recipient states. Both of these consequences have been witnessed in the last decade at the aftermaths of the removal of dictatorial governments by the United States of America in Syria, Lybia, Iraq, Egypt and Morocco or the so-called Middle East and North Africa, MENA (www.brookings.edu/-) The story which was told to the rest of the world was that America and the Allied Nations only wanted to get rid of corrupt and authoritarian leaders in these countries as a way of ensuring that citizens' rights and welfare in these countries are being respected and that subsequent governments in these states would begin to embrace the basic principles of democracy. But deep down the truth, the untold story in all these was that the then George Bush jnr and Barak Obama of the United States of America, decided to adopt the military option rather than diplomatic sanctions in achieving the same results, not because these would not work when effectively monitored, but in a bit to show-off as the reigning World Power.

Contrary to the thinking of most Contemporary World Powers, such as America and Russia, foreign intervention policy is not only limited to the military option. Christopher Coyne has observed that Big Brother nations can exercise their foreign intervention policies either by invasion or by diplomatic means. He adds that there are several reasons to be skeptical about the military option. Accordingly, Stevenson Colburn has demonstrated with notable examples from the cold war era showing the superiority of the later. In the opinion of this author, invasion or the military option should only be applied in circumstances where there is extreme failure of all other options. This, according to this author, is the reason why Big Brother external interventions by the US and by Soviet Union by means of their food aid schemes to poor African countries, played a significant and quicker role in entrenching America's democracy, Western capitalism or Russian Communism in those African countries of intervention during the Cold War era.

Globally, the Big Brothers of every society have continued to subscribe to two philosophical theories in their application of the scope and extent of foreign intervention policies. Adetayo, Olawole and Adebusuyi, have noted that these theories have historically been those of the following, namely, the self-sufficiency theory which captures the intervening power as a kind of Big Brother Nation and the dependency theory which depicts the recipient nation or the nation in crisis as a kind of Small Brother Nation. It is Elizabeth Schmidts, who has explained that the term 'intervention' in 'foreign intervention' refers to a unique kind of political and diplomatic relationship which has historically always involved an imbalance of power between the intervening powers or the Big Brother Nations and the recipient states or the Small Brother nations. According to Jason Robinson:

It is not synonymous with engagement, involvement or influence which reveals nothing about power dynamics --- it occurs when a dominant country uses either force or pressure to interfere with and to exert power over a weaker foreign entity.

It can, however, be deduced from the foregoing that every intervening power or Big Brother Nation does so in a bid to advance certain interests. In many cases the Big Brother role in other countries has been a mere display of power and a kind of show-off. In other instances, it has been a sign of the struggle for power and resources in such a Small Brother Nation in crisis. In all cases, every Big Brother Nation engages in foreign intervention policy for rewards and benefits. In other words, a Big Brother Nation will always refrain from external intervention of any kind unless it is acting for the sake of its national interests. There is no gainsaying that foreign intervention as an instrument of foreign policy has its own lapses and that when loosely implemented it can lead to a worst case scenario. It is at the same time a reality whose importance to contemporary society cannot be over emphasized. This makes it even more interesting to examine how the Nigerian state has so far fared on this.

Instances of Nigeria's External Intervention in and beyond Africa and the Big Brother role Played by the Nigerian State

Instances abound where Nigeria has played the Big Brother role in Africa's troubles and in other countries of the world. It is to be recalled first that although Nigeria's foreign intervention policies and missions extend beyond the African continent, it remains a truism that Nigeria centres its external intervention missions on the African continent. Moreso, it makes Africa a centralized platform for reaching out to the rest of the world in its foreign policy development fiasco. There is no debate around the fact that Nigeria also has foreign relations with the rest of the world. However, regarding its African target as a concentration of its foreign intervention missions, Nigeria has continued to pose as a Big Brother Nation and as a continental power, and in it, its foreign intervention objectives as aspects of its foreign policy development, have been an attachment to several fundamental objectives of which chief among them have been those of the following, namely, the political independence of all African states, the unity of the African continent and the socio-economic progress of the continent. In carrying out these assignments, Nigeria historically deemed it necessary to take the lead in the development of some political instruments which would provide Nigeria the platform to intervene in these and in many other African problems within and beyond the African continent.

In carrying out these foreign intervention objectives on Africa as its mission area to the rest of the world, Nigeria as a 'Continental Giant' and as an African Big Brother, took the historic lead in the formation and application of the following Regional, Continental and Inter-Continental Organizations in Africa. Nigeria took the historic lead in the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, the formation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its Military Wing, namely, the ECOWAS Monetary Group (ECOMOG) in 1975, the formation of the Africa Union or the transformation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU) in 1999. Atom Feed has recalled that:

upon gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria quickly committed itself to improving the lives of the people of the country ... and its neighbouring African countries ... in it, Nigeria as an African Big Brother, became a founding member of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) which later became the African Union, AU.

