

# **Trends in the Nigerian Foreign Policy from 1960 to 2015: An Overview**

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## **Abstract**

Foreign policy is inextricably linked to domestic policy. Nigeria's foreign policy cannot be considered in isolation from its domestic issues such as the state of the economy and other social factors within the country. However, from independence the Nigeria's foreign policy has witness changes in circumstances, situations, styles of leadership, character of the leadership and experiences over time. However, the basic principles guiding Nigeria's foreign policy have been consistent. This paper overviews the trends and historical antecedence of the Nigerian foreign policy from independence to date.

## **Introduction**

Nigeria is often described as the "Giant of Africa" and its foreign policy is best understood and assessed in the context of its regional and continental ambitions which have been demonstrated over the course of the country's 52 years' history. Nigeria's leaders of all political persuasions have come to see their country as the natural leader of African continent. This aspiration to continental leadership manifests since independence in 1960, and is central to understanding some of the principal features of Nigeria's foreign policy. It is clear from a historical examination of Nigeria's foreign policy relations that its hegemonic ambition has not, however, necessary led to relevant, coherent and effective policies. Therefore, foreign policy is a strategic planned course of actions developed by the decision makers of a country, aimed at manipulating the international communities in order to gain specific national interest (Emakpor;2005).

The evolution of Nigeria's foreign policy can be divided into two periods; the pre-colonial period and the post-independence period. The pre-colonial period was when the entity Nigeria came into existence, from 1914-1960. This period covers the European colonial occupation of Nigeria by Britain. While the post-independence period covers the period of Nigeria's independence from British rule. i.e from 1<sup>st</sup> October 1960 to date. However, this study focuses on the post-independence period because; that was when Nigeria as a sovereign state really had an interest in an International environment. According to Izzah (1991:9), "Until (October 1, 1960), technically, Nigeria did not have any foreign policy as it was not a sovereign state".

### **Theoretical Framework**

The adoption of the decision making theory for this study is because of the nature of the work. The decision making approach was made popular by Richard Snyder who introduced it into political analysis. Snyder's approach deals with dynamic circumstances. Unlike the systems and structural functionalist approaches which are static in analyzing phenomena. The decision making approach is concerned with the condition, time, change and sequences of behavioral events. Therefore, the decision making approach examines the cause of changes, degree of changes, what influences change with regards to the time of change, type of change, condition and the manifestations of the changes that occurs. Therefore, the approach considers the individuals making decisions, their perspectives, and the need to put the decision made into the context of the exigency of their time in the process of analyzing the reasons for making certain decisions. Snyder's decision making approach focuses on the three main areas. The internal setting, the external setting and the decision making process itself. By internal setting Snyder implies the society to benefit from the decision made. By external setting he implies the action, and the reactions from other states. While the decision making process deals with the competence of the decision makers, the information available to them and the level of motivation given to them to perform effectively. Therefore, this approach is adopted because, in analyzing Nigeria's foreign policy, the circumstances within which the state emerged should be considered. The exigencies of the time vis-à-vis, the experience or in-experience of policy makers at the time, the domestic and external conditions at independence and the quality and quantity of information available to the policy makers determine largely the decision that were taken at independence. This also determines the level of consistency, continuity or changes, depending on the similarity or otherwise of the various periods under focus (Varma: 2001).

### **Background to Nigerian's Foreign Policy**

Nigeria became independence in October 1, 1960 but until then she had no foreign policy, as her interest as a nation was tied to that of Britain which was then the colonial government administering the entity called Nigeria. However, at independence, Nigeria became a federation made up of three regions namely: Northern, Western and Eastern regions. Because Nigeria is endowed with the

human and natural resources, Izah noted that it was expected that she will play a significant role in international affairs, especially in African affairs. But as is common with the newly independence states, Nigeria at independence was faced with the problem of domestic unity; disagreement among the political leadership of the first republic; a weak center and strong regions and the attendant difficulty in harmonizing the foreign policy of the two parties that made up the government in the first republic. All these problems and others were the major challenges that really undermined the participation of Nigeria in the international system. This was what led to the passive role played by Nigeria in the international system in the first six years after independence (Joseph; 1995 cited in Cyril et al, 2007).

