

## Multilateralism, Foreign Policy, and National Interests of States: A case Study of Nigeria

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### Abstract

Great powers within the global system are deemed to be financially and militarily powerful to stand behind the multilateral institutions as sentinel and use such as a tool of achieving national interests. In this case, most researchers have toed such a line of reasoning while sidelining the role regional powers could also play in multilateral intuitions at regional and sub-regional levels. The current research, therefore, queries the role of regional hegemony in the employment of multilateral institutions in achieving foreign policy goals. It seeks to provide basic elements underlining the involvement of Nigeria in international organizations. As Nigeria conducts most of its external relations through multilateral diplomacy, it is imperative to provide a conceptual basis upon which such a role can be defined. In doing this we present the contemporary case study of Nigeria's involvement in Mail to buttress our claim. The article relies on the theoretical precept of Regional Security Complex which emphasizes the role of state actors in the multilateral institutions to stem the tides of regional insecurity. In addition, the study uses newspapers, textbooks, speeches, archival records, articles in journals, and internet sources. In utilizing all these data sources, the use of latent content analysis and textual mining in interpreting and analyzing the data is upheld. Thus, the research found that Nigeria needs to be more proactive and assertive in Africa's regional institutions in order to mitigate the insecurity issue in West Africa. The research, therefore, concludes that Nigeria, as the sole regional power in West Africa, needs to act fast to prevent the total collapse of security architecture in West Africa and the Sahel.

Keywords: **Multilateralism, Foreign Policy, Regional power, Nigeria, West Africa**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Multilateralism is an instrument of diplomacy that helps in solving global problems by collective action of states in the international system. One of the basic principles of Nigeria's foreign policy is multilateralism (Chibundu, 2003:10; Adeniji, 2005:1). Nigeria's huge human and natural resources endowments have bestowed on her the need to play a leading role in the continent since independence. In terms of population, military clout, and economy, Nigeria stands out of all its contemporaries in Africa. Presently, it is the largest economy on the continent, followed by South Africa and Egypt. Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at present is 522 billion dollars, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates of 2014, while its population of 170 million constitutes 60% of West Africans.

Nigeria relates to the outside world through some means and methods. Some of these are unilateralism, bilateralism, plurilateralism, bandwagoning, and multilateralism. Nigeria got its independence in 1960 during the heyday of Cold War tension, which left no opportunity for the new state to claim neutrality in global political issues. It was in the midst of this global tension that the Nigerian government at the time resulted in multilateral diplomacy as the main hallmark of Nigerian foreign policy. As one would be expected, Nigeria at the time of gaining independence did not have much experience in the conduct of external relations. In this case, British official was invited by the first Nigerian Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (Snelling, January 19, 1959). It should be noted that Nigeria's invitation to British officials did not compromise the independent foreign policy of Nigeria as the first Prime Minister opposed the imposition and perpetuation of Western colonial presence in Africa. Thus, decolonization, racism, apartheid, and economic underdevelopment in Africa became major issues for the Nigerian government (Adoghome, 2008:8).

The position of Nigeria in Africa, resulting from human and natural resources endowment, made Nigeria pursue African-centred foreign policy. In this quest, the only viable option available was multilateral diplomacy. Therefore, the Commonwealth of Nations, the Nonaligned Movement, the United Nations (UN), and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) became the earliest medium with which Nigeria pursued its national and African interests. To properly delve into conceptual clarification therefore this article is divided into four sections. Section one discussed Nigeria's multilateral policy and legitimacy, while section two delved into the essence of Nigeria's multilateral diplomacy. Section three also assessed the basic features of Nigeria's multilateral diplomacy, and the last section dealt with Nigeria's multilateral involvement in the Malian case.

