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Is Nigeria's claim of leadership role in Africa a myth or reality?

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Abstract

This study examined Nigeria's claim of leadership in Africa in order to find out if it is a myth or reality. Our design is an ex post factor descriptive and historical research. In order to analyze the data collected, we used content analysis approach. We adopted realism as our theoretical framework for the study. Our choice is based on the fact that realism remains one of the most important theories of international relations. Realism explains the vital need for power in international relations and sees power as the most needed "commodity" in the international arena. The study discovered among other things that Nigeria has yet to establish a sound economic, military, technological base for playing any effective leadership role in Africa. Based on the findings, the study made a lot of recommendations which include the need for the charity of Nigeria leaders to begin at home; minimization of corrupt practices by the leaders and curbing of religious violence.

Keywords: Nigeria, Leadership role, Africa, Myth, Reality, Constraints.

1. Introduction

The political leadership of every sovereign state makes foreign policies that are expected to protect its sovereignty, economy and people. Palmer and Perkins (2005: 640) explain that the foreign policy of any state is largely determined by factors such as geography, history, socio-political system, economic and military strength, relative power position, global environment and the policies of other states. Obi (2006:109) ^[36] posits that "international relations are the expression of foreign policy of nations". In his further assertion, he states that the success or failure of states depends to a large extent on their foreign policies. He argues that the fall of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and Iraq can be traced to the aggressive foreign policy of the two nations, while American's apparent greatness is largely due to her foreign policy of "containment".

It is remarkable that despite the number of phases through which the Nigerian foreign policy has passed since the attainment of independence in 1960, the conceptual basis underlying its formulation has scarcely changed. As Onwunwa (1988:1) ^[51] argued, in varying degrees, it has remained committed to the principles and interests which express our conviction that our destiny lies in our role in Africa and which necessitates a coordinated strategy for maintaining the African Milieu for the pursuit of those interests. Consequently, Fawole (2003:202) ^[21] contends that based on the history of colonization and other imperatives, Nigeria, from Sir Abubaka Tafawa Balewa to Obasanjo civilian regime, maintained Afro centric foreign policy thrust. This fact, according to Garba (1987:32) explains why successive Nigerian governments have made Africa the central focus of their foreign policy. This policy thrust has Africa as the Centre-piece of Nigeria foreign policy and the West Africa sub-region as her "activity area". The Implication of Afro-centrism, in the opinion of Fawole (2003:204) ^[21], is that the "well being of Nigerians and Nigerian economy, lie on a highly defended African continent with emphasis on the west African sub-region.

Nigeria has done, much and has continued to do more in the pursuit of her foreign policy objectives and Afro-centrism. In the spirit of Afro-centrism, Nigeria has intervened in several crises between African countries (Obi, 2006:237) ^[36]. According to Obi, Nigeria operated a policy of decolonization in southern African to Liberate African sister states, intervened in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory coast, and other African countries. She (Nigeria) is currently involved in peace keeping mission in Sudan, Somalia, Mal and Congo under the African Union (Au).

Notwithstanding the active role Nigeria played in the creation of the then Organization of African Unity in 1963, scholars of international relations like Dudley (1982:16) ^[16] Hositi (1983:28) Aluko (1981:40) ^[10] Sagah (1981:18) ^[57] Ogwu (1986:53) ^[28] Onwunwa (1988:4) ^[51]

among others are unanimous in branding Nigeria's foreign policy after independence as extremely pro-British- a more drift with events according to the dictates of the British Government, which relegated African affairs to the background in favour of Commonwealth affairs. As Ajayi (2004:66) ^[7] and Eybu (2005:18) in Ucluma (2006:39) noted, it was, no doubt, the exigencies of the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) which compelled the Nigerian Federal government to re-appraise its stand on African affairs and that was because it needed to win the support of African states or at least, be assured of their neutrality. The end of the war did not immediately usher in an era of significant policy moves to put Nigeria in the limelight of African politics, hence as Wayas (1979:46) observed:

From the civilian administration of Balewa to the military regime of Gowon, Nigeria played an unenviable role that is often interpreted, if not as outright leadership amnesias, then certainly as passivity.

As Akinyemi (1974:69) ^[9] and Onwunwa, (1988:6) ^[51] scholarly noted, not until the short-lived Balewa administration become positively conscious of the fact that Africa, with its great concentration of mineral resources, should have a tremendous bargaining power with the rest of the world, and so should be given an effective leadership. That Nigeria woke up from her slumber to start playing leadership position in Africa after her independence. This probably explains the reason why Nelson Mandela told Abdusalami Abubakar, the former Nigerian Head of State that African nations and indeed the entire world is waiting for Nigeria to come out of her dictatorial system to assume her position of leadership within the comity of nations. But does this mantle of effective leadership really fall on Nigeria? This question is necessary because according to Duru (2006) ^[20] in Onwunwa (1988:9) ^[51] it has become fashionable for Nigerian leaders to make such a claim which does not appear to be the result of an objective analysis of the implications of continental leadership or a relatively accurate estimate of the power relations existing among the different African states. Yet the more the policy of African Leadership is pursued, the more our human and material resources are unreservedly committed to it at the expense of urgent domestic needs. This made Agbo (2012:61) to assert that Nigerian foreign policy fails to provide enough protections to national economy, security and general well being of Nigerians. In view of the fore-going that this paper intends to ascertain if Nigeria's claim of leadership role in Africa is myth or reality.

2. Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to ascertain if Nigeria's claim of leadership role in Africa is myth or reality.

The specific objectives are:

1. To verify major elements of Nigeria's national power
2. To examine the impact of Afro Centric Foreign Policy of Nigeria on her claim of leadership role in Africa.
3. To do a critical analysis of Nigeria's role in Africa in order to ascertain if her leadership claim in Africa is a myth or reality.
4. To examine her major constraints towards this claim of leadership role in Africa.