After the first and the second coups in January 1966 respectively, Nigeria's domestic problems were aggravated by the Eastern region secessionist ambition. The active role played at this period was to canvass for support from other countries to ensure the unity of the country as one. However, with the successful execution of the civil war and the subsequent oil boom; Nigeria became an active participant in both African and world affairs (Ajayi; 1975 cited in Cyril et al, 2007).

### **Nigeria's Foreign Policy Objectives**

Among the elements of foreign policy are the objectives that a country seeks to achieve in her relation with other countries and the means for achieving such particular goal and objectives. However, the objectives of a nation's foreign policy are many and can be divided into three viz: Short range, Middle range and the Long range objectives. They represent the composite desires and wishes of the articulate group within a state that are interested in some phase of international relations. (Macridis, 1976).

Nigeria, since political independence in 1960 persistently retained as part of the primary objectives of her foreign policy the critical questions of independence, national self-determination, national unity, national security, territorial integrity, economic prosperity and advancement of freedom and justice for the black race in Africa and in the Diaspora. These were the main constituents of what came to be known as Nigeria's national interest precepts that were used to mobilized Nigerians and other foreign nationals in the arena of international politics. These precepts also formed the bases and genesis of Nigeria's participation in the United Nations System, the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the joining of the Non Aligned Movement and her commitment towards the decolonization struggle in Africa.

At the end of the civil war in 1970, the Second National Development Plan (1970-74) stated Nigeria's Foreign Policy objectives as follows:

- The promotion and protection of the national interests;
- The promotion of the total liberation of Africa;
- The promotion of international cooperation;
- Respect for international law; and
- The promotion of just world economic order.

In the past quarter of the century the various political leadership that emerged in Nigeria retained these as fundamental foreign policy principles and objectives which set the tone, content and direction of Nigeria's role in international relations. (Rufa'i, A.A. 1996:64).

### **Overview of the Nigeria's Foreign Policy since Independence**

Nigeria's foreign policy commenced on a moderate level at independence, this is inevitably expected since the country obtained its independence on the platter of gold and was not expected to be too radical in the pursuit of foreign policy, unlike an emergent nation state that obtained independence through violent means and liberation struggle.

Following Nigeria's independence, the Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa adopted a conservative, pro-western policy. Although he embraced the policy of non-alignment, there was no firm commitment by his government towards it. According to Balewa, Nigeria would be non-aligned in international relations with regards to the big power blocs, but never neutral in the matters affecting African people. He stressed further that Nigeria would be adequately objective, selecting the policy for each occasion in "Nigeria's national interest and in the world peace" and that the country would not associate herself "as a matter of routine with any power blocs."

In spite of the unequivocal statement by the Prime Minister his government's foreign policy was generally pro-west while his proclaimed non alignment posture was more in name than action. Indeed, the pro-western policy of the Balewa's government was manifested in various ways throughout the First Republic. Similarly, the Balewa regime emphasized that the cornerstone of Nigeria's foreign policy would be Africa; subsequent actions of government did not justify the pronouncement as there was little concretely done to illustrate the proclaimed Afro centric policy.

When the military took over from Balewa in January 1966, the pro-western posture of Nigeria's foreign policy did not witness any fundamental shift. Major General Aguiyi Ironsi who became the Head of State could not change government foreign policy stance as he was busy trying to resolve the huge domestic problems precipitated by the civilian political leadership.

Following the counter-coup of July 1966 which swept away the Ironsi regime and led to the emergence of Lt. Col. (later General) Yakubu Gowon as the new Head of State, serious internal conflict erupted which brought the nation to a near state of disintegration. This had a serious impact on Nigeria's external relations as the country could not play any active role in foreign policy.

However, following the end of the civil war in 1970, Nigeria's economy became buoyant as oil resources boomed. By 1974, the oil sector had accounted for about 90 percent of the total revenue, and the country took dynamic steps to assert her leadership role in Africa.

In July 1975, General Gowon's government was toppled by late General Murtala Mohammed who brought dynamism and activism into Nigeria's external relations.

The administration's interest in foreign affairs was demonstrated by the setting up of the Adedeji Commission to overhaul the entire foreign policy machinery of the country. The Commission's recommendations led to the redefinition of foreign policy objectives and the setting up of guidelines that determined fundamentally the course of Nigeria's external relations. Based on this, the Murtala regime made far reaching impact and achieved significant feat in foreign affairs. The most often cited was Nigeria's dramatic and timely intervention in the Angolan- independence crisis in 1976 which remarkably illustrates the dynamic and action oriented Afro centric policy of the administration. (Cyril: 2008).