The chief functions of these Big Brother creation, especially, the OAU, were to serve Nigeria's foreign intervention scheme as a tool for checking political instability in other African countries and for encouraging other African countries unto what Atom Feeds sees as the demand for frequently holding regional meetings in a manner which would eventually strength Africa's political and economic standing within the global community.

Therefore, among other Nigeria's foreign intervention projects or schemes, these schemes have been those of the following, first, during the then Apartheid rule in Southern Africa, Nigeria backed the African National Congress ANC towards achieving eventual independence for Southern Africa. Within this first of Nigeria's external mission to Africa, Nigeria provided not only asylum for African activists whose lives were endangered by the brutal executioners of apartheid rule. It single-handedly mounted the kind of political pressure against Apartheid White Minority Rule in Southern Africa and in a manner which caught the attention of the international community concerning the plight of the people of Southern Africa. Second of Nigeria's external intervention missions, during the Civil War in Liberia and the Crisis in Sierra-Leone (1991 to 2002) Nigeria led the ECOMOG troops into various peace-keeping operations in these countries. In another external intervention mission to other African countries, earlier on in 1975, the military government of General Yakubu Gowon sponsored the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (PMLA) when Civil War broke out in Angola after its Independence from Portugal. During this crisis, Nigeria mounted incredible political pressure on the against the rebel troops through diplomatic and military influences in support of the population PMLA in Angola as a way of returning political stability into post-independence Angola.

Sources have noted in respect of Nigeria's further intervention mission in Africa that, in 1977 the government of General Olusegun Obasanjo in its charismatic tempo donated \$20million United States Dollars to Zimbabwe in Nigeria's support to the government of Zimbabwe against the White Apartheid rule in Rhodesia which is now known in modern-day times as Zimbabwe. Side by side with this, Nigeria also sent military troops and equipments to Mazambican National Resistance Guerrillas. And when war broke out in Zimbabwe, during the said Zimbabwen War in 1979 which the government of Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo undertook at the time against the then White Minority Rule of Prime Minister Ian Douglas Smith, a regime which was backed by Apartheid government in South Africa, Atom Feed has noted that, Nigeria provided military training in Kaduna as well as organized logistic and other diplomatic support in favour of Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe's troops in Zimbabwe (Feed 4).

In all of these, Ilifee John, has placed former president Olusegun Obasanjo at the centre. He speaks of former President Olusegun Obasanjo as a window of Nigeria's foreign policy intervention policies. His views here being analyzed are clearly in contrast with those of Hollie West, who has argued that Nigeria's Big brother role in the country's foreign intervention missions in Africa and the rest of the world, is a product of all past and present presidents of the country and the supreme effort of which Pan-Africanism is the architect of it all. In the opinion of Gerald McLoughlin, Ilifee's thinking is premised not on any sentiments that it is

because President Obasanjo has been the longest serving president of the country having served the country for Twelve Years as a Military Head of States (1976-1970) and as a Civilian President (1999-2007). Instead, McLoughlin has opined that Ilifee's assertion is probably based on the kind of charisma which General Olusegun Obasanjo has always brought into African Affairs including the country's Big Brother role in Nigeria foreign intervention policies.

The problematic of Nigeria's Big Brother Role in Nigeria's Foreign Intervention missions in Africa and beyond

Adreinne Lebas, has noted that one of the problematic of Nigeria's Big Brother role in the continent and of the country's foreign intervention policies is that, not only in Nigeria and Africa, but anywhere in the world, whenever intervening power takes on a problem in any recipient state, the intervening Big Brother, among other things, stresses the weaknesses and inactiveness of the recipient government. In the opinion of this paper, stressing the inactivity of a less powerful nation like Lebas has done, is although an emotionally satisfying critique, it is also in the opinion of this paper true of Nigeria as an African Big Brother. Almost all countries undertake foreign intervention missions in furtherance of their national interests. Nigeria's Big Brother role in its external intervention in Africa and the rest of the world is still a bundle of charity organization as if the extension of foreign policies to other countries has ceased to be politics.