2.1. Methodology

This work is predicated on historical research design/desktop research. In terms of data collection, we used extraction

(abstraction) from secondary data which entails teasing the research data from other forms of recorded and stored information (Obikeze 1990:18). Consequently, the researcher relied mainly on secondary sources of information especially by eminent scholars, institutional and official documents from Nigerian institute of international Affairs Lagos; Federal Ministry of foreign Affairs Abuja; Official gazettes of the African Union etc.

As a result, we used descriptive and historical analysis which seeks for an in-depth and insightful understanding of the social phenomenon being studied by indentifying and analyzing social forces and processes that brought it into being or shaped or directed its subsequent development and evolution to the present time. Therefore, given the ex post facto nature of this study, we adopted the one-short case study. This is because we are more concerned with discovering whether Nigeria's claim of leadership in Africa is actually a myth or reality.

In order to analyze the data collected, we used the content analysis approach which involves a systematic transformation of quantitative data to qualitative data with a view to situate patterns of events in their historical context and establish their subsequent development.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Realism is the theoretical framework for this study. As a political theory, realism can trace its intellectual roots to an ancient Greek historian (Thucydides) and his account of the Peoplennesian wars between Athens and Sparta-431-404 B.C- and especially the sixteenth century English Philosopher, Thomas Hobbes (Kegley Jnr, 2007:29). However, the three thinkers commonly invoked as realism's foremost proponents are: Thomas Hobbes, Jean- Jacques Rousseau and Hans Morgenthau (Williams, 2005:1). Realism became the dominant, if not sole approach to the subject of international relations with the growth in the academic study of the field of international relations, after the Second World War. It possessed a powerful and comprehensive explanation of international relations and conflict (Halliday, 1994:11). As Halliday further contends realism remains one of the most important theories of international relations, despite others that aim at hacking away at its power-hungry core, with no real success. In support of this view, James (2009:47) has opined that realism should not be equated to amoral tendencies, as indeed, Morgenthau, the grandee of realism has argued that the highest moral duty of the state is to do good for its citizens (James, 2009:47).

Realism or power theory of international relations was propounded by members of a school of thought known as realists to explain the conflict-ridden nature of the international society. Some of the prominent members of the realist school of thought include, H. Morgenthau, J. Spanner and G. Schwarzenegger. The realists ascribed a position of primary to sovereign state as an actor in international relations and view power politics as a constant feature of international relations. In the view of Spannier, quoted in Asogwa (1999:63) ^[13], "co-operation is possible in international politics but only when it serves the national interest defined in terms of power". Morgenthau in Ayah (1998), explains power as the motivation of nation-states in their relations with one another, pointing out that politics, whether at domestic or international level, is marked by a struggle for power. Schwarzenberger (1964:171), maintains that "power politics has been a recalling feature of international relations throughout the age".

The position of the realists is that, international society constitutes the activity area of nation-states; hence states require power and applications of power to remain afloat. To realist theorists, the state is the only effective basis of analysis in international relations because the other actors in international relations are mere components of the state or may be regarded as the environment within which the national interests of states. In the light of such prevailing circumstance at the international society, and in addition to the absence of a central authority, the survival of state in their external relations depends on her national power. Realism explains that vital need for power in international relations and sees power as the most need ‘commodity’ in the international arena. In the realist’s perceptions Might is always right in the international society, hence national interests of states should be defined in terms of power. This theory says also that international law, international moralism and international organizations processes cannot produce a peaceful and secured global society. Rather, it recommended a mechanism known as ‘balance of power’.

According to realist explanation, ‘balance of power’ is an approach or mechanism in international relations by which efforts are made by states to ensure that no one states achieve preponderance of power over the rest states, this approach maintains peace and order by ensuring that increase in the national power of one state is counter balanced by arrangement of alliances. Sola (2000:138) argue that ‘the mechanism of balance of power is responsible for global peace as currently obtained.

2.2.1. Tenets of the Theory

The major tenets of the realist theory of international relations include the following:

- **Centrality of State-Actors:** According to Bakut (2006:18), for the Realists, the only actors in international relations are states whose decision-making units operate to advance its interests. Thus, Realism views the state, which should answer to no higher political authority, as the most important actor on the world state (Kegley Jnr, 2007:29).
- **Definition of National Interest in Terms of Power:** Granted that national interest influences the behavior of states in international relations, in realist categorization, this national interest is defined in terms of power (Ofuebe and Anierobi, 2005:16) thus, in realist configurations, when the goals and interests of states conflict in international relations, they struggle to determine whose interest will prevail. The resolution rests frequently on who has the most power (Rourke, 1999:259).
- **Rationality of State Actors;** A major tenet of the realist theory of international relations is that all states are rational actors. In this regard, grant (2008:1), has posited that its premise (realism) is that all states are rational actors and their main goal is to attain power to survive.
- **Centrality of Power:** The realist theory of international relations is about the centrality of power, in international relations. Thus, there is one dominant way of analyzing relations between states for quite a long time and that is the realist conception of power (Echezona, 1993:141).

Realism has thus, come to enjoy a privileged position in the field of international relations. From a social scientific view point however, the most fundamental reasons is that it remains the only clearly articulated theoretical approach (often termed a ‘paradigm’ in the field of international relations (Moravcsik, 1992:1). Critics of realism although would still

disagree with this position, by contending that theoretical priority does not necessarily imply greater empirical power (Moravcsik, 1992:38).

It is within these Realist theoretical contexts that the study continues with the remainder of its tasks.

2.2.2. The Application of Realism to the Study

At independence in 1960, Nigeria demonstrated her new status by ending all unequally treaties she had with Great Britain which include Anglo-Nigerian Defenses pact, among others. Nigeria also declared her opposition to be a party to the cold war between the West under the United States of America and East led by the defunct Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). She rather joined the non-aligned movement. Nigeria is also a member of the United Nations for reasons of the protection of her sovereignty.

Nigerian foreign policy is Afro-centric. This is reflected in making Africa her ‘activity area’ and the proclamation of Africa as the centre peace of Nigerian foreign policy. This foreign policy thrust tantamount to leadership claim over the entire Africa. And such imperialist-like policies that form part of Nigerian national interests can only be explained in terms of national power.