## 2. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1. Conceptual Clarifications: Foreign Policy, Multilateralism, and Regional Power

This section conceptualizes the concepts of multilateralism, foreign policy and regional power. Various definitions have been proposed and advanced by scholars in the field and it is not possible to exploit all of them. In sum, foreign policy is a form of action and response that is basically official in nature coming from the governmental circle and objectively carried out for a purpose toward a foreign country which is normally carried out by government officials residing either in the home country or in a foreign land which is an authentic representative of the government (Carlsneas & Guizzini, 2008:86-87). From the above, it can be inferred that foreign policy is a country's reaction to the external world, which is usually stated in the international system. Formulation of foreign policy is not everybody's business; it is a policy made from the government quarter, which is at best, represents the national objectives of the national government involved. In addition, foreign policymaking is an abode of experts who are specialists in the field of policymaking. This is so because a mishap in policy formulation and implementation may land a state into unwarranted conflict or war. An excellent example of this

scenario was the Vietnam War prosecuted by the US. Between 1965 and 1973, the US Army intervened to project its ideological standing in Vietnam. Incidentally, the guerilla warfare tactic employed by the Vietnamese rendered the US military supremacy useless. External and internal factors define the foreign policy process.

While multilateralism embodies all interactions that involve three or more transnational actors within the international system. Concepts like institution, order, regime and organization have been frequently employed to explain multilateralism. It needs to be stated here that not all of these concepts are necessarily multilateral in nature unless they incorporate elements that are inherent in the multilateral arrangement (Hasenclever et al., 1997:6). Multilateralism is therefore an act of coordinating policies collectively among three or more states with a view to achieving specific aims and objectives based on certain values, norms and principles (Ruggie, 1993:34). Multilateralism according to Ruggie (1993:33) is based on three principles. These principles are reciprocity, indivisibility, and nondiscrimination.

Regional power, in international relations parlance, is that type of states that have influence in the issues pertaining to their region (Nolte, 2010; Lemke, 2002). The definition of regional power becomes difficult because of the problem of identifying what constitutes power in global politics. There is also no consensus on how to measure the power capability of a state. What becomes unanimous agreement among scholars is the power preponderance of a state over other states (Bach, 2007; Adebajo, 2002). This power preponderance is based on the material capability that can be measured in terms of relative strength. Some of the material capabilities identified by scholars are economy, population, military strength, landmass, geographical location, and natural endowment. In the actual operationalization of what constitutes the power projection of regional power, some scholars also identify technological advancement and popular culture as important elements of power projection (Prys, 2010; Frazier & Stewart-Ingersoll, 2010). It should be said here that these two elements of power projection do not apply to the majority of regional powers, as they do not possess such intangible power. Most great powers and global hegemon possess these indispensable element of power most especially the US and Britain. It is, therefore, not necessarily a prerequisite for measuring regional powerhood (Nolte, 2010).

Thus, the most common element scholars employ to measure a state's regional power status is material in nature. In this case, some countries have been identified by scholars as belonging to this group of states (see Table 2.1). While some of these are regional powers, others are noted to perform hegemonic roles in their respective regions (Prys, 2010; Schirm, 2012). To label regional power as a hegemon, such regional power should have the capacity to transform its power potential into active policy formulation in its region (Prys, 2010). Such active formulation of policy must reflect in four ways. First, a regional power can be described as a hegemon in terms of its self-perception in the region, which will ultimately impel it to perform certain exceptional roles within the region. Second, a regional power must be recognized, at least by few, within the regional space as the leader to call upon when the need arises. Three, the regional powers should be able to provide public goods within the region for other regional members. Lastly, a regional power should project a value and preference within its own region.

## **2.2. Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT)**

The RSCT is a form of subaltern security discussion in the global security architecture. During the Cold War global system, the global structure was the predominant approach adopted in security studies (Ayoob, 1991:259). As a sub-system, the region has become a useful mechanism in defining contemporary international security, which is seen as a step towards achieving global peace and security. The importance of regions as the basic unit of security analysis appeared in the 1970s when some states were coerced into the Cold War rivalries between the two superpowers. The only unified mechanism adopted then was a non-

aligned movement, which most developing countries adopted in resisting the Cold War influence (Ayoob, 1995).

