

Nigerian-United Nations (UN) Relations during Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Challenges and Prospects, 1999-2007

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the diplomatic relations of Nigeria and the United Nations (UN) with respect to Nigeria's Fourth Republic between 1999 and the year 2007; and identified the challenges and prospects that were recorded during the period under review (1999-2007). More importantly, it examined the diplomatic engineering adopted by the then Nigerian Government to turn around the country's battered image abroad. The National Interest theory was adopted for this study. The methodology used for the study is secondary sources of data collection. The findings of the study showed that during the period under review, Nigeria's human right record improved drastically. Secondly, the country stood outstanding in her financial contribution to the UN treasury which benefited the world organization immensely. The paper concluded that one of the major challenges that confronted the Nigerian state during the period under review was debt burden. Therefore, the paper recommended that Nigeria should watch the level of borrowing especially from the United Nations financial agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (I.M.F) as well as from Asian countries like China; and the loans obtained from these creditors should be tied to the provision of socio-economic amenities like education, water, sanitary and health facilities amongst others. Besides, the paper recommended that the improved Nigerian human right record as well as her financial contribution to the UN treasury should be sustained.

Keywords: Challenges; Prospects; Relations; Republic; United Nations

INTRODUCTION

In meeting with foreign policy objectives, Nigeria has been striving under the auspices of cooperation with other nations of the world since gaining independence from the British colonial masters on 1st October 1960; except towards the ending of Gen. Ibrahim Babangida's regime and through the length and breadth of the military regime of Gen. Sani Abacha. Prior to these periods, there was consistence in the Nigerian foreign policy goals particularly with respect to friendship with all nations of the world that recognize and respect Nigerian's Sovereignty [1].

Nigeria policy goals provided a frame work enough for Nigeria to promote her national interest; besides, world peace can serve as a vehicle in which Nigeria-UN relations can be guaranteed. But, the refusal of both Gen. Babangida and Gen. Abacha to release Nigeria for democratic rule which was triggered by the

annulment of the June 12, 1993 general election by Gen. Babangida and the subsequent manipulation of new parties under Gen. Abacha's watch; different from Gen Babangida's two party structure; a little to the right and a little to the left, coupled with Gen. Abacha breaches of international conventions, declarations and resolutions as well as human right abuses created a melting point between international and national demands for good governance in Nigeria.

However, the emergence of the fourth republic under the watch of President Olusegun Obasanjo; saw the need for a change in steering the affairs of state based on brotherhood and pursuance of world peace; thus, Nigeria sacrificed her economic, financial and human resources especially on the African continent to the pleasure of the UN; notably, the restoration of democratic leadership in Sao Tome and Principe, stood outstanding [2]. Then, Nigeria's foreign policy revolved round the core issues of

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African independence and unity, despite resolutions on non-alignment and non-intervention in sovereign affairs; besides, regional development and economic cooperation was among Nigeria's top agenda during the period. In pursuit of these goals, Nigeria played an integral role in the activities of the United Nations which had resulted in the restoration of cordial relations with global diplomatic actors such as the United States of America, France and Great Britain.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Here, the researchers review some related works of distinguished scholars of international politics who were noticed over the years to dwell on Nigeria-UN Relations as follows: Ikhaiale states that Nigeria's bid for permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council is very legitimate having matched her words with her deeds. Nigeria's intervention in Africa speaks volume; for instance, it is not contestable her role in Angola, Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Gambia, Liberia, Sao Tome & Principe to mention but a few including across the Atlantic Ocean to other parts of the world [3]. Therefore, based on her credentials, Nigeria ought to be entitled to the UN Permanent Council Seat meant for Africa except if the country declines the offer and that will be tantamount to undermining her geopolitical standing globally.

Grey's unpublished PhD thesis of University of Pennsylvania in 1965 examined the foreign policy process of Nigeria with a view to uncovering the fundamental and less ephemeral elements which motivate the foreign policy of an emergent state of tropical Africa of which there was the analysis of the place occupied by United Nations in Nigeria foreign policy process and his four major findings were as follows; firstly, from the beginning of Nigeria's independence, the United Nations, occupied a place of primacy in Nigeria's Foreign policy process and in the early years, the UN was regarded as the most important forum for consideration of international problems and the main instrument of world peace, but also, more significantly as the only sure guarantee of preserving the sovereignty of the Nigerian state.

