

## **Nigerian Foreign Policy: Significance for the Development of the West African Sub-Region**

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### **Abstract**

The 'Big Brother' posture of Nigeria on the African continent is expected to have implications for the development of the region. This study examined Nigeria's foreign policy and its significance for the development of the West African sub-region. Data was obtained from secondary materials such as books, journals, periodicals, the internet, etc. The study adopted the theory of Realism (Morgenthau, 1997) as its theoretical framework. It followed the technique of content analysis in its methodology. Results showed that through her foreign policy, Nigeria has made tremendous contributions to the development of the West African sub-region. The study recommended that the foreign policy should be strengthened to do more in the area of trade among nations in the sub-region.

**Keywords:** *Foreign Policy, Trade, Development, Big-brother posture, West African sub-region*

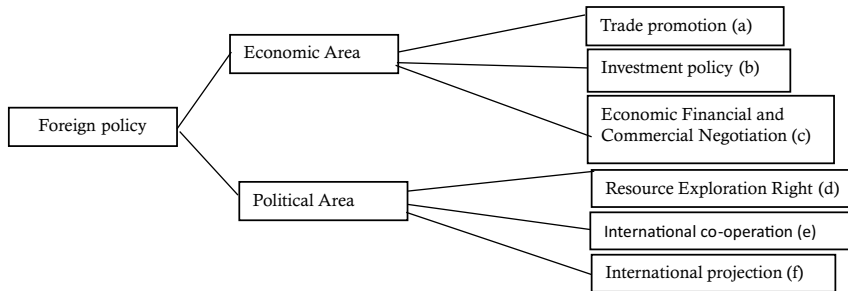
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### **Background to the Study**

A sovereign state usually conducts her foreign relations and interacts with other states through her foreign policy. The implication is that a foreign policy in international politics is like a charter containing national interests which shows areas of agreement and disagreement. It explains the ideal with which a state can exert its influence in a very effective way. Such policy is formulated for the purpose of safeguarding and promotion of the country's national interest in the conduct of relations with other countries bilaterally or multilaterally. Foreign policy therefore is a direct reflection of a country's traditional values; and overall national policies, aspirations and self-perception. As the saying goes, 'no man is an island' and no nation can afford to exist in isolation. This makes the framing of foreign policy, a necessary activity of the modern state. Hence, in contemporary times, every state establishes diplomatic, economic, trade, educational, cultural and political relations with other nations. The contemporary society also compels such a nation to maintain and sustain relations with not just other nations, but also with international organizations and non-governmental actors on the international scene.

There is a strong line of linking which believes that the semi-periphery or developing/emerging countries present a serious need for a strong state when it comes to overcoming the gap that separates them from the centre or developed countries. It was in this vein that Gerschenkron (1916) observed that, "the more backward a country is, the greater the role the state needs to play in promoting its development". In the area of international relations, Wallensteins (1988), and Arrighi (1990), confirm the need for a strong state presence in overcoming the gap between centre and periphery (and semi-periphery), while presenting a pessimistic view on the real opportunities for joint development of the backward countries. The role of foreign policy in enhancing development should always be envisaged within the context of the relevance of the state in the development process. Thus foreign policy may be divided into two broad areas through which it influences national or regional development, policy and economy. In the economic sphere of foreign policy, three channels stand out clear which can influence the country's development strategy. They include, trade promotions, investment policy, economic, financial and commercial negotiations. In the areas of politics, three channels are also listed. They include – resource exploration rights, international co-operations, and international projection. Although these channels of action are more indirectly related to development promotion; however, they help to create a positive environment for the other channels of action to succeed.