Thus, some regional organizations were formed in the heydays of Cold War, which tried to curb the incidence of local rivalries within a certain region. ASEAN, OAU, ECOWAS, and the Organization of American States (OAS) were formed during this period. The focus of RSCT is that states who share the same borders are normally locked in a security dilemma. In terms of definition, RSCT is regarded as a situation whereby "local sets of states exist whose major security perceptions and concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national security perceptions cannot realistically be considered apart from one another" (Buzan, 1986: 8). The theory posits that the security of states within a region or sub-region is defined by the geographical contiguity. It maintains that the security and safety of each state within a region cannot be isolated from the happenings in the neighboring states. The focus of the theory, therefore, rests on the basic assumption of the need to ensure that the regional security is collectively pursued by states that make a regional security complex. There are basic features defining the RSCT. These are anarchy, geographical proximity, interdependence and rivalry, and independence (Lake and Morgan, 1997:11). These are elaborated more below.

The RSCT is defined in terms of anarchy, which pervades the sub-regional political structure of the region (Adler & Barnnet, 1996:65). The states that make up the regional system are locked up into regional security, which they cannot extricate from. In this process of anarchy, it may be possible to contrive a regional mechanism to address such a security complex, which may be "standard or centered" (Buzan, 1986). Regional security complex is standard when the region is bipolar or multipolar in nature while the centred regional security is a unipolar system. The conception of RSCT is that regions are anarchical in nature, characterized by rivalries among contiguous states. RSCT also relies on the geographical proximity of states within a certain region (Buzan, 1986). It posits that states within a certain geographical setting with shared boundaries are inextricably locked together in terms of security. The position is that for the theory to hold, two or more states must share geographical proximity which may makes it difficult for each other to escape from the security threat of the adjacent states (Nwokedi, 1985:198). RSCT is also characterized by interdependence and rivalry among the constituted states. The regional arrangement renders the need for interdependence in some areas inevitable, while in some cases, states may engage in rivalries in terms of dominating the regional complex. According to Buzan (2003) "the nature of security interdependence, national threat perceptions, and quest for autonomy are some of the crucial factors affecting the prospect for collaboration within regional security complexes".

The last characteristic of RSCT is the perceived independence from global structure (Lake & Morgan, 1997). RSCT evolves as a durable approach in achieving global security. This is because the region perceives itself as capable of maintaining its security, and it is regarded as such. According to the theory, the region tries to maintain its independence by evolving a regional mechanism to prevent external penetration into the region (Ayoob, 1991:267). This is particularly so during the heyday of colonialism, where regions evolve mechanisms to promote decolonization. The formation of pan-Africanism and, subsequently, OAU can be regarded as a prime example of this scenario. At present, eleven regional security complexes are identified as constituting the basic security approach in the international system (Frazier & Stewart-Ingersoll, 2010:10). It needs to be stressed here that the regional security complex has three principal sources of threat. They are intra-regional rivalry, intra-state threat, and extra-territorial threat.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Nigeria's Multilateral Policy and Legitimacy

The concept of legitimacy has rarely been assessed vis-à-vis Nigeria's multilateral policy. What the concept really portends in relation to Nigeria's foreign intervention is shrouded in confusion. Some scholars of internationalist orientations assert that the intervention of Nigeria abroad is legitimate if it is sanctioned by the UN or other regional bodies (Okeke, 2007:5). Others are of the view that the Nigeria's foreign adventure needs to be legitimated from domestic political machinery. In terms of domestic legitimacy, Adeniji (2005:1) states:

As far as Nigeria is concerned, the relevance of the UN has never been in doubt. The seemingly high profile of the global body in the conduct of the country's diplomacy is premised on the principle of multilateralism to which the Nigerian state has historically attached great importance.