Secondly, in all occasions, Nigeria leaders supported the strengthening of the UN and their aim was always to ensure that the authority of the world body was not ignored or lightly treated by any nation state, no matter how weary she might be. Thirdly, Nigeria was ever ready to support all important activities of the United Nations and fourthly, within the very short time that Nigeria had been a member of the UN, it had played a substantial role in resolving a number of issues arising in the UN [4]. Andrew Young, 2003 states that there is no doubt that the Obasanjo's administration being one of the architects of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) which seeks a new focus on economic development in Nigeria is committed to lend its vision and determination to Africa vis-à-vis the United Nations continued growth.

Nigeria's approach to issues arising within the UN had been a non-emotional as well as pragmatic posits that to some extent Nigeria has reduced its poor human rights profile in the sense

that the Obasanjo's administration had established the Human rights commission to investigate past human rights abuses.

According to the United Nations MDGS recognized the interdependence between growth, poverty reduction and sustainable development so that achieving one of them can be expected to contribute to achieving the others. For example, in Nigeria, reducing the share of the people living in extreme poverty would certainly help to deal with the health and education challenges while achieving health and education goals would also contribute to the fight against poverty. Posit that since the UN millennium summit in 2000, the MDGs have received global acceptability as targets for survival and sustainable development [5]. The MDGs became international standard for measuring the progress and effectiveness of development programmers for national governments such as that of Nigeria.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) asserts that Nigeria is a signatory to the Millennium Declaration of 2000 and committed to achieving the MDGs in 2015. A strategic framework for reaching these goals by Nigerian led to the development of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). Under NEEDS, various policies were made by the government to achieve the MDGs. For example the Universal Basic Education, National Policy on women, The National Health Insurance Scheme, National Environment Sanitation Policy etc.

The programme on National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) is derived from Nigeria's Long-term programme on poverty reduction, wealth creation, employment generation and value re-orientation. A coordinated implementation of both programme is expected to reduce unemployment, poverty and lay good foundation for sustained development in line with the United Nations MDGs. The equivalent of NEEDS at state and local government levels are State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS) and Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS). While not denying Nigeria's strong claim to the exalted position of an occupant of a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council, one should add that in order to solidify Nigeria's chances; the government needs to pay attention to the domestic condition of the country. To this end, according to Ambassador Glu Sanu, it was the paying of less attention to domestic issues that had stood in the way of Chief Simeon Adebo of Nigeria being elected UN Secretary General in succession to U. Thant; even when it was clear that he was the best candidate [6].

Again, Fafowora states that the challenge before Nigeria in her quest for a permanent UN Security Council Seat is her inability to make her domestic condition comfortable by reviving the economy and providing adequate security for lives and properties of her citizens. As it stands, the international community cannot be expected to reward a country with a veto power where strife is endemic, security of her citizens is in peril and her democracy faces threats of authoritarianism. Noted that immediate post-independence period, the UN had a strong appeal for members of Nigerian foreign policy elite and therefore, Balewa's government

attached great importance to the Nigerian membership of the UN [7]. Therefore, in the first few years following its independence, Nigeria played an important and indeed a leading role in resolving issues or crisis either arising within the UN system or that were brought before the UN system; and thirdly, while Nigeria was generally supporting the UN; she took the position that one of the best ways to make the organization more effective was to expand Africa's representation in her organs and committees.

However, he was of the view that not only was Nigeria Pro-West, moderate and conciliatory where it should have been independent, fanatical and un-compromising in defense of Nigeria and Africa's interest. Furthermore, Nigeria was idealistic rather than realistic in evaluating or perceiving the UN in dealing with member states. Unfortunately, during the period, Nigeria's whole performance at the UN was marred largely because it had idealistic and utopian conception of the organization and its functions.

The pattern of Nigeria's voting on a number of issues arising before the UN, with respect to economic development, peace keeping, human right etc. The findings revealed that on all the issues, the pattern of Nigeria voting behavior at the UN was superficial random, confusing and sometimes at odds with the internal and external realities of Nigeria's national interest. More so, Nigeria's participation in the UN seems a failure and indeed a random and confusing exercise in the sense that the government failed to use the UN to advance Nigeria's national interest and boost her international prestige. Besides, Nigeria's impact on the UN was not commensurate with the country size and potential and the UN had failed to secure automatic African support for Nigeria's policies in the UN and other international organizations [8].