**Figure I:** Foreign Policy Lines of Action in Promoting Development



**Source:** Elaboration by Spohr, P.A and Da Silva, R.L.A (2017).

A study on Nigeria's consolidation of foreign policy directive in West Africa by Ibrahim and Kabir (2019), observed that, “Nigeria's foreign policy even in the West African sub region has been influenced by its African focus which has conferred on her (Nigeria), the status of a sub-regional leader in all ramifications. It recommends that the Nigerian authorities must regard and treat its African neighbors as strategic. In this regard, Nigeria's foreign policy since returning to democracy in 1999 is guided by the 1999 constitution. In section 19 of the 1999 constitution, a dynamic foreign policy has been projected through the promotion of economic development, integration and unity, peace and security in West Africa. It is therefore expected that such a policy would enhance the promotion of trade as well as political stability of the West African sub-region. Against this background, this study seeks to investigate the extent to which Nigeria's foreign policy constitutes the much needed veritable tool for the promotion of trade and political stability of the West African sub-region. Thus, while the broad objective of the study is to access the significance of Nigeria's foreign policy for the development of the West African sub-region, its specific objectives includes to:

- a) Examine the role of Nigeria's foreign policy in trade promotion in the West African sub-region and,
- b) Ascertain the importance of Nigeria's foreign policy for the attainment of political stability in West Africa.

The study will attempt to locate answers for the following questions:

- a) What is the role of Nigeria's foreign policy in trade promotions in the West African sub-region?
- b) To what extent has the foreign policy enhanced the political stability of the West African sub-region?

## Literature Review

### Conceptual Literature

**Development:** In Rostow's seminal work (1971), 'Development' has been explained as “a process of evolutionary succession in states where human societies leave a rudimentary model until they arrive at a western industrialized civilianization consumption model, which is considered unique and universal.” In Riberto's approach (2005), the word development, in various areas of knowledge, converges to “a state, process, well-being, progress, economic and

human growth or ecological balance.” The South Commission (SUD) (1990), defines development as “a maturing and development process of self that frees the population from fear and exploitation”. Summing up, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (1991) views the concept as, “expanding the range of choices for the population that allows development to become more democratic and participative, access to income, participation in decision and enjoyment of human, economic and political liberties, from the economic perspective. Schumpeter (1984, 1985, 1989) used the term development as “evolution, unfolding, revelation and innovation”. In his own view, Pearson (2000) asserts that development involves “an improvement qualitative, quantitative or both--- in the use of available resources. This development means different things to different people. No matter the perspective, it needs be underscored that 'development' is not purely an economic phenomenon but rather a multi-dimensional process involving reorganization and reorientation of entire economic and social system. It is the process of improving the quality of all human lives.

**Economic stability:** The definitions of economic stability differ from one perspective to another. According to Hausmann, (1996), some perspectives take an approach which holds that all economies are stable except for extreme conditions of volatility. However, while Sundrum (1990), considers that economic stability is linked to the basic structure of the economy, Mankiw (2001) examines economic stability solely through a macro economic perspective. Putting it in a simple form, he defines the term as “the smooth growth of real GDP”

**Foreign Policy:** Foreign policies are the strategies, methods, guidelines, agreement which are usually used by national governments to perform their actions in the international arena. It defines the goals of national interest and seeks to achieve these through the exercise of national power. Foreign policy may also be conceived as the general objectives that guide the activities and relationships of one state in its interactions with other states. The development of foreign policy is influenced by domestic considerations, the policies or behavior of other states, or plans to advance specific geopolitical designs. Ogwu (2005), defines foreign policy as the relations between sovereign actors in the international system. Foreign policy embraces the goals that the nations officials seek to attain abroad, the value that give rise to those objectives, and the means or instruments used to pursue them (Wittkopt, 2003). In the views of Modelski (1962), 'foreign policy is the system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behavior of other states and for adjusting their own activities to the international environment'

**Political Stability:** Sottiolotta (2013), cited by the international consulting firm Eurasia Group, defines political stability as the capacity of a country's political system to withstand internal and external shocks. Coming from the reverse side, Williams (2014) defines political instability to mean giving an insight on political stability: as the propensity ` of a government collapse either because of conflicts or because of rampant competition between various political parties. Political stability can be achieved through oppression or through having political party in place that does not have to compete to be re-elected. The implication is that polity stability is a double-edged sword.