This wake-up call on Nigeria's legitimacy in continental multilateral organization was evoked to argue against Nigeria's apathy to the US's bombing of Libya in 1986. It was argued that Nigeria should have condemned the US's bombing of Libya insofar it contravened one of the objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy: Promotion of African unity. Although, Nigeria did not have the political and economic will to threaten the US but its condemnation of the bombing would have sent a wrong signal to the US when considering the political weight of Nigeria in the OAU. Also, in terms of external legitimacy of Nigeria's multilateral intervention, Article 42 of the UN Charter provides for the intervention of state in the internal affairs of other state for the sole purpose of restoring peace and security (Omach, 2000:76). In essence, both Nigerian Constitution and UN Charter are readily available to provide legitimacy for Nigeria's multilateral intervention in such instance.

However, the argument is that foreign intervention is burdensome and as such should receive the blessing of domestic forces before it is taken. Both endogenous and exogenous approbation of intervention may be seen as complementing each other, not conflicting. Thus, the legitimization of intervention abroad needs to consider some important variables which are peculiar to Nigerian position in the global system. Before delving into this, there is a need to explore briefly what the concept of legitimacy means in the practice of international relations. Legitimacy is an act of being lawful. It is a process by which an action is deemed right or legal. According to Inis Claude, legitimacy is a critical aspect of politics together with power; and that power which is central to politics needs legitimacy to proof its legality (Claude, 1966:368; 1994:193). Thus, the concept of legitimacy is so widespread that most states called upon it to justify their actions within the global system. In fact, within the domestic political milieu, legitimacy dichotomizes the military rule from civilian administration and the electorates in most cases provide the basis for democratic governance in a state. The concept of legitimacy is even sought after by the dictatorial regimes in order to provide legal basis for their action.

The above discussion, therefore, seems to equate legitimacy with the rule of law, and it is no wonder some states in global politics try as much as possible to invoke the concept to justify their intervention. Claude asserts that "rulers seek legitimacy not only to satisfy their consciences but also to buttress their position" (cited in Luck, 2002: 48). National leaders, regional hegemony, global hegemony, judiciary, and international institutions are the entities that do regularly employ the concept of legitimacy to justify their action, Nigeria is no exception.

Legitimizing of Nigerian actions in international organizations and global politics is provided for in the Nigerian Federal Constitution, which stipulates multilateralism as one of the basic principles of Nigeria's foreign policy, as quoted earlier. Since independence, various Nigerian governments have sought legitimacy for their foreign intervention through the constitution and National Assembly approval. But one thing that is missing here is the role of other domestic actors in legitimating Nigerian foreign adventurism. Since the foreign

intervention is financed by people's tax, other domestic actors like the press, public opinion, pressure groups, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) need to give their input in the process. In this case, legitimacy is sought through domestic consensus. Also, the international organization through which Nigeria acts must also have the legitimacy to intervene in the domestic affairs of a certain state. Such legitimacy needs to be provided by all parties making up the international organization. In this way it is assumed that mutual consensus among the parties concerned can provide legitimacy for the action of the international organization and the corollary of this is that any state that wishes to act through such organization is automatically considered having legitimacy. The prominent illustration in this scenario was the intervention of Nigeria in Mali in 2013. The legitimacy to intervene was provided by both Nigerian National Assembly and members of ECOWAS (Nwankwo, 2013:217). The Nigerian National Assembly and ECOWAS were of the view that the Tuareq strike in the northern Mali, if not immediately attended to, portends a significant threat to the security of the entire West African region.

However, it needs to be stated here that most times, the interest of a particular actor in certain issues may dictate the nature of legitimacy that will be sought. Legitimacy may be tacit in some cases especially if the actor concerned feels threatened by the event taking place in another state. In such a case, the concerned state may consider acting through multilateral organizations a delay tactic, and acting unilaterally in concert with friendly states may be a viable option. In such a circumstance, legitimacy is implied through the intervention of friendly countries. A prime example of such a case was the intervention of the US in the Gulf War in 1991 (Luck, 2002:59). Thus, the issue of legitimacy has to do with accountability and democratization of state action in global politics, which in turn provides the basis for intervention. This view may appear moralistic as it guides against the unwarranted intervention of the powerful against the weak. In the Nigerian case, the basis for intervention is examined internally by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, think tanks like the Nigeria Institute of International Affairs and National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies, National Assembly, National Assembly Committee on Foreign Affairs, and the President and his Cabinet (Ojo, 1983:65).