Afro-centric policy declaration is also known as ‘Obasanjo Doctrine’ and compares favourably with Monroe Doctrine in purpose, in that it is intended to restrict and prevent further interference by outside powers in the affairs of Africa. According to Ayah (1998) it aims also at the preservation of the sovereignty of African states, the revival of those virtues for which Africans should be proud to be associated with and the restoration of the dignity of Africans and black world over.

Nigeria has successfully kept a leading role in African affairs by ensuring the establishment of organization of African Unity, now African Union as against United States of Africa as demanded by the like of Nkruma of blessed memory. African Union (Au) as loses body enables unity, free interactions without fear of domination, intimidation or absorption by any member state. The foreign policy thrust of ‘Africa as the centre-piece’ of Nigerian foreign policy enabled Nigeria to be in the fore-front in emancipation struggle of the apartheid era.

Nigeria has indeed applied ‘power theory’ to her advantage in international relations by master minding the establishment and functioning of Economic Community of West African Military wing known as ECOMOG are in line with the ‘balance of power’ and mechanism. The existence of such a military alliance of sub-regional level must have forestalled direct intervention of by and powerful nations in crisis involving countries of the sub-region of West African without request.

From the foregoing, one cannot but agree that Nigeria has been using power theory in her foreign policy practices through membership of organizations and alliances that promote her national power and her quest for continental leadership

2.2.3. Impact of Afro-Centric Foreign Policy of Nigeria in Her Claim of Leadership Role in Africa

Maduka (2004:164) ^[31] argues that Nigeria has continued to make enormous commitment in both human and material resources in conflict resolutions and peace-keeping operations across Africa. The records, according to him, form long list of cases. Some of the cases listed include; the Congo Crisis in 1960, Rwanda, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Uganda and Sudan.

Though Nigeria intervened in some of those conflicts/crises under auspices of ECOMOG (ECOWAS Monitoring Group) or UNO (United Nations Organization) joint operations, she has always taken the Lion-share in personnel contributions and funding. It should be noted that Nigeria's major justification for involvement in those conflicts has been the pursuit of her foreign policy thrust, which has Africa as the centre piece of her foreign policy.

Fawole (2003:227) ^[21] contends that the resources in human and material terms, which Nigeria has committed in African States since independence, are incalculable. Fawole reports that Nigeria spent more than sixty million dollars in cash and tangible gifts while playing support to MPLA Movement. She lost many of her citizens in both Liberia and Sierra Leone in addition to huge expenditure. She made during liberation era in Southern Africa and recorded successes in conflict resolutions, especially in Liberia and Sierra Leone. In fact, Nigerians lost sleepless nights and resources, but earned her special position in comity of nations.

An insight of Nigeria's resources commitment in Sierra Leone under President Olusegun Obasanjo was given by Asobie. Asobie (2005:33) ^[12] reports that Nigeria, in 2000 entered into a military co-operation agreement with the United States of America (USA). Under the Scheme, known as military Professional Resources Initiative (MPRI) USA. Undertook to send its military personnel to reactivate Nigeria's military institutions and help Nigeria to procure military aids. The same agreement provided for the USA government to assist Nigeria in retraining and re-equipping of Nigerian soldiers to enable them perform their peace-keeping role in Sierra Leone more efficiently and effectively. That Military pact was seen by Nigeria as useful in many regards particularly in giving Nigeria the military capability as a regional actor, to provide effective peace-keeping operations in African conflict areas, such as those of Sierra Leone and Congo. Besides, President Obasanjo's civilian regime needed to be secured and to stand out as a major force (outside South Africa) for stability in Africa. However, by that military pact, Nigeria has granted the US access to her military installations and defense secrets. The agreement allows the US military undue advantage over Nigeria military in event of any conflict in the future. We feel that the resource expended in that Nigeria-US military pact designed with the intent to save Sierra Leone and for the protection of African continent as a whole should have been used to address the poor condition of services in the Nigeria military-better and enhance remunerations, provision of training and education of Nigerian military personnel for role understanding/proficiency and infrastructural welfare provisions for members of the armed forces and their dependants.

Apart from the US military agreement with Nigeria, Obi (2006:233) ^[36] notes that in the same 2000, the sum of N1.8 billion was approved for contract to supply equipment in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo, while only the sum of N0.95 billion was proposed by the Federal Ministry of Finance for all the Nigerian Armed Forces. The Civilian regime of President Obasanjo had peace-keeper sent to many conflict nations including-Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Somalia, etc either as a member of UN, African Union (AU) or ECOWAS, all in the name of implementing her foreign policy of Africa.

While Nigeria under President Obasanjo civilian regime recorded successes in resolution of conflicts in Africa and generally in global security, it must be pointed out that those achievements were made at the expense of Nigerians who

share in either lose of their relations in those peace-keeping missions or national wealth. Political Watchdog, vol. 16, no 30 of 2007 reported that members of the Nigerian Armed Forces have been dying unreported. The journal added that those Nigerians sacrificed their lives for the defense of unity of other nations. The question one is forced to ask is; what becomes the fate of families of the bread winners that lost their lives in settling those in disputes in other nations?

The standard of living of Nigerians during the period under evaluation was quite low. According to the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) in 2004, Nigeria has less than 44 years life expectancy, consequent upon poverty and low standard of living. Nigeria's experience in maintaining Africa as the centre-piece of her foreign policy could be better channeled to infrastructural provision, tackling unemployment, crime, health-care, poverty and many other problems confronting Nigeria as a nation. Afro-centric foreign policy of Nigeria obviously impacts adversely on national economy. It makes much in-road into Nigeria resources by causing death of some of Nigerian military personnel and huge material resources that could serve alternative uses in national development.