Ibiozor attributed Nigeria's failure largely to its inability to lobby effectively because of its low key foreign policy style to inject drama, pomp and pageantry into its diplomacy and its lack of familiarity with how to capture people's attention. Adebo posits that for Nigeria, the UN is important and highly valued because of the concrete achievements which were recorded in the process of Nigeria's Participation in the organization and for the belief that it was the most prestigious international forum; however, not every Nigerian had respect for the UN as a political institution. Secondly, Nigeria leaders had not comprehended the intricacies of the UN system in the sense that over the years they had treated the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) as if they were different components unrelated to the UN system. However, at the UN, African countries assumed increased importance in Nigeria diplomacy, following the creation of the organization of African unity, now African Union.

The successive Nigerian governments attached a high degree of importance to the UN as reflected in the fact that Nigeria's diplomatic posts at the UN in both New York and Geneva have remained since independence. On the other hand, the UN has generally occupied a special place in Nigeria's domestic issues which became useful to the Nigerian government during the country's civil war in her bid to maintain the unity and safeguard

the territorial integrity of the Nigerian state. Nigerian involvement and commitment to the United Nations clearly indicates that as a component of the country's national interest, support for UN and utilization of the institutional capacity it offers for foreign policy projection and pursuit; cut across the three measures established by Thomas Robinson, which includes the degree of primacy or importance and priority interest; the degree of permanence or perpetuity of interest and the degree of generality and widespread applicability of interest.

Against this background, Nigeria has displayed support and commitment to the UN largely through financial contributions, participation in various UN initiatives, verbal expression of support at the level of the General assembly and the UN organs as well as participation in the vast array of UN sponsored conferences that take place every year in different parts of the world. Aside this, international peace is one area in which Nigeria has displayed an unwavering commitment to the effort of the UN as well as Nigeria's support for the UN in the area of economic, disarmament, outer space law, law of the sea, legal issues amongst others. The course of many travels, the then head of Nigerian government, President Olusegun Obasanjo has been calling for the support for the UN reforms, particularly the security council and at the same time pushing forward Nigeria's credentials for a permanent seat at the security council, through persuasive means at the various levels of the committee set up by the African Union to harmonize the position of the continent.

There were many limits beyond which Nigerian could go as a permanent member of the UN; especially in the light of the fact that any majority view without the possibility of an appeal to a higher instance. Adeniran unpublished PhD thesis of university of Columbia in 1978 states that Nigeria as a member of UN recorded significant successes in economic matters. However, on the whole, Nigeria's participation in the UN reflected a hunch-back posture. In other words, it was ill-balanced in the sense that it was a posture that undermined Nigeria's forcefulness to external relations and weighed heavily on the country's capacity to lead group pressure against opposing forces.

Tukur's unpublished master's degree thesis in 1968, asserted that with regards to the principle of non-intervention in African affairs by foreign powers, Nigeria embraced the principle in line with her national interest based on the fragile unity of the country in view of the fear that an intervention from outside could instigate the break-up of Nigeria which had always troubled her leaders. Secondly, in the activities of the UN, Nigeria gave more attention to the economic function of the organization of which she had benefitted from. For instance, she secured quite a substantial amount of loans from the World Bank and its affiliates. Besides, pertaining to the use of the UN as a forum for diplomacy, Nigeria's participation was a huge success in maintaining inter-African contacts with the greatest facility and the least expense. Through these, it was able to get ideas of African unity accepted by the UN and in terms of learning the art of diplomacy, Nigerian representatives at the UN gained immeasurably from their negotiation and lobbying techniques; Finally, Nigerian representatives used UN-sparked acquaintanceship to work out plans favorable to Nigeria.

Theoretical framework

National interest theory was adopted for this research to analyses Nigerian policy objectives. This theory was propounded by the Objectivist of the Liberal school of thought, Morgenthau. The theory states that a state in the international arena is premised on her national interest and this reflects on the peculiar circumstances in the aspect of economic capability, military capability amongst others. Furthermore, the theory posits that a country's self-image or perception of itself in terms of its relative power considerably influences the contents of its national interest and hence the nature of its foreign policy.