Externally, depending on the issue at hand, Nigeria legitimizes its foreign intervention mainly through the UN, OAU/AU, ECOWAS, and other multilateral institutions of which Nigeria is a member. Besides all these internal and external sources of legitimacy, national and international expediency may force a state like Nigeria to intervene in a foreign country. Sao Tome and Principe's intervention by Nigeria under President Olusegun Obasanjo is a prime example. The elected government of Sao Tome and Principe was overthrown by a military junta that was at an ECOWAS meeting in Abuja, Nigeria (Durotoye, 2014:27). Nigeria unilaterally issued a warning to the military regime to leave within 24 hours. It was such an ultimatum that forced the military regime to flee, and the civilian government to be reinstated.

Although Nigeria acted unilaterally in such a case and did not need any legitimacy to interfere in the issue but one needs to recognize the fact that it may appear that Nigeria acted unilaterally; it did not. It was part and parcel of ECOWAS Declaration that no government ever seize power by force will be recognized by the member states and such declaration in itself can be invoked to provide legitimacy for Nigeria's action in Sao Tome (Omach, 2000:79). Thus, the ECOWAS Declaration has provided the basis for Nigeria's intervention which was tantamount to multilateral diplomacy in disguise.

### **3.2. Essence of Multilateralism in Nigeria's Foreign Policy**

Whether Nigerian multilateral policy receives its legitimacy from external or internal sources remains a future intellectual debate. What is clear is that its multilateral policy has an important role to play in foreign policy making. Globally, states have resorted to multilateral policy for one reason or another. Nigeria, at the point of independence, realized the danger of

acting alone in the anarchical global environment without the support of friendly states. Given the state of Nigerian politics at the point of independence, it was natural that the state adopted multilateralism as one of the cardinal principles of Nigerian foreign policy (Chibundi, 2003:2). The question one should ask at this point is: What is the essence of multilateralism in Nigerian foreign policy?

The essence of multilateralism in Nigerian foreign policy could be grouped into the following: One, multilateral policy, as construed by various Nigerian leaders, has been regarded as a window of opportunity for economic development (Pogoson, 2011:47; Ojo, 1980:573). In the early years of Nigerian independence, the federal government could see the sign that a state could not be an island unto itself if economic advancement was to be accomplished within the space of time. It was the pressure of having to raise the standard of living at home and to make sure that the Nigerian economy is well integrated into the world economy that spurred the urge for multilateral undertakings. It was the need to align with financial and economic powerhouses like the US, Britain, the Soviet Union, Japan, and other developed countries in the IMF, GATT, and World Bank that necessitated the multilateral policy at the time of independence. Similarly, Nigeria also sees cooperating with other states in the multilateral organizations as a strategy to contain the threat of great powers, especially France, in global politics (Ojo, 1980:580). This prophetic assumption came to the fore during the Nigerian Civil War. Again, multilateralism is seen as a means to boost the image of Nigeria in the global society (Shaw, 1984:395). The consideration of Nigeria as the most important single element in African politics endeared the leaders to pursue multilateral policy in order to safeguard the interests of Africans anywhere in the globe. Second, security challenges have been seen as something that cannot be effectively addressed without the cooperation of other political entities in global politics.

Thus, the first attempt on the part of the Nigerian leader to achieve this noble objective was to join the UN in its effort to curb the state collapse in the Congo in the early days of independence in 1960. Nigeria was so embroiled in the Congolese debacle that the Prime Minister of Nigeria at the time questioned the degree at which the Congolese people was consulted before the declaration of independence by the colonial master. Balewa asserted that:

The recent tragic events in the Congo must be uppermost in all our minds...I frankly admit that there are many features of this seemingly intractable problem which remain obscure to me. I am in some doubt as to the exact manner in which the constitution granting independence to that country was drawn up by the colonial power...and as to the degree of consultation there was with the Congolese peoples themselves, and at what level that consultation was carried out (Balewa, 1960).