2.2.4. The Major Elements of Nigeria's National Power

Scholars like Morgenthau (1975:18) ^[25] Okolo (1978:32), Gambari (1980:64) ^[23], Fawole (2003:29) ^[21], Onwunwa (1988:10) ^[51] Frankel (1963:41) Ogwu (1986:22) ^[28] among others argued that the role which any sovereign state plays in international politics is a function of the amount of power and influence which it wields on the international scene. Fawole (2003:29) ^[21] in particular pointed out that power and influence results from a number of factors: the geographical position and size of the state; the size and quality of its population; its reserve of national resources; its industrial and military capacity; the quality of the diplomacy and the degree of its national cohesion. We shall briefly examine these factors as they affect Nigeria.

2.2.5. Geographical Size

Nigeria's territorial expanse of 923, 773 sq.km is, by all standards, impressive, provided its security is maintained. It is a great advantage, although Charles and Said (1993:17) has argued in line with Hosit, (1983:95) that the role of a state in international politics is not necessarily a reflection of its geographical size, it cannot be denied that, in the final analysis, territorial vastness counts for something and that it has some bearing on a state's status. As Ogwu (1986:46) ^[28] argues, Nigeria's territorial vastness has some emotional and psychological appeal. Nwachukwu (1989:57) ^[34] seems to agree completely with Ogwu (1986:44) ^[28] when he posits that the prestige enjoyed by Nigeria in Africa and the world over is, to a certain extent, attributable to its geographical size as compared to that of the other states on the African continent.

Nigeria's population according to recent National population census is about 162 million. Nigeria is the most populous nation in Africa. Even though Anifomoshe and Enemu (1999:31) ^[55] argues that one should not consider a country to be very powerful because its population is large, but it is important to note that a country with a small population rarely plays an effective leadership role in international politics.

Morgenthau (1975) ^[25] proved this point when he showed the plight of France in 1940 with only 5 million men fit for military service whereas Germany, its enemy, had 15 million men at its disposal. It is, therefore, proper to take Nigeria's huge population into account in any assessment of its national

power because it represents an enormous reserve of power which, fortunately, is reasonably acceptable in many respects in international politics.

2.2.6. Natural Resources

Nigeria is blessed with mineral resources. For example, apart from the crude oil which has remained an invaluable asset, she also has about 32 other important minerals which makes her economy one of the most sought for within the African continent. As one of the world's largest exporters of crude oil, it is a source of supply of strategic significance, the control of which is a crucial stake in world politics, because most European states can still say, as did Georges Clemenceau of France during the first world war, that one drop of oil is worth one drop of their soldier's blood.

2.2.7. Military Capacity

Kolawole (2004) ^[7, 29] in Ogunsanwo (1986) ^[40] posits that since the civil war, Nigeria's military capacity has increased considerably. Similarly, Nwachukwu (1989:39) ^[34] despite the demobilization shortly after peace was restored, Nigeria's military strength stands at about 195, 000 and it is highly intimidating. As Okereke (2005:46) ^[41] noted, this human force is backed up with an immensely increased fire power. The size of Nigeria's army according to aduku (2006:27) ^[3] looks impressive when compared to that of the following neighbouring African states: Cameroon, 16, 000; Chad, 21, 000; Equatorial Guinea 2, 400; and Ghana 21, 000. other states like Libya and south Africa have an army of approximately 85, 000 respectively, but the latter (south Africa) has a substantial reserve force and an Air force which has a striking power that is, by African standard, second only to that of Egypt. All these elements of national power, which we have outlined, account for Nigeria's leadership pretensions in Africa.

2.2.8. Nigeria's Role in Africa

It is necessary to give a brief view of the role played by Nigeria in Africa because, as Morgenthau (1975) ^[25] remarked:

The character of a foreign policy can be ascertained only through the examination of the political acts performed.

For clarity and preciseness, we shall examine this under the following rubrics: Nigeria's contribution to the quest for political cooperation in Africa; its concern for peace in Africa; the liberation of Africa from colonial rule, the struggle against south Africa's apartheid policy and Nigeria's aids to other African states.

a. The Quest for Political Co-operation: Maduka (2004:19) ^[31] argued that Nigeria has never supported the idea of an African continental government. Rather she has always entertained fears regarding its feasibility. This was clearly demonstrated by late Sir Tafawa Belewa in his policy statement of October 1960. He made it clear that his government would give its support only to inter-state cooperation resulting from closer economic and cultural relations of African states. That statement notwithstanding, Balogun (2006:41) ^[14] noted, Nigeria contributed to the creation of the Organization of African Unity now African Union in 1963. And as Alhaji Inua Wada Nigeria's First Defence Minister remarked, the seven points of the principles of O.A.U as contained in the section 3 of the O.A.U. charter

were the brain child of Nigeria. The late Defence minister went forward to claim that the charter of the O.A.U was drafted by Dr. T Elias who was then Nigeria's Attorney-General. What this shows in the words of Ajayi (2000:101) ^[6] is the amount of influence which Nigeria exercised on the other African countries. Nigeria has helped to sustain peace in Africa through its numerous financial contributions as well as its diplomatic ingenuity.

Garba (1987:22) in agreement with Wayas (1979:17) pointed out that in 1982, the problem of Western Sahara paralyzed the 19th summit of the O.A.U because more than 18 member states which were in sympathy with Morocco, refused to attend in protest against the then Secretary-General's announcement of the admission of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic as the 51st member of the O.A.U. not until two years later when Nigeria recognized the SADR, did the representatives of the new Republic effectively take their seats in the organization. It was thereafter, that many supporters of Morocco decided to co-operate with the organization.

b. Nigeria's Efforts at Ensuring Peace in Africa

Onuorah (2001:9) in line with Olutoye's (1997:12) line of thought remarked that Nigeria's concern for peace in Africa was demonstrated in her maiden international engagement in the Congo (now Zaire) during that country's crisis in 1962. According to them, Nigeria sent troops to serve with the United Nation Forces and also sent 400 officers and men of the Nigeria Police Force to help restore peace and order. Nigeria bore its own part of the enormous cost of the operations and even contributed to the U.N bonds issued to help defray the debts accruing from the operations. Nigeria headed reconciliation movement of warring factions in Chad Republic and even wrote off N90 million which she spent in her peace keeping mission in Chad.