**Trade Promotion:** Trade promotion is crucial to the success of brand. It is a concept of distribution that stresses price-related matter;

*The objective may be to encourage the middlemen to stock new items, buy in large quantity, buy early or store a product of producer, thereby reducing inventory of finished product from manufacturers as well as increasing the carrying capacity of various wholesaler and distribution to stock and be rewarded for their individual effort accordingly (Perreant and McCarthy, 1993).*

Kotler and Armstrong (2010), define trade promotion as a sales promotion strategy used to persuade resellers to carry a brand, give it self-space, promote it in advertising and push it to consumers. Trade promotion comprises a growing category of manufacturer incentives directed to channel members such as wholesalers and retailers, rather than to final consumers. The promotion generally aims to influence resellers' sales and price by providing various and sometimes, complex inducement to enhance their stock carrying capacity. According to Doyle (2002) trade promotion is promotion undertaken by manufacturers to incentivize retailers and wholesalers. Nwielaghi (2013), views trade promotion as “an aspect of sales promotion which creates incentives for channel members to share with consumers and create sales for manufacturers merchandise; it is also called “dealer” or push strategy which could be targeted toward retailers, distributors, wholesalers, brokers or agents.

### **Empirical Literature**

This section presents past and current works on the subject matter in a tabular format as follows:

**Table 1:** Past and current works on the significance of Nigeria's foreign policy for the development of the West African sub-region.

Name of researcher (s)/years/ Title of study	Geographical and content scope covered	Data source and analytical tools employed	Findings/conclusion/Recommendation
Ibrahim (2019). Nigeria's consolidation of foreign policy directive in west Africa: some major challenges and prospects.	Nigeria: foreign policy directive, challenges and prospects.	Secondary sources- Descriptive Resources, Library Instruments	Findings show that issues involved are quite pervasive and problematic to be effective projection of the country's foreign policy in the sub-region. The paper concludes that Nigeria foreign policy even in the west African sub-region has been influenced by its African roots.
Omo-Ogbebor (2017) Nigerian foreign policy	ECOWAS: Foreign policy of Nigeria since 1999	Secondary sources- Content analysis technique was employed in the study	The study found that the evolving geopolitics has shown that foreign policy is an effective mechanism in projecting a country's image and policy Directive abroad in modern international relations system.
Lawal and Aluko (2016) Nigerian foreign policy: a fourth republic Diplomatic Escapade	Nigerian Foreign Policy: A fourth republic diplomatic escapade. Challenges facing Nigerian foreign policy in the fourth republic.	Secondary and content analysis material	The study identified some challenges of foreign policy in the fourth republic to include- a) Redeeming Nigeria image abroad after being bastered by the prorous military Dictator-Sani Abacha b) The problems posed by the conservative concentric circle by the Balewa administration referred to as Africa, centerpiece of Nigerian foreign policy. c) The issue of adequate funding for the ministry of foreign Affair. Suggestions were made in these areas.
Caleb and Danjuma (2018) Identify conflict as challenge to political stability in West Africa.	West Africa: Identify conflict, challenge, polity stability, The nexus. Nigeria and Coted' Ivoire	Divers source of data which include- documentary source (desk review) and government reports. Documentary materials used consist of secondary materials such as text books, journals, magazines, newspapers, government reports, internet, etc. Descriptive and narrative techniques were adopted for analysis. The research was based on a systematic analysis of content documentation.	The paper recommended states within the sub-region should ensure that they develop their immense human and materials research towards ensuring that they shape a national identity directed at the unification of their people and harnessing the vast resource enmeshed in their diversities.
Ujara and Ibietan Foreign policy in Nigeria's fourth republic: A critical analysis of some unresolved issues.	Nigeria: foreign policy fourth republic, unresolved republic issues.	Secondary source – books, journals, newspaper, internet, etc. content analysis technique was employed.	Findings revealed an urgent need for restructurizing and reformulation of Nigeria's foreign policy capture the internal and external dynamics of the Nigerian state in order to maintain respect and relevance in the internal system.