This is one of the instances of Nigerian leader's carefully-worded message that exemplifies their concern to African problems. Because the need to ensure the safety and security of the Congolese people was guaranteed, the Nigerian government was compelled to act through the UN. In sum, the factors of security and economy, as enumerated above, are regarded as the essence of Nigeria's multilateral policy.

### **3.3. Features of Nigeria's Multilateral Policy**

The practice of any policy by a state normally follows a certain pattern which may distinguish it from the practice of another state. This may be attributed to the peculiar characteristics of a state. The adoption and practice of Nigerian foreign policy has been consistent since independence and the pattern seems to remain the same over decades. As such, some features are identified which are peculiar to Nigeria's multilateral policy.

One of such features is leadership focus. Since independence in 1960 until 2015, various leaders of Nigeria have been exhibiting consistency in the policy of multilateralism, a consistency that is very rare in the domestic realm (Barika, 2014:54). What is remarkable about Nigeria is its consistent multilateral policy since independence. No Nigerian leader has abandoned multilateral policy in its 54 years of independence and the zeal is shown in global, regional and sub-regional multilateral institutions. Another feature is the recognition of institutional power by Nigerian government. Nigeria's 'manifest destiny' in Africa places it at the centre stage of African and global politics (Adebajo, 2003:66). In order to discharge its responsibility as a regional hegemon in Africa, Nigerian leaders recognize the role multilateral institutions can play to legitimate its position in Africa. In this quest, the advocacy for regional and sub-regional organizations has been central to Nigerian foreign policy since independence (Adebajo, 2003: 65). The mere recognition of the danger of acting alone in the continent might be responsible for Nigeria's multilateral zeal in the global political atmosphere.

Norms is also central to the Nigeria's multilateral policy. The norms of international politics endeared Nigeria to multilateral policy and since independent deviation has not been recorded. The most important feature of multilateral institutions is its normative principles which tend to control the behaviour of states in the international system. This approach seems to toe the liberal view in international politics. Nigeria, by independence, realized the danger inherent in colonialism, which Balewa was prepared to champion. It needs to be stressed that the idea of hasty decolonization of Africa did not occur to Nigeria under the Balewa government because he did not want the case of Congolese to repeat itself in Africa (Saliu, 2007:1). Rather, Nigeria opted for gradual decolonization of African territories based on the internal integration of the state. It thus may be wrong to assert that the first Nigerian Premier did not promote the decolonization of Africa; it advocated systematic and functional decolonization. Another cardinal normative principle of international organization that Nigeria found attractive during the heyday of independence is the equality of all member states of the UN. This golden theoretical principle did not only affect Nigeria's membership in the UN, it also dictated the direction of Nigeria's behaviours towards its neighbours (Adeniji, 2005:2). It was based on this principle that Nigeria severed Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact in 1962 as Nigeria did not want to set a bad precedence in Africa (Nwokedi, 1985:198). Such a Defence Pact might have propelled some other countries, especially the Francophone, to enter into a defense alliance with their erstwhile colonial master, a step that Nigerian leaders regarded as a threat to the African territorial integrity. It was also based on the principle of equality of member states that Nigeria denounced the testing of Atomic Bomb by France in the Sahara Desert in 1962 (Chibundi, 2003:3). The conviction of such a reaction was the idea that no state should be subservient to another as long as they are all member of the same international organizations, the UN, which preaches the normative principle of equality

Another normative principle is that of Atlantic Charter jointly declared by the US President, Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill which was later incorporated into the UN Charter in 1945. The Charter, which was drafted by the duo in 1941, declared that all colonial territories should be independent and no territories should be forcibly occupied outside the intent of the colonized people. Such a declaration was capitalized on by Nigeria through its decolonization campaign in Africa and other colonized territories in the world (Fafowora, 1997:52). Although it took decades before such agitation could be materialized but such normative principle provided a basis upon which Nigerian leaders reacted to colonization in Africa after independence.