There can be no better demonstration of Nigeria's desire for peace in Africa than the decision of Ex-president Shagaria's government to resolve Nigeria's border dispute with the Republic of Cameroon through peaceful negotiation inspite of the later's provocations. Nigeria's role in the formation of ECOMOG and consequent restoration of peace in Liberia speaks volume. Recently, Nigeria sent 900 military officers to Mali and went ahead to contribute Five million dollars for Mali Liberation. Inter-state conflicts in Africa have continued, though, and Nigeria has been intimately connected with efforts at resolving crisis in Somalia; Rwanda; Libya; Sudan; coted'ivoire and Democratic Republic of Congo among others.

c. Nigeria and the Colonial Liberation of Africa

Scholars like Akinyemi (1974:18) ^[9], Shaw (1979:28) Obiozor (1985:16), Olu (2000:33) Umar (2000:10) among others have consistently argued that Nigeria has always emphasized its commitment to the total liberation of Africa from colonial domination. Umar (2000:10) asserted that concrete action towards achieving this was a bit long in coming. For instance, he argued when Rhodesia unilaterally declared its independence from Great Britain in 1965, Nigeria, unlike Tanzania, did not break diplomatic relations with Great Britain for imposing just "limited sanctions" on the Ian Smith Government. Obiozor (1985:106) observed that if that Lapses led Britain to think that Nigeria would support its installing a puppet government in Zimbabwe, the reaction of the then Obasanjo Administration left it in no doubt as to the commitment of Nigeria to colonial emancipation. As Umar

(2000:15) pointed out, Nigeria in 1979 rejected the Anglo-American peace proposals for Zimbabwe and later denounced the election that brought Bishop Abel Muzorewa to power. According to Akinyemi (1974:93)^[9], Nigeria argued that bishop Muzorewa's party-the African National Congress-was in alliance with Ian Smith's Rhodesian front, and that the decision of the British governments to go ahead with the elections when the rules for conducting them had not been accepted by all the parties concerned is to say the least ill-conceived, dictatorial and highly undemocratic. According to Olu (2000:66), Nigeria argued that it was an attempt to impose Bishop Muzorewa's government on the people of Zimbabwe.

As Garba (1987) posit, intensified diplomatic, financial and material support for the patriotic front parties of Jomo Kenyetta and Robert Mugabe, was made by Nigeria and when it was revealed that the shell BP (Nigeria) Limited had broken the oil embargo on Rhodesia, the then Obasanjo administration nationalized it. Olusanya and Akindele (1986) argued that Nigeria's action had the effect of making Britain with-hold its recognition of the Muzorewa's government.

Another colonial territory which engaged the attention of Nigeria was Anglola. Before the turning point in Portugal's colonial history in 1974, Offiong (1980:66) noted, Nigeria had championed the condemnation of Portuguese resistance to decolonization in Africa. Retired General Garba, then Nigeria's External Affairs Minister, recalled that when South Africa moved into Angola to forcibly put in power Jonas Savimbi of the UNITA who was in collusion with the racist regime, Nigeria, under the late Gen. Murtala Mohammed, surprised the world by resisting American pressure and recognizing the government of Augustino Neto of the MPLA. According to Oshodin (1997:91) and Gambanm (1980:18) that action gave Nigeria's foreign policy an unprecedented international prominence. Nigeria followed it up with a gift of N20 million cash, in addition to military hardware from rifles to MIGs and from supplies of clothing to composite rises which were sent in ever-increasing quantities.

Nigeria equally played a prominent role in Namibian independence. She gave South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) financial, material and moral support. Nigeria initiated action and supported U.N security council and the then O.A.U. in asking for the withdrawal of South Africa's administration from the territory and its granting of independence.

d. The Struggle against Apartheid

There is hardly any state in Africa, even in the world today that demonstrated its opposition to South Africa's racial policy by then more than Nigeria. According to Nwachukwu (1989:63)^[34], the recognition of that fact was demonstrated in the election of former Nigeria's representative at the United Nations, Late Major-General Joseph Garba, as the chairman of the U.N. Anti-apartheid committee.

Cenvenda (1980:33) in the same line of thought with Arikpo (1980:17) argued that South Africa was the only state in whose internal affairs Nigeria arrogates to itself the right to interfere. This according to Wayas (1979:19), Oyediran (1978:12) and Onwunwa (1988:7)^[51] was on the ground that the policy of apartheid pursued by the then Pretoria government constituted a threat to world peace.

Nigeria's attitude towards South Africa was non-fraternization with the Pretoria government then in power. Nigeria even sponsored several motions both at the United Nations and the then OAU calling for majority rule in South Africa. The then

Head of state, General Obasanjo criticized all the multi-national corporations which were contributing to the perpetuation of apartheid. In an address on the liquidation of apartheid, he declared: (1977:4)

In the pursuit of this objective, we shall not consider any sacrifices as too great or any weapon too mean to hasten the end of all oppression and injustice in South Africa and to ensure the total Liquidation of apartheid.

It is on record that in 1986, Nigeria Championed the boycott of the 13th Commonwealth Games in Scotland in protest against Britain's refusal to impose economic sanctions on Pretoria. In fact, Nigeria contributed immensely to the dismantlement of apartheid, eradication of colonialism, liberation movements, and conflict resolutions in Africa. She displayed her might and courage in restoring peace in Sierra-Leone Liberia, Chad, Somalia, and Rwanda in particular and other African nations in particular.

e. Aids

Garba (1991:81) asserted that from the sustained financial and material assistance to African Liberation movements, Nigeria has given all kinds of Aid to many African countries which have experienced one type of disaster or another. In 1980s, African states benefited from what Onwunwa (1988:11)^[51] called Nigeria's "Donatus principle" which included the following; The Republic of Cameroon which was dispatched food and other materials immediately after the Lake Nyos disaster; the Equatorial Guinea which was given vehicles and other equipment; the drought-stricken cape Verde and Namibia which were sent food (the latter, for its refuge in Angola) and Burkina Faso which received a donation of 40 light trucks.