The assassination of General Murtala Mohammed on February 13, 1976 did not dampen the tempo of radicalism and dynamism of the government's foreign policy as the new Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo (who was second-in-command when Murtala Mohammed was alive) continued with the same policy as led down by Mohammed. Indeed, what Obasanjo did was to consolidate Murtala's effort and Nigeria's voice continued to be heard in the international community. One of the most outstanding things done by Obasanjo was the punitive measures applied to British companies following Britain's unacceptable policy in Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa. For instance, in 1978, the British-owned Barclays Bank was partially nationalized in Nigeria when government took over 80% of the company's shares and changed its name to Union Bank of Nigeria Limited. The British Petroleum was also nationalized in 1979 by the Obasanjo regime as a means of hastening the Lancaster's conference that was to usher in Zimbabwe's independence. The partial nationalization of Barclays Bank and the taking over of British Petroleum because of their links with Apartheid South Africa were no doubt practical demonstrations of Nigeria's Afro-centric and non-aligned policy (Cyril: 2008).

In October 1979, General Obasanjo successfully handed over power to the civilian government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari. However, the Shagari era witnessed a retrogressive reversal in Nigeria's foreign policy as the government damped the momentum of dynamic and radical foreign policy posture bequeathed to it. Nigeria once again reverted to the conservative, Pro-Western policy that was reminiscent of the Balewa era. Although Section 19 of the 1979 Constitution committed government towards promoting African unity, little effort was made by President Shagari to actualize this. Rather than pursuing an active foreign policy, Shagari was engaged in pro-active policy. For instance, his failure in 1981 to attend OAU summit in Nairobi, Kenya with his declaration in 1982 that Nigeria would not attend the OAU summit in Tripoli, Libya. Although the Shagari administration supported decolonization, its commitment to it was not sufficient due mostly to the severe economic crises which the country began to experience in the early 1980's. (Izzah, 1997).

Amidst the deepening economic crisis, the Shagari government was toppled by the military in December 1983, and the new military administration headed by Major General Muhammadu Buhari reverted to the dynamic foreign policy posture of the Murtala/Obasanjo era. The Buhari regime which prided itself as an offshoot of the Murtala/Obasanjo government has made strenuous effort to follow those

regimes footprints in foreign affairs. The Buhari government also re-launched Nigeria's deep commitment to the cause of freedom and liberation struggle particularly in South Africa. However, the regime was terminated in August 1985 which led to the emergence of General Ibrahim Babangida. He relaxed the radical posture of the Buhari government's foreign policy. The regime adopted economic diplomacy as the thrust of its foreign policy. The Babangida administration however made its mark in projecting the country's image as a regional power in the West African sub region. Nigeria's leadership role in the Liberian and Sierra-Leone crisis underscores this (Izzah, 1997).

Following Nigeria's debilitating political crisis precipitated by the annulment of June 12, 1993 Presidential election by the Babangida administration. General Abacha toppled the Interim National Government (ING) which was recorded little if not nothing regarding to foreign policy because of the internal crisis of democratization. Since then, the nation's foreign policy has been drifting forward and backward. Abacha government pursued a reactive foreign policy and there has been no significant impact made to project the image of the country outside. He was credited for ensuring a lasting solution to the Liberian crisis and similar assignment in Sierra-Leone where the military junta that seized power from a democratically elected government has been flushed out by the ECOMOG peace-keeping force led by Nigeria. (Izzah, 1997).

Abubakar Abdulsalami took over government after the death of General Abacha, though he has the problem of isolationism of Abacha's regime and democratization process, but regards to the foreign policy, he tried to reconcile the Nigeria's relations in an international environment more especially by the western capitalist countries of the world. He released political detainees and convicted political prisoners. He revoked all the draconian and donoxious degrees and also engaged leaders of the sub-region in the belief that their interests and destiny were tied to those of Nigeria. He maintained Africa as the centre piece of Nigeria's foreign policy and the leading role in ECOMOG, peace keepers were sent to Rwanda, Namibia, Angola, Ethiopia and Eritrea.