Another component of Nigeria's multilateral policy is soft and high politics. The conduct of Nigerian multilateral policy is rest on the assumption of cooperation at both high and soft political level. Such high politics like war, peace, foreign affairs, defense, domestic security, and regional security have occupied the minds of policy formulators in Nigeria since independence (Barika, 2014:53). The idea is that for such sensitive issues to be resolved the



multilateral institutions could be a reliable mechanism that could be employed to suppress the incidence both in Africa and the globe. All the above features are important to give a preliminary guide to the direction of Nigeria's multilateral policy. It is, therefore, imperative at this juncture to provide a case study to buttress Nigeria's multilateral diplomacy since independence. The currency of Malian issue makes it a readily available case in our discussion.

### **3.4. Nigeria's Multilateral Peacekeeping in Mali**

The Nigerian multilateral peacekeeping efforts continued in Mali in 2012. The case of Mali is a complex one as the involvement of terrorist groups is glaring. According to This Day, the roles of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Al-Shabab, Tuareg Rebels Force and Ansar al-Din should not be underestimated in the Malian case (This Day, November 23, 2012). The Mali case became an issue in 2012 with the fall of Libya's leader, Colonel Gaddafi (Ireogbu, 2012). Most of these Tuareg rebel groups were part of forces that fought under Gaddafi in Libya. They fought to rescue Gaddafi from the Arab Springs that radiated nearly all the political landscape of the Arab world (Obayuwana, 2012). With the fall of Gaddafi, the weapons that were used in the revolution in Libya by the Tuareg were not surrendered. This gave them ample chance to use the weapons to launch attacks on Malian government. They declared separate region in the northern part of Mali which was imminent for the entire region. Because of the reluctance of the UN to intervene, Nigeria led ECOWAS forces into Mali to nip the war in the bud before it went out of hand (This Day, November 21, 2012).

With the intensity of AQIM onslaught in the northern Mali in 2012, it became increasingly clear to the Malian government in Bamako that they needed foreign assistance (This Day, November 23, 2012). It was based on this realistic assessment that the Bamako government requested Nigeria to lead ECOWAS troop into Mali in November, 2012 (Oyedele, 2012). Nigeria needed to debate this in the National Assembly before any response was made. Senator David Mark, the Senate President, discussed the issue with the senate members, after which there was unanimous agreement that Nigeria should intervene in Mali. Thus, \$34 million was approved in January 2013 for such operation and Nigeria led ECOWAS members into Mali (Adigbuo, 2013:18). Apart from regional approval, the UNSC Resolution 2071 of 2012 also authorized Nigeria to lead ECOWAS intervention in Mali (Adigbuo, 2013:17). During the intervention, the Nigerian president, Goodluck Jonathan, addressed the African Union (AU) at the Donors' Conference organised at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the AU Summit in Ethiopia (Adigbuo, 2013:17). The session identified raping, plundering, and assaults on the civilian as the most heinous crimes committed by AQIM all of which could not be controlled by the Malian government. Thus, Nigeria led ECOWAS into Mali with the approval of the UNSC and the AU in 2012 and subsequently brought the conflict to condition of relative peace (UNSC, 2012).

## **4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Foreign policy is a response of the state towards the external environment, which, of necessity, needs to take into cognizance the domestic and external imperatives. Nigeria's multilateral policy has failed to give proper attention to neighboring countries, as they are crucial in maintaining Nigeria's territorial integrity. Current events have shown the need to evolve a strategy involving all of Nigeria's neighbors in the same socio-economic union. In this way, multilateral policy should be re-engineered to accommodate the needs of the neighbors, and if this is satisfied, then the West African interest as a whole can be promoted. The idea of leaving one's backyard dirty and sweeping the distant yard needs to be avoided. The current Boko Haram situation is a living testimony that reinforces this proposal. It should be noted that the scourge of terrorism is a potent threat to Nigeria's security, and the failure to instantaneously put an end to it may further worsen the case.