**Theoretical Framework: Theory of Classical Realism (Morgenthau 1999)**

Realist scholars hold the view that man's nature is vital in international policy. They hold that human is naturally sinful, egoistic, interest-oriented, aggressive and always seeking character. The theory depends on the opinion of Carr and Morgenthau and explains the international policy through human nature. Objective laws which dominate human nature must be understood to conceive international policy. As long as these laws are neglected, International Relations (IN) cannot be figured out. Realists accept states as rational actors which obey certain rules to attain their objectives. This theory acknowledges and underscores the nature of humans as the major underpin of the international relations. This background suits the purpose of this paper; hence, its adoption as the theoretical framework.

## **Methodology**

This study examined the significance of Nigeria's foreign policy for the development of the West African sub-region. Data was obtained from secondary materials including books, journals, periodicals, newspapers, and the internet. Content analysis was employed as its techniques for analysis. Two research questions were addressed as follows:

**Research Question one (1):** What is the role of Nigeria's foreign policy in the West African sub-region?

Nigerian foreign policy objective has enabled it to participate in various ECOWAS regional programs to give credence to the West African regional integration process. This has culminated the signing of number of ECOWAS laws, treaties, protocol agreement and convention to advance the economic development and economic growth of the region. In line with United Nations (UN) call for countries to get involved in regional co-operation to boost free trade, common market political stability, security of lives and properties, humanitarian and cultural operation and co-operation, the country active role enabled by its foreign policy initiative, is a direct response to accommodate the burden of its West African neighbors.

In the area of trade, the WTO (2017) observed that “significant progress has been made in privatization and price controls have been largely removed from most products, thereby opening most sectors for even competition between local and foreign companies.” These measures were part of a number of reforms between 2010 and 2016 in the area of trade policy by Nigeria. The reforms enabled the Nigeria customs service to ease customs procedures and documentation by deploying technology and process improvements. Nigeria's leading role is manifest in the ECOWAS agenda on trade. It was an agreement entered into by member states at the treaty of Lagos, in 1976. Thus, the ECOWAS agenda on trade was the main tool of the ECOWAS FTA which is the Economic Trade liberalization scheme (ETLS) aimed at liberalizing trade within the ECOWAS region. It aimed at addressing the ECOWAS treaty objectives which includes to:

- a) Eliminate customs duties and other charges of equivalent effect on imports and exports between member states.
- b) Eliminate quantitative and administrative restrictions on trade among members.

The treaty was adopted by ECOWAS in 1983 and entered into force in 1990 with the strong support of Ghana and Nigeria. A study by Umoh and Onye (2013), which investigated the growth implication of trade liberalization in twelve West African (WA) countries using time series data for the period 1970-2011 found that West African economies can vigorously pursue trade liberalization in order to enhance their growth performance, It recommended the reinforcing of domestic production capacity to commodity lines which overlap those of the trading partners, especially those of the OECD nations so as to gather the benefits drivable from liberal trade policy occasioned by foreign policy reforms.

**Research Question two (2):** To what extent has the Nigerian foreign policy enhanced the political stability of the West African sub-region?

Nigeria's leading role in the West African sub-region was also manifested in the Quest for political stability of the sub-region. The Nigeria foreign policy since returning to democratic role in 1999 witnessed pro-activeness towards ECOWAS sub-region with Obasanjo administration poised to reposition the nation as a Grant of Africa. Clearly the constitution outlined the foreign policy objective which projects a dynamic foreign policy for the country through the promotion of economic development, integration and unity, peace and security in West Africa, Africa and the world. The foreign policy enabled the government to ensure and promote democratic values in ECOWAS member states and beyond. The government ensured that the democratic rule became the norm by showing strong resistance for non-democratic regimes among ECOWAS member states. The government of Nigeria is known to have resisted regime changes inspired by military coups particularly in the case of Guinea, Niger, Burkina Faso, as well as the attempt in Principe and Sao Tome which was not an ECOWAS member state. The Obasanjo regime was so committed to the peaceful resolution of conflicts that it was able to restore confidence and credibility in West Africa through the pursuit of the philosophy of peace. To further contribute to the peace and stability of the sub-region, the Obasanjo administration advocated four broad based issue areas which Africa must address to achieve lasting peace in the continent as a whole. They include- redirecting the mind, redefining sovereignty, a redefinition of security, and institutionalization of democracy (Obasanjo, 1999).