In the context of this discourse with regards to the liberal school of thought that says a country's national interest reflects on peculiar circumstance in the area of military capability, economic capability amongst others brings to mind, Nigerian foreign policy which says: Africa is the center piece of Nigerian foreign policy. This policy points to the fact that Nigeria is ready to play big brother role to assist any African country in distress such as in the area of military assistance to achieve peace in line with United Nations agenda on restoration of peace and security in every part of the world.

With respect to the aspect of the theory which posits that a country's relative power influences the contents of its national interest and the nature of her foreign policy, cast our minds to the early part of the fourth republic when the then Nigerian government agreed to obey the judgment handed down by the International Court of Justice (I.C.J) sitting in the Hage. The court ruled that Nigerian should cede Bakassi Peninsula; an oil rich region in the Niger-Delta of the country to the Republic of Cameroon. The Nigerian government knew that the loss of this strategic portion of the Nigeria territory to Cameroon would deny the country a huge financial and economic base; yet, in obedient to that judgment, Nigeria ceded the territory to Cameroon in view of her national interest of the continuous existence as a united country while acknowledging the fragile existence of the Nigeria state. This is coupled with the fact that France whom by her position in this context, is the military supporter of the Republic of Cameroon in view of the peace pact that exists amongst the two countries dated back to pre-independence era based on the principle of assimilation.

Therefore, it was obvious that the Nigerian government was conscious of the fact that she might not have the wherewithal in terms of military capability to face the combined military power of Cameroon and France in the event of an outbreak of war between Nigeria and Cameroon; taking into cognizance the fragile nature of Nigeria's unity. Against the background, Nigeria chose the path of honor through the exchange of land resource for peace in line with her foreign policy objective of holding onto national interest which in a way had promoted the intervention made by the United Nations in resolving the crises.

DISCUSSION

The new resident coordination of the United Nations System in Nigeria and Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the country, Mr. Alberic Kacon has pledged support for Nigeria's sustainability

programme. Four donors have pooled together \$30 million in support of the successful conduct of the 2007 Nigeria's general elections; which was seen as critical to political stability and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Therefore, UNDP which is the UN's global development network managed the support. An American publisher and global philanthropists, Sara Miller MC Cune has pledged \$500,000 to the Ikaru/Ibrahim Millennium village cluster in Ondo state in October, 2006. The philanthropist had meetings with host communities and visited schools, health centres and demonstration farms in the seven villages that made up the cluster in Ondo state.

Over the years, before 1999, Nigeria had been disciplined by the western powers and the UN with economic sanctions and as a result, Nigeria experienced diplomatic displeasure but, the country has since been welcomed back into the fold. Therefore, Nigeria's relationship with the UN in conjunction with the western powers including the US has thrived. For instance, Commerce Secretary William Doley and Energy Secretary Stuart Bill Richardson and various members of congress came to discuss possible areas of cooperation with their Nigerian counterparts. At the request of President Clinton, an inter-agency team spent almost two weeks in Nigeria, discussing with government, civil society leaders and Nigerian companies to determine how best to direct both present and future programmers.

The talks had been fruitful and the new projects had begun. Already, some \$30 million in development assistance has been earmarked by congress to assist in building Nigerian's democratic institution and strengthening civil society. Military to military ties had been resumed, beginning with a USAID/office of transaction initiatives funded team from the private company military professional resources. Nigeria had played an integral role in the activities of the United.

In Abuja, UNICEF supported programmers for children's day celebration which included a 26th May 2006 special session of National Children's Parliament. This programme had young parliamentarians debated the impact to HIV/AIDS on children and issued a call for actions. The session featured lively deliberations about parents, communities, schools, health services, governments and religious institutions as well as what the children themselves should do to fight AIDS which includes prevention, treatment and education. Thereafter, the UNICEF representative in Nigeria, Ayalew Abai presented awards to the winners of a school competition at the children's day ceremony on 27th May, 2006 and applauded the comment of President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria on how to put young children and adolescents at the centre of the HIV/AIDS Agenda. According to Ayalew Abai, we are pleased to see that government is taking the lead in the HIV/AIDS campaign which the UNICEF, UNAIDS and other partners launched in November 2005 in Nigeria.