Nigeria also lacks in the area of citizen diplomacy, which is expected to provide a policy compass for Nigeria's foreign relations. A country's foreign policy is expected to be in agreement with the welfare and security of the citizens. Nigeria as a nation does not give financial assistance to countries, which in turn may not yield any benefit to the country as a whole. For example, Nigeria wrote off the OAU debt of \$80 million when it was indebted to the multilateral financial institutions to the tune of \$33 billion in 1986. In this way, Nigeria's domestic realities do not really reflect the way it responds to financial issues at the multilateral level. Although this does not suggest that Nigeria should abandon its responsibilities in multilateral institutions but moderation is what is being advocated here. Foreign policy is not all about financial assistance alone. The country is expected to devise other means of assisting the needy countries in Africa, which will be in consonance with the goals and objectives of its national interest. Nigeria as a country also does not consider reciprocity before giving any form of assistance to states in the international system. Most of the assistance rendered through multilateral organizations to most African countries is untied. Most Western nations render assistance to other countries based on national interests. It is strange that most African countries assisted by the Nigerian government do not show any sign of appreciation. They become the staunch opposition of the Nigerian government in global and regional politics. This is particularly true of the Francophone West African countries. It needs to be stressed here also that these countries may have their reason for doing so, given the fact that they are independent entities with national goals and objectives. Thus, whatever may be their reason for such a response, there is a need to contrive alternative methods to dole out cash to needy African countries.

In addition, Nigeria's domestic economy is also very weak in relation to other regional powers in the global economic relations. A viable domestic economy is a panacea for progressive and independent foreign policy. The period of General Gowon, most especially, is regarded in Nigerian history as the most wasteful of all governments (see Table 6.2). Most of the wealth amassed due to the oil boom was squandered instead of laying a good foundation for the national economy. Agriculture was neglected, and oil became the principal source of government revenue. Thus, from the time of Gowon, the Nigerian economy was susceptible to the intricacies of international oil prices, which dictate, to a greater extent, fiscal policy. The government abandoned many projects that could not be executed because of the oil glut that occasionally arose. It is conventional in international relations that a state needs to build a strong economy before projecting a viable and independent foreign policy and to do otherwise is to subject the foreign policy to the dictate of the major powers. It is assumed that an economically strong nation can pursue externally oriented goals and objectives with utmost certainty. This condition still prevails in Nigeria till today where government cannot pursue foreign policy goal with utmost certainty because of the fragile domestic economy and politics.

It is, therefore, imperative at this point that the Nigerian government should strive to build its economy and make its political environment viable before launching aggressive foreign policy to the detriment of its citizens. After all, countries like the U.S., Western Europe, Canada, Japan and some other Eastern Asian countries yielded to domestic pressure before projecting meaningful foreign policy. This is particularly true of the U.S. in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, during the period of President James Monroe. Monroe's government went into isolation to compete favorably in the international environment. Japan also did the same thing from the times of Tokugawa Iyeyasu, Oda Nobunaga, and Toyotomi Hideyoshi until the time of the Meiji Restoration. It is, therefore, true to assert that before a nation can project itself externally, it needs a virile economy and a stable internal political climate to do so. The Nigerian government should borrow a leaf from this universal political ethos.

The adoption of multilateral policy in Nigeria's external relations has been consistent since independence. As shown in the last section of the article, Nigeria, as the sole regional power in the West African region, has been championing the regional order through multilateral

diplomacy. It has been trying to ensure that it legitimizes its intervention in the internal affairs of other countries in the region through multilateral organizations. Nigeria does abhor unilateral action in West Africa so as to avoid mutual suspicion from other states within the West African region. The conceptual clarification above also reveals that Nigeria also shows its regional power status throughout the continent. The dismantling of the apartheid regime in South Africa and Angola's independence are cases in point. Despite Nigeria's active multilateral diplomacy, the presence condition in the Sahel and West Africa as a whole may need Nigeria's proactive policy that will eventually remove the security threat from the region. Boko Haram and AQIM insurgence may prove intransigent to multilateral action. If this is true, then Nigeria needs to act fast, possibly without any need for legitimacy, before the insurgent groups align themselves strictly with terror groups in the Middle East.

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