Nigeria leadership role in attaining political stability in West Africa sub-region is also clearly evident in the peaceful resolution of the political crisis in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Togo which was made possible through various ECOWAS protocols. Applauding Nigeria's leading role on the continent as a whole and boosting the Nation's image on the international scene through such roles as contribution to peace and democratic growth of the sub-region, the study by Omo-ogbebor (2017) concludes by asserting that, "in the evolving geo-polities of the world, it is revealed that foreign policy is an effective mechanism in projecting a country's image and policy direction abroad in modern international relations system.

### **Findings**

This investigation revealed the following:

1. Nigeria's foreign policy objective has enabled it to participate in various ECOWAS regional programs to give credence to the West Africa regional integration process.
2. The nation's foreign policy initiative is a direct response to accommodate the burden of its West African neighbors. It has adhered to the (UN) United Nations call to boost free trade, common market, political stability, security of lives and property.
3. Reforms between 2010 and 2016 in the area of trade policy have been acknowledged by the WTO (2017) as ensuring significant progress in trade liberalization which has opened up most sectors for even competition between local and foreign companies.
4. The ECOWAS agenda on trade was an agreement entered in to by member states in a treaty of Lagos in 1975. This shows Nigeria's leading role in trade promotion.
5. West African economies can vigorously pursue trade liberalization in order to enhance growth performance.
6. Domestic production capacity of West African states when given the required boost and expansion is one of sure way of ensuring the countries in the region enjoy the benefits of trade liberalization.



7. The 1999 constitution clearly outlined the foreign policy objective which projects a dynamic foreign policy for Nigeria through the promotion of economic development, integration and unity, peace and security in West Africa, Africa and the world.
8. Through its foreign policy, the Obasanjo administration was able to restore confidence and credibility in West Africa via the pursuit of the philosophy of peace.
9. Nigeria's leading role in attaining political stability in the West African sub-region is also evident of its involvement in the peaceful resolution of the political crises in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Togo, Gambia, Principe and Sao Tome (non-member of ECOWAS).

### **Conclusion**

This paper examines the significance of Nigeria's foreign policy for the development of the West African sub-region. Data was obtained from secondary materials – books, journals, periodicals, newspapers and the internet. The analysis was by the technique of content analysis. Specifically, the study examined the significance of Nigerian foreign policy in trade promotion and political activity. The study underscores the need to acknowledge the fact that whatever role played by the country in West Africa must have been possible with the constitution at the background. Thus Nigeria's achievement since 1999 (Obasanjo development) was as a result of constitutional reforms that gave birth to the dynamic foreign policy. Against this background, it is worthy of mention that the period 1999, marked the turning point in Nigeria's image that was bastardized by the previous military administration particularly the Abacha region. During the period, Nigeria contributed to the growth and development of the sub-region through the Obasanjo peace philosophy which ensured political stability of the region. The same administration (Obasanjo) ensured adherence to the WTO (2017) trade liberalization Agenda which also promoted free trade. This paper submits unequivocally that Nigeria's foreign policy (particularly since 1999) has enhanced the political stability and trade promotion in the sub-region.

### **Suggestions**

Against the background of the findings and conclusion in this paper, the following suggestions has been advanced:

- 1) Nigeria should sustain the pursuit of the cardinal objectives of her foreign policy since 1999.
- 2) The boost free in trade, common market, political stability, should be sustained.
- 3) West African economies should take bold steps to ensure the vigorous pursuit of trade liberalization in order to enhance growth performance.
- 4) Domestic production capacity of West African states must be enhanced to ensure they reap the benefits of trade liberalization.
- 5) The confidence and credibility restored by the Obasanjo administration must be sustained through an enduring democracy.
- 6) Nigeria should continue to play a leading role in ensuring the political stability of the West African sub-region.

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