To complement this gesture of random aids, the then Babangida administration created a Technical Aid Corps Scheme (TACS), under which Nigeria professionals in various discipline are sent to work in any African country that needs them, at no cost to the recipient. Apart from that, the human and material losses which Nigeria suffered during the Liberian crises amounted to about 9 billion dollars; Chad 6 Billion dollars; mal 8 million dollars etc.

3. Constraints to Nigeria's Leadership Attempt in Africa: An Analysis

1) The Nature and Characteristics of Conflict in Africa:

African conflicts are spread all over the continent and there are no regions without conflict. As Sani (2014:13) asserts, the nature of African conflicts creates a big problem for Nigeria. The characteristic and the nature of conflicts in Africa require special attention as well as military requirements. According to Ngugbu (2013:18), conflicts in Africa are intra state; international, transnational, inter-state or a mixture and external. Players traditionally try to influence areas of interest and regional organizations as well as state aspirations for regional hegemony are setting the environment. Borders in Africa are in many cases artificial. Artificial borders can cause internal conflicts where two or more nations are living within one state. Artificial borders can likewise create both intrastate conflicts, interstate conflicts transnational conflicts, and international conflicts.

As Dersso (2012:47)^[19] noted, an effective conflict resolution mechanism, therefore, has to be capable of conducting operations in both civil wars, transnational and international conflicts. Nigeria is yet to develop such capabilities. She is

not capable of conducting peace support operations in a multi conflict scenario, with several parties with different interests as seen in Sudan, Rwanda, Somalia, Coted' ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Libya etc. As Sidibe (2012:27) pointed out, independence left many African countries weak, and with states characterized by social instability, lack of health services and education, and lack of security and widespread kleptomama, an extensive number of military coups and poverty. Best (2009:42) ^[15] argues that and collapsing states are characterized by loss of state, control over the political and economic space and the collapse often takes place in a cyclic downfall which can be diverted when nations are in crisis. Nigeria do not have effective peace support that is capable of providing or assisting the buildup of the three basic services in a state: authority, institutions and security.

Cold wars among warring factions and proliferation of small arms, post-colonial era's spheres of influence of the former colonial powers who try to maintain the causes of conflict pose considerable constraints to Nigeria. Besides that, Africa is divided into five regions namely North Africa; West Africa; East Africa; Central Africa, and Southern Africa. Each of the regions has a regional organization traditionally established to evolve economic development, security and general development. All these tries to checkmate Nigeria's leadership attempt in Africa.

i. Administrative Constraints/Bureaucratic Gaps

Effective peacemaking and peace keeping initiatives require efficient management and bureaucratic structures in the field to provide strategic vision and support senior mission leadership terms. At present, however, Nigeria still lacks the institutional capacity and human resources to conduct effective peacemaking initiatives and complex peace operations in Africa.

As Agbode (2013:11) noted, Nigeria suffers from weak bureaucratic processes and management systems, poor information technologies; inadequate physical infrastructure; a lack of professional and motivated personnel; weak strategic initiative and inadequate sources of funds. At present, the Nigeria peace keeping operation remains severely under-funded. In fact, peacekeeping operation in Africa poses particular institutional challenge.

ii. Operational Efficacy of National Armies

Nigeria consistently struggles to marshal the requisite military personnel and range of military assets needed for complex peace operations, such as the situation in Somalia, Sudan, Mali, Liberia etc. among the assets in highest demand in difficult African theaters of war such as Mali, Sudan, Somalia etc are helicopters (utility and attack), armored personnel carriers; communication and intelligence equipment; unmanned aerial vehicles; night vision goggles and bottle tanks etc. Nigeria also lacks a sophisticated mortar radar system, which could have helped to reduce levels of civilian casualties in troubled African states.

As for military personnel, Nigeria's greatest deficits are specialists with niche skills including medicine, engineering and intelligence gathering. Okoknwo (2012:20) argues that to fill these gaps, Nigeria peace keepers have to rely on external donors to provide training, equipment directly to troop and sometimes money.

iii. The State of the Economy

The first problem that faces Nigeria in resolving conflicts in Africa as well as aspiring for leadership position is lack of

adequate finance. Have Nigeria been able to generate enough financial resources in implementing its intricate security management system? The most important factor on the future of peace keeping in Africa and leadership position in the continent is finance. The Nigeria government is quite aware of this potential problem despite her leadership claim. This affects adversely her strategic operation and even tactical aspects of peace operations it may wish to undertake.

Nigeria was described in early 70s as Black Africa's richest and most populous nation, with a gross national product of \$276 billion, which was greater than that of all the other Black African States put together. Agbode (2013:63) noted that it was the period of the oil boom. Even though the country's per capita income was below that of Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Ghana, etc., Nigeria was relatively rich. But we know that most of that wealth was squandered on irrational power play instead of its being invested in the expansion of the productive capacity of our economy. We all know also that what was left of it was drained dry by the Shagari and Babangida regimes which witnessed an unprecedented level of corruption in Nigeria's history.

In an attempt to grapple with the economic problem thus created, there was, as from 1983, a clamp-down on "illegal aliens." In effect, thousands of Africans who had sought refuge in Nigeria were expelled. They included some refugees of the Chadian civil war who had to move to Ghana where they were received, in keeping with Ghana's support for the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of citizens of its member-states, which include Nigeria. For about 16 months starting from April 1984, the Buhari administration closed Nigeria borders to the so-called illegal immigrants to the dismay of some ECOWAS member-states. Yet ECOWAS has been identified as one medium through which Nigeria intends to project its leadership image.

In any case, Nigeria's economy is still in a terribly bad state of rehabilitation, with the burden of a staggering internal and an external. This is not surprising because Nigeria accounts for half of the total external commercial debts owed by sub-Saharan Africa and, so, it has to bear a good part of the \$1 billion which is estimated to be the additional annual charges on rescheduling the debts.