It is therefore not surprising that since independence date of 1960 Nigeria's foreign policy drive as a continental giant is still very underdeveloped and limited largely to one continent compared with other continental giants, such as US in America, China in Asia and Britain in Europe. Unlike the situation in most countries today, Nigeria as an African Big Brother is still able to achieve the same results that it has always had from its foreign intervention operations with the same low risks as always, yet at a higher-reward scale limited by the charity motives in Nigeria's foreign intervention policies and processes. But this is not all. There are other limitations and problematic to be mentioned in respect of Nigeria's Big Brother role in the continent's foreign intervention realities.

As if it is not enough to mention Nigeria's charity motives in the country's foreign intervention policies, Lebas McLoughlin has identified three other problematic with Nigeria's policies of foreign intervention and the country's Big Brother role in it. He lists these three setbacks and challenges to include the following: the Nigerian Military factor in their illegal involvements, the problem of non-state security or what he sees as the absence of strong investment in state institutions strong enough to contain rival states on any mission, and the problem of intelligence being that its external policy intelligence is mostly based on security tips provided by crisis countries which Nigeria intervenes to rescue. This does not allow the country its highest or best potentials as a 'Continental Giant'. Lebas assessment, especially, the point on intelligence is an indictment on Nigeria to step up its foreign intelligence to ensure greater results in its interventional missions.

It follows accordingly that one can group the vagaries of problems plaguing Nigeria's Big Brother role in Africa and the country's foreign intervention missions into the following major headings, namely, the economic, the political, the military or strategic, the social and the environmental factors. Yet, central among them are the socio-economic, political and military limitations. The fact that Nigeria has continued to experience depreciation in the value of its currency is not a good sign to the country's status as a 'Giant of Africa'. With a continued fluctuation in its foreign reserves as a 'continental giant', fluctuation in global crude oil prizes in the global market of which Nigeria depends for its economy, and with the outburst of new diseases in the country; All of these socio-economic and political factors, now threaten to weigh-down Nigeria's tempo as a Big Brother Nation in Africa. With heightening levels of political and economic instability in Nigeria, one conclusion that can be reached in addition to what has already been said is that Nigeria is getting weaker by the day as a Big Brother Nation in Africa. It is also getting weaker in its role as a defender of other African countries against stronger ones and against the rest of the world than it was the case with the country in the 1960(s), the 1970(s), the 1980(s) and the 1990(s).

Furthermore, more than the problems of weak intelligence, military corruption, political and economic instability in the country, there is also something about Nigeria's image factor arising from corruption and related factors already discussed in the content of this paper. Ukechukwu Iroha, has noted to this end that while all these factors have been on the front burner, what everyone sees but fails to emphasize in respect of Nigeria's foreign relations is the country's poor image within the contexts of the international community. The question now is: how hence is Nigeria's external image a problem to the country's Big Brother Status in Africa and its external intervention missions? To a large extent, the answer to this question is simple. How else is Nigeria's poor external image a problem to the country's foreign intervention policies in Africa and beyond, if not its consequences on the dwindling trust it has attracted, even from among its African brothers who formerly reposed confidence on it as their Big Brother? The situation here is that since the military days, corruption became rife. Not only corruption in isolation but leadership dictatorship, high records of human rights violation and bad governance, all greeted long years of military rule in the country. Today, Nigeria has successfully operated a civilian democracy for 19 years since 1999, still, nothing has changed about the dwindling trust of nations on Nigeria, orchestrated largely because of the country's falling image within Africa and within the global community.

Conclusion

Nigeria is no doubt a "Giant of Africa". Its teeming population, rich human and natural resources clearly puts it on advantage over the rest of Africa and beyond its Third World counterparts throughout the world. As a 'continental giant', Nigeria is not only able to cater for the problems of its African brothers through its foreign intervention policies and missions. Its strength as a 'Big Brother Nation' makes Nigeria attractive to the rest of the world as their first port of call in their search for Africa's assistance to their problems. But while the country has continued to excel as an African Big Brother and in its external intervention policies, it is to be said that times have changed. New demands have risen through the passage of time. And these contemporary challenges to Nigeria's historic status as an African Big Brother have

necessitated this paper to call attention to some of the problematic and setbacks as a way of better positioning Big Brother Nigeria in its foreign policies and foreign policy interventions for better and greater results in contemporary times. In a bid to make a valid contribution to contemporary debates on foreign policy interventions, the current paper has identified some of the future-shaping problematic of Nigeria's Big Brother role vis-à-vis Nigeria's foreign intervention policies to include the following: political and economic instability, corruption, poor external image and foreign intelligence, to mention but a few. The paper believes that these are some of the challenges which Nigeria's Ministry of External Affairs need to be looking at if it must retain Nigeria's image on the continent as a Big Brother Nation in international politics.

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