Those who witnessed the debt cancellation meeting includes the representatives of the governments of Australia, Canada and Norway as well as those of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the European commission, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development as well as the Secretariat of the United Nations

Conference of Trade and Development (UNCTAD). On the other hand, the delegation of the Federal Republic of Nigeria was headed by Nigeria's Minister of Finance, Dr. (Mrs.) Ngozi Okonjo Iweala. The Chairman of the Paris Club Mr. Xavier Musca presided over the meeting (IMF staff Report on Paris Club Creditors and Nigeria's debt Cancellation deal, 2005).

CONCLUSION

Nigeria's foreign policy revolves round the core issues of global and regional development and economic cooperation. Over the years, in pursuit of these goals, Nigeria had played an integral part in the activities of the United Nations which had resulted in relatively cordial relations with global diplomatic actors such as the United States, France and Great Britain.

With regards to the sustenance of world peace, Nigeria had sacrificed both financial and economic resources for the African continent and beyond; to the pleasure of the UN. In the midst of these efforts, Nigeria became a Pariah state during the Gen. Babangida and Gen Abacha's military regimes between 1985 and 1998 respectively. At that period, Nigeria-UN diplomatic ties were broken; and besides, the Common Wealth of Nations suspended the Nigeria from the organization because of her lack of respect for human rights. Hence, there was condemnation of human right abuses and the subsequent imposition of sanctions by the international community on Nigeria following the internal policies of the government which had generated reactions from the comity of nations.

However, with the emergence of the fourth republic on 29th May, 1999; Nigeria tremendously regained her past glory in global affairs after the government had promised to redeem her image. Consequently, in the area of global security, Nigeria contributed troops and officers as well as observers to trouble spots in Africa, Asia, Middle East and Southern America. She had also contributed police personnel to the UN peace-keeping mission worldwide. More so, Nigeria had attended virtually all the conferences organized by the UN to foster world peace in line with the country's foreign policy objective, especially in fulfillment of her national interest. One of the major challenges that confronted the Nigerian state over time was debt burden and there was a major breakthrough during the period under review. For instance, 60% of Nigeria's debt burden was cancelled by the Paris Club. This was believed to have been facilitated by the UN and this had brought a relief to Nigeria.

Nevertheless, there had not been a huge success in the core areas of self-reliance, general welfare of Nigerians, equality of Nigeria; compared to other developing countries as well as in the area of food security. While holding on to her national interest, it may not be out place to say that Nigeria's participation in the United Nations' financial system may have dwindled over time and this is bound to be so as long as Nigeria's productive forces are weak. Aside this, industrialized countries with whom Nigeria is in an unending competition with respect to her enormous oil and gas, arable land and immense human resource potentials are not resting. Consequently, these recommendations are hereby presented:

Nigerians should embrace dialogue as the principal mechanism for the resolution of crisis situations and when this is adhered to; it would go a long way to show the international community, the UN in particular that Nigerians are people worthy of a respectable place within the comity of nations.

Nigerian foreign policy objectives should be geared towards the wellbeing of the Nigerian people rather than been focused entirely on the African continent. Therefore, the economic development and the security of Nigerians, domiciled in foreign land should be the mainstay of Nigerian Foreign policy; in a nut shell, Nigerian foreign policy should be citizen centered or citizen driven.

Nigeria foreign policy should encompass a clear opinion and vigorous strategy on major international issues vis-à-vis the reform of the United Nations.

With regards to the bid to secure a permanent seat at the UN Security Council, Nigeria should engage in aggressive bilateral diplomacy, multilateral diplomacy and campaign in and outside Africa with a clear-cut aim to woo to her side; the developed countries that had much influence on the decisions of many states.

The campaign for the Security Council seat should be treated as a critical national project where all hands must be on deck. Therefore, Nigeria must make good use of its seasoned and experienced diplomats, scholars, politicians, journalists, student organizations, labor unions, the organized private sector, mass media outfits, and professional bodies to mobilize both local and international publicists and lobbyists around the world for the campaign.

Nigeria should make a careful choice of her global allies based on her economic, political, scientific, technical and military strategy.

Government should watch the level of external borrowing and any loan to be borrowed should be tied to social and infrastructural investments in the area of education, health, water supply, road construction, housing etc. and above all, the prudent management of funds through the adoption of transparency and accountability should be prioritized.

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