However, with the returned of democracy, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo came in to power for the second administration in May, 1999 and the foreign policy thrust was "Nigeria- we shall continue to honor existing agreement between Nigeria and other countries", Nigerian activities in the sub-region, the joint commission on boundary adjustment particularly on the Bakassi peninsular with Cameroon and the level of functional cooperation in education, health, economy, energy and closer bilateral relationship between Nigeria and her neighbors. Obasanjo stated that "we shall pursue a dynamic foreign policy to promote friendly relations with all nations and continue to play constructive role in ... the organization of African Unity (OAU). Meanwhile, with this policy thrust, the president Obasanjo and the minister of foreign affairs traveled extensively across Africa to promote Nigeria's bilateral and multilateral relations. By 2002 on 8<sup>th</sup> July in Durban South Africa, at the 38<sup>th</sup> session of the 53 members' states of the OAU, having achieved the eradication of colonialism, apartheid and independence of all African states and people. The African Union (AU) was unveiled to replace the OAU as its objectives

have expired with the passage of time. Nigeria under Obasanjo maintains her leading role in ECOWAS, ECOMOG, and AU, assistance to weaker states far and near. (Chibundu, 2003).

Yar'adua administration developed a stance regarding its foreign policy. According to the foreign affairs minister the foreign policy should be constant and not be constantly changed like a commodity when minister change". This was ascertaining in Nigeria's involvement in the sub-regional economic group and the continuation of the Bakassi boundary adjustment is an attestation to this fact. Meanwhile, President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan assumed the mantle of leadership sequel to the demise of President Yar'adua in May, 2009. And his foreign policy thrust advocates continuity of the late Yar'adua's administration and maintain afro centrism posture which is manifested by his participation in AU affairs and other regional organizations and contribution towards democratization movement in some African states.

#### **Africa as the Centre Piece of the Nigeria's Foreign Policy**

The centre piece of the Nigeria's foreign policy is Africa; according to Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa stated that we belong to Africa and Africa must first claim attention in our external relationship. We can rightly say that the above statement by Sir Balewa gave rise to the concept of Africa as the centre piece of Nigeria's foreign policy.

In the foreign policy statement submitted to the House of Representative on 20<sup>th</sup> August, 1960 Sir Abubakar, the Prime Minister of the federation, specifically stated that:

Very particular attention will be devoted to adopting clear and practicable policies as regards Africa. It will be our aim to assist any African country to find solution to its problem. And to foster the growth of a common understanding among all the nations, and especially among the new nations of the continent. We are determined to encourage the development of common ties between all states. The difficulties which will confront us in promoting the friendly association of independent countries of Africa are fully appreciated, but we believe that they can be overcome if a start is made by emphasizing and building upon the culture and economic links which already exist.

This statement was further developed in a speech made during the 16<sup>th</sup> Regular session of the United Nation General Assembly by Hon. (Dr.) Jaja Wachukwu, Minister of Foreign and Commonwealth Relations on 10<sup>th</sup> October, 1966, thus:

Our foreign policy is based on three basic pillars, the concept that Nigeria is an African nation; it is part and parcel of the continent of Africa, and therefore it is so completely involved in anything that pertains to the continent that it cannot be neutral and must never be considered, as a neutralist country. I say this because there have been misnomers and

misrepresentations, and countries have been called neutralist. Nigeria is not a neutralist country. We are independent in everything but neutral in nothing that affects the destiny of Africa.

Mbu, 1997 asserted that the moment Africa is affected, we are involved. We want to make this absolutely clear; Nigeria finds itself involved in anything affecting the African continent anywhere, in any square inch of African territory-we are involved. We cannot be neutral, so neutralism used in broad sense, should exclude our country when it comes to African affairs. And being a member of the African community and feeling ourselves completely bound to its destiny and accepting our involvement in everything that pertains to it, obviously all questions pertaining to Africa must be considered as questions pertaining to Nigeria. The peace of Africa is the peace of Nigeria. Its tribulations are our tribulations and we cannot be indifferent to its future.

Thus Africa, in ipso facto, became the centre piece of Nigerian foreign policy. As a manifestation of the policy, a full pledged directorate of African affairs to deal specifically with the matters relating with African countries was established. Besides the government also established diplomatic relations with all independence African countries and appointed Ambassadors (or Consuls) as appropriate to cover relations with those countries.