Evidently, Nigeria's economic situation is now worse than in early 80s and 90s when one American dollar exchanged for 70 kobo as against the current exchange rate oscillating between N160 to N165 to the dollar. It is true that Nigeria's natural resources are still in good supply but it is deficient in industrial establishments for using them to foster rapid economic recovery. It is pertinent to emphasize that economic growth is an indispensable prerequisite of status in the international society. Nigeria has vast mineral deposits but does not have enough infrastructure for putting them into industrial and other uses, to remain important in international politics from the viewpoint of military strategy but its power vis-à-vis other states will not change much. By implication, Nigeria cannot lead other African states with a battered economy. Garba (1977:2) was so conscious of this fact that in an address at the University of Ibadan as far back as in February 1977, when Nigeria's economy was still buoyant, told his audience as follows:

"No nation can effectively pursue a dynamic and independent foreign policy with a weak and dependent economy.... Indeed, I would go as far as to declare that Nigeria's ability to succeed in her diplomatic endeavours will, to a large extent, depend on her economic strength."

Whether this fact should make Nigerian leaders unmindful of the contradiction between their words and their actions as far as her relationship with foreign nations especially France is concerned is another matter. As Director-General of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Prof. Bolaji Akinyemi, who later became Nigeria's External Affairs Minister, described France as Africa's enemy of the first order because of its support for the then apartheid regime in South Africa. In those days all the public declarations of the Nigerian Government condemn those European countries helping to sustain apartheid economically and diplomatically, including France. How does Nigeria expect to be taken seriously when it's economic relations then with the so-called No. 1 enemy of Africa is, paradoxically, on the increase? For example, there were only 15 French companies actively engaged in Nigeria in 1975. Today, notwithstanding the economic contretemps, they are about 130 French Companies in Nigeria. Obviously pleased with this development, A French consular official in Lagos once declared:

"Our establishment in this 'giant' of Africa is more far reaching than one can imagine. Our interests in West Africa may depend heavily on the consolidation or weakening of our position in Nigeria."

It is believed that the volume of trade between Nigeria and France exceeds that between Nigeria and all the francophone African countries put together. According to the observation of Roland Dumas in 1987, France and Nigeria have, in the space of one generation, become partners of prime importance to each other in the economic sphere. Nigeria is the second largest oil supplier to France and France is its biggest buyer of crude oil. As far as investment in Nigeria is concerned, France ranks second only to Great Britain.

African countries know that Nigeria has yet to establish a sound economic base for playing any effective leadership role. If Nigeria always succeeds in forming a diplomatic coalition of African states in troubled African nations, it is not because they see it as a leadership role but because they all agreed, in principle, on the need for peace in Africa and can afford, in practice, to take such symbolic measures in support of the principle as would not jeopardize their own national interest.

vi. The Level of Internal Cohesion and National Morale

The morale of the average Nigerian has been on the downward trend since the country's economy are being ruined by their leaders. Between October and December 1985, we debated and rejected the IMF loan and its conditionalities only to be committed by the Babangida administration to a N4.3b loan from the World Bank, which is largely responsible for the introduction of Nigeria's Structural Adjustment Programme in July 1986. Although it is appreciated that SAP is aimed at creating a better tomorrow after the suffering of today, the scourge of today is too much to bear till tomorrow. As a result of introduction of the programme, industries were closed down; several workers in both private and public sectors retrenched. Malnutrition once again reared its ugly head with its attendant health consequences, as prices of essential commodities soar. There was devaluation of Naira policy introduced by her leaders. Yet the much anticipated infusion of foreign investments which the devaluation of the Naira should attract did not seem to materialize. One has every reason to be apprehensive of the future because according to Prof. Onimode, "as long as there is FEM and

SAP and the debt service ratio hovers around 30 percent... there can be no change."

Many a Nigerian is not elated by the flattery that the success of the SAP, which earned President Babangida the 1987 International Strategic Studies Association Award, has done much "to prepare the foundation for a sound economic growth. The World Bank Report late in 1987 showed that its practical effects on gross domestic product, exports, savings, investment, unemployment and inflation were far below expectation. Suffering has engulfed the country since 1983; life is insecure. The future of the youths hang in the balance. Infact, as one observer remarked:

"So long as an army of unemployed youths, hungry and very angry, is allowed to exist in the country, so long will violence and chaos be a constant threat".

Is it any wonder, therefore, that the victims of the economic crisis do not understand why the Nigeria leadership should be so charitable abroad when its own house is not in order?

If the objective of the aids which Nigeria gives to other African countries is to impress the recipient States with its economic power, then it is a corruption of the policy of prestige because it does not reflect the true state of our economy. The beneficiaries know this. They assess Nigeria's leadership quality on how well it caters for its own people. If, on the other hand, the aids are meant to serve as a technique of influence, then the policy defaults in its optimism of the preferred behaviour of the recipients. Most African nations accepts aids from Nigeria but does not show commensurate gratitude for them because it perceives Nigeria as a country whose leaders do not know what they are doing with their nation's wealth. In fact, many African nations spurns at the leadership pretensions of Nigeria in Africa.

v. Religious Conflicts

Incidents of religious fanaticism are a common feature in Nigeria. But since the second Republic they have been assuming an alarming dimension. It is not so much the spate of disturbances provoked by the Maitatsine and its rival sects that sap internal cohesion as the controversy generated by Nigeria's membership of the Organization of the Islamic conference as well as the recent Boko Haram heartless destruction of lives and properties of Nigerians. Babangida administration in 1987 dragged Nigeria into membership of OIC. The suspicion is strong in Christian communities that it is a step towards making Nigeria an Islamic state. This suspicion was not even removed by the setting up in June 1987 of a 24-member Advisory Council on Religious Affairs which is expected to "provide a permanent forum for mutual interaction among the various religious groups" and to serve as a means of fostering harmony. What buttresses this fact is the withdrawal from the Council of a Christian member, former Ambassador Tanko Yusuf, on the ground that certain utterances of some Muslim members of the Council confirmed the fear that some people were bent on making Nigeria an Islamic country. The activities of Boko Haram sects seem to confirm such fear. This particular religious conflict knocks Nigeria out from playing an effective leadership role in Africa. This is unfortunate because one of the basic requirements for achieving foreign policy goals is that the state concerned must have a supportive domestic environment. We lack such in Nigeria today because of activities of Boko Haram Insurgents.