The extent to which African-centeredness in Nigerian foreign policy is reflected in the stand of Balewa administration against the apartheid regime and colonialism as well as huge financial and material supports given to liberation movements operating in different areas in the continent.

During the brief stay of General Murtala Mohammed, Africa played a center role in Nigeria's foreign policy. Nigeria's Afro centric policy direction during the Murtala regime is captured in Col. Joe Garba's (late) statement in his book, "Diplomatic Soldiering" (1987). He stated "Henceforth, Africa would be the centre-piece of our foreign policy. . . Nigeria we believe cannot consider itself truly subjected to Portuguese colonialism in Angola and Mozambique, nor could Nigeria tolerate completely the daily humiliation of our fellow African's in Southern Rhodesia and South Africa". The Murtala Afro centric policy can be viewed from four broad perspectives: Involvement in Liberation Struggles, Aids to African Countries, Involvement through organizations and neighborliness.

The Second Republic under the leadership of Alhaji Shehu Shagari maintained Africa as the cornerstone of its foreign policy. His government geared all efforts towards achieving cohesion within the African continent. In his inaugural speech as president on October 1, 1979 Shagari said among other things that "we had a special responsibility for Africa and the African wherever he might be. It would be the cardinal principle of my administration to ensure that all the oppressed people of Africa regained their dignity and freedom. We would also extend our whole-hearted co-operation to all African countries and organizations to bring about the unity of the African people and the rapid emancipation and development of all the countries in Africa. It was also our strong desire to contribute fully to world unity,



peace, progress and co-operation (Shagari, 2001).

Nigeria's prominent position on the African continent has helped to determine the concentric pattern of her relations with her neighbors, with other African countries and the rest of the world. Africa, therefore, is the centre-piece of Nigeria's foreign policy and maintained that policy with dedication. As a founding member of the OAU, the ECOWAS, the Economic Commission of Africa (ECA) and the ADB, Nigeria had played a leading and active role in each, and through them had helped in no small concretize and invigorate the spirit of African co-operation. Nigeria was also involved in other activities to secure peace in the continent. These include the Western Sahara Dispute, The Chad crisis and her role in the African Liberation Committee and in the Mediation Committee on the Ethiopia-Somalia crisis over the Ogaden region, in the horn of Africa among others.

General Ibrahim Babangida's regime also made Africa as the centre-piece of Nigeria's foreign policy which is in line with her national interests. However, that regime was marked by three major policy thrusts of economic Diplomacy, IMF induced Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and peace enforcement through ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), in Liberia from 1990.

Cyril quoted that Babangida once asserted that "The aim of Nigeria's foreign policy is to defend the territorial integrity of all African states" It means that Nigeria would take up the responsibility of policing and protecting the entire continent. In keeping with this declaration, Nigeria initiated ECOMOG for peace enforcement and peace keeping in the Liberian civil war. At the African level, Nigerian peacekeepers were sent to Somalia, Namibia and Rwanda to maintain peace. Consequently, Babangida's sub-regional peace initiatives registered success.

Shonekan's Interim National Government (ING) was a failure in foreign policy formulation and implementation. This was largely due to the political tension he met. Though Abacha's government was repressive due to some of the policies he adopted, he made appreciable effort towards pursuance of an African policy. He stated that "we shall ceaselessly work towards the realization of African unity". His efforts at keeping peace in Liberia and Sierra Leone through ECOMOG were commendable. It also assisted weaker states in Africa. The regime maintained close ties with Libya, Egypt and Gambia among others.

General Abubakar's regime though short but continued to maintain Africa as centre-piece of Nigeria's foreign policy. This through Nigeria's leading role in ECOMOG

President Obasanjo's administration upon inauguration was confronted with some domestic and international challenges of foreign policy. However, the administration played the role of big brother in African affairs. He maintained that "we shall pursue a dynamic foreign policy to promote friendly relations with all nations and will continue to play a constructive role in the OAU. However, on conflict prevention and resolution, Obasanjo proposed that year 2002 be set aside at Algiers OAU Summit in 1999 as the year of peace, security and solidarity. Nigeria has continued to contribute peace contingents when required by ECOWAS or UN such as in Sierra Leone amongst others.