vi. The Level of Nigeria's Military Power

The importance of a formidable military force to a continental leader or aspirant cannot be over-estimated. Singer (2009:13) rightly pointed out, the scarcest commodity in international relations is security, because the gross inadequacy of ethical, political, (and we might add, legal) restraints make violence accepted and anticipated. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary that a policy of regional leadership should be backed up with a military force that is capable not only of safeguarding national security but also of serving as an effective prop to diplomacy. This is so because as long as force remains the final arbiter of rivalries among nations, the comparative strengths of military establishments will continue to set limits to actions in foreign affairs.

We have already observed that in relation to many African states, Nigeria has a military might that is impressive but whether it can place Nigeria at the peak of the hierarchy of power in Africa is quite another matter. Leadership in the international political context is not just leading a diplomatic coalition which African countries readily constitute on issues pertaining to the continent's trouble states policy. It is much more than that. It has to do with the capacity of achieving a desired goal by the use of military force when diplomacy fails. Generally speaking, diplomacy has so far failed in the struggle to ensure peace in Africa. African States do not have any alternative to the use of force. Has Nigeria, therefore, the military capacity to lead the other African countries to a successful war against African nations that are always at internal war? No. in the words of Gordon Idang: (2003:47).

“Nigeria and other independent African States are likely to face an indefinite period of frustration in their relations with South Africa because militarily South Africa has the best equipped and disciplined Army, Navy and Air Force on the African continent and it is doubtful whether even the combined forces of independent African States can match this fighting power.”

In any case, it is not comforting to assert that Nigeria depends greatly on external suppliers for almost all its military vehicles and hardware because such dependence is a source of weakness. If, as Gen. Babangida felt in 1985, Nigeria's military responsibilities in the West African sub-region in particular and in Africa as a whole, will continue to grow, then Nigeria must develop its defence industry to the extent of being able to manufacture most of its military needs in equipment. The Nigerian Defence Industrial Corporation which was established in 1964 produces only light arms, ammunition, explosives and spare parts, and although since 1981 Nigeria has been licensed to manufacture armored personnel carriers and transport vehicles, the plant set up in Bauchi has not taken shape because of lack of funds.

Now this question of low level of national morale which weakens our national power. “Military power”, as Macridis (1999:14) noted, “is like the fist whose force depends on the health and vitality of the body politic and the whole society; troops are an important determinant of a successful foreign policy but without other foundations, they will not suffice.” One of such foundations is national morale which is deplorably low in Nigeria for reasons which we have already discussed. Indeed, the spirit of many Nigerians may be willing to embrace any leadership role Nigeria can play in Africa but their flesh is certainly too weak to give such a policy the desired support.

vii. The Dependence Syndrome in Africa

African states are among the third world countries which are characterized by a high rate of illiteracy, a high population growth, and shortage of capital, low agricultural and industrial productivity and other traits of under-development. Their most urgent need is the capital for a rapid economic growth.

Invariably, African States depend on the advanced nations of the world for both the capital and the model of development. They borrow money from international financial consortia or from their erstwhile colonial masters. Then begins the loss of their independence of action as the creditors are assured handsome rewards for their loan by way of profits as well as of participation in the formulation of the economic policies of the states concerned. One should not be surprised to learn that most of the Nigerian Budgets had to be endorsed by the World Bank before it was broadcast to the Nigerian public. This has been the practice from Tafawa Belewa regime to this present GoodLuck Jonathan regime.

Apart from the area of economy, African States also depend on foreign powers for ensuring their security. This is why France, for example, has military base in a number of francophone African states. Most of her military hardware are imported, all things considered, therefore, African countries, including Nigeria, are controlled in their policies and actions by powers outside the continent. In fact, the involvement of foreign powers like the United States of America, the defunct Soviet Union, France and Great Britain is indispensable to the settlement of most, if not all, the problems confronting Africa. Because by the instrumentality of financial and military aid, they control the economic and political lifeline of African States. It stands to reason, therefore, that the other African States cannot accept Nigeria's leadership because they, like Nigeria, for now depend on foreign powers for survival-and he who pays the piper dictates the tune.

4. Conclusion

Nigeria right from independence has not been blessed with good leaders. Starting from Belewa, Nigeria's first prime minister down to the current president GoodLuck Ebele Jonathan, the story is the same. We have produced wasteful, corrupt and inept leaders who lack the vision and political will to lead the country successfully. Leaders in our first Republic and military Era institutionalized corruption stealing, wasteful culture. Nigeria leaders in second and Third Republics were even worse than those before them. They siphoned, looted our National treasury and milked our Nation dry. All of them have displayed kindergarten administrative behaviour.

They have failed to curb internal local violence in their country yet they aspire to lead other African countries but forgot that charity begins at home. The culture of impunity which is continuing to be prevalent and difficult to overcome by Nigeria leaders is a serious shortcoming of her pretentious claim of leadership role in Africa. Due to lack of political will and inability of Nigeria leaders to curb religious violence in the country their efforts to assume leadership role in Africa have largely faltered to date despite the claim of her leaders to outside world.

Even at the time of the oil boom, experts did stress that Nigeria would not be able to dominate the affairs of the continent either politically or militarily because she does not possess leaders to assume such big role. Additionally, it has not been possible for Nigerian leaders to create at home the basis for national cohesion and the reign of social harmony in order to carry the people with them in their foreign policies.

Not until their charity begins at home and not until these wishes become horses can Nigeria qualify to take up the challenge of leadership in Africa. In the meantime, our leadership will do by minimizing corrupt practices and to commit our resources to over pressing domestic needs instead of deceiving Nigerians with their psycudo pursuit of leadership role in Africa.

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