Regional co-operation and integration have given emphasis. The AU was formed from the OAU in July 2002 with active participation of Nigeria. The administration initiated the policy of resuscitating the idea of Gulf of Guinea Commission comprising Nigeria, Cameroon, Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe, Congo, CDR and Angola to strengthen economic and political cooperation amongst member states. NEPAD is another development organization formulated by Obasanjo and president Mbeki of South Africa, Bouteflika of Algeria, Wade of Senegal and president Mubarak of Egypt. The purpose of NEPAD is to establish a new form of beneficial relationship between Africa and the developed countries in order to arrest the declining fortunes of African continent and its marginalization following the advent of globalization. Cyril, 2007

The Yar'adua administration which was inaugurated 29<sup>th</sup> May 2007 had continued to maintain Africa as the centre piece of Nigeria's foreign policy. For instance, Nigeria's commitment in peace keeping in Darfur was a pointer that his administration continued to honor her external obligations especially in Africa. The Jonathan's led government is still preserving that posture of Africa as the centre piece of Nigeria's foreign policy.

### **Policy of Non-alignment**

Political pronouncements of Nigeria's non-aligned status have appeared in every major foreign policy statement since 1960. The non-aligned movement formed in 1961, is a loose association of countries that during the cold war had no formal commitments to either of the power blocks in the world, which were led by the United States and the then Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The movement includes about 110 countries mostly from Africa, Asia and Latin America that recently freed themselves from foreign domination and rejected renewed ties to any of the big powers. Membership of the movement is distinct from neutrality in that it implies an active participation in international affairs and the judgment of issues on their rather than on predetermined positions. Thus, a large majority of the members of the movement opposed the US during the Vietnam War of 1957 and the USSR after its invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. In practice however, many members of the non-aligned movement leaned heavily towards one power bloc or the other.

Nigeria's membership of non-aligned movement and its policy has never had much meaning with regards to its economic ties which have overwhelmingly been with the West. Between 1960 and 1967, official pronouncements of Nigeria's non-aligned status had little political content as Nigeria usually supported Western position even in the UN and was reluctant to extend formal diplomatic ties to USSR whom, given its communist ideology, it treated with suspicion. But when in 1967, during the civil war, Britain and US refused to sell fighter aircraft to Nigeria, the country reluctantly turned to Moscow with success. This was a turning point in the evolution of Nigeria's foreign policy. It pointed to the weakness of relying on one group. Thus, in response to the imperatives of the national security and integration, the Federal Government of Nigeria created a credible image of non-alignment that has been maintained to the present day.

The impact of the civil war on Nigeria's foreign policy was significant, causing Nigerian leadership to draw five major lessons from the experience:

- The country's survival as a sovereign state could not be taken for granted.
- There was a compelling need to have friendly governments in neighboring state.
- The existence of minority white-owned regimes in South Africa was a threat to Nigeria's security.
- It was dangerous to depend disproportionately on one power bloc for the supply of arms required to maintain internal security.
- Publicity and propaganda were vital in the conduct of external relations.

### **Summary & Conclusion**

Foreign policy is inextricably linked to domestic policy. Nigeria's foreign policy cannot then be considered to be in isolation from its domestic issues such as the state of economy and other social factors with the country. However, the Nigeria's foreign policy revolves around Four Concentric Circle of National interest. The first and innermost circle represents Nigeria's own security, independence and prosperity. It is hinged on the primary goal of the country's survival centered on its immediate neighbors, those states that it shares international borders with like Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. The second circle revolves around Nigeria's relations with its West African sub-regional neighbors. The third circle focuses on continental African issues of peace, development and democratization; and the fourth and last circle involves Nigeria's relations with organizations, institutions and states outside the African continent. This concept of the Four Concentric circle has guided Nigeria's foreign policy priorities to date. However, the military regimes are more bureaucratic regime, energetic in projecting national interest, more exposure and more developmental with regards to Nigerian foreign policy. This came through the following reasons.

- Personality trait
- Resources available to the leader
- Opportunity and constrain

In conclusion, the paper has attempted to analyze the trend to the Nigeria's foreign policy since from independence to date and focuses on the Nigeria's national interest. The study adopted the theoretical frame work that could best explain the study which is dynamic in nature and the sequences of changes. The paper also focuses on the successive government from Balewa administration with their policy thrust and the general overview of the nations' foreign policy and its position of non-alignment during the battle of interest between the big power blocks of US and USSR.

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