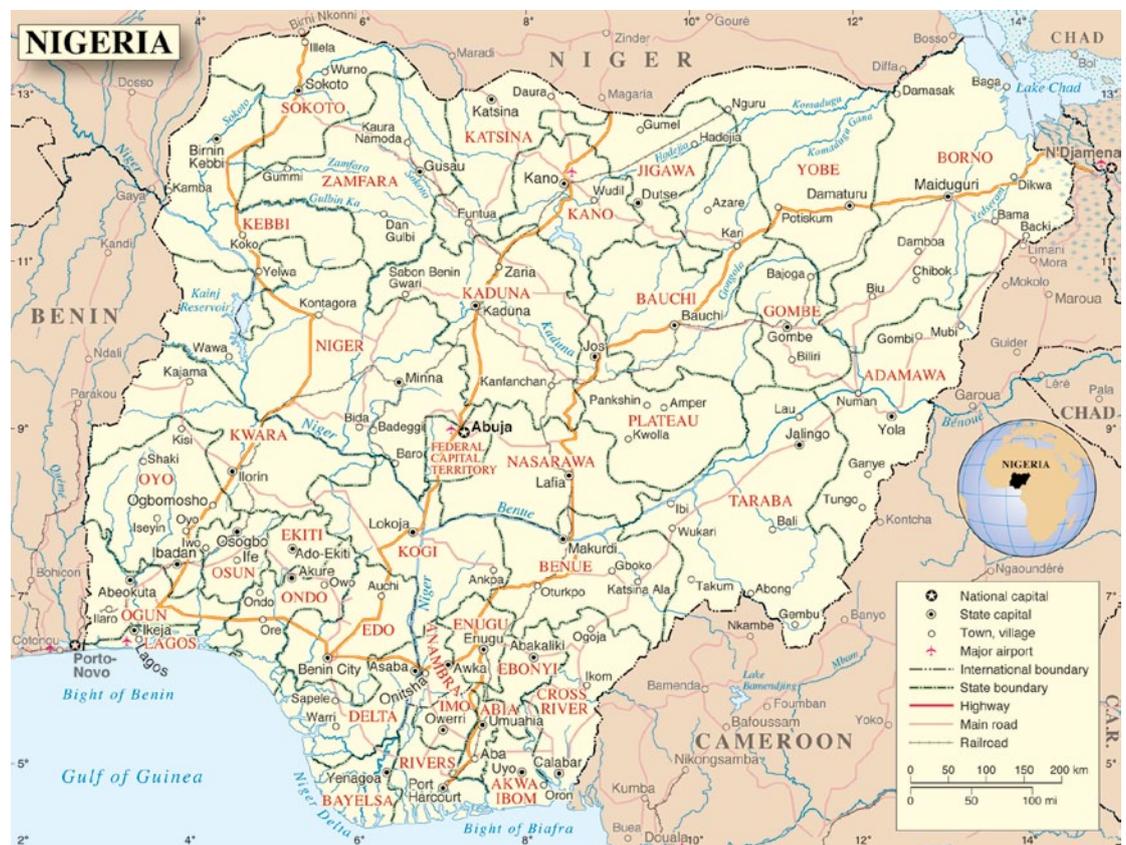


# NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY BEFORE BUHARI: GLOBAL EXPECTATIONS AMID DOMESTIC AND REGIONAL CHALLENGES

'KUNLE AMUWO



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## **ABSTRACT**

A country well-endowed in terms of population, natural resources and geographic size, Nigeria's post-independence foreign policy has been marked by a near-constant striving for influence within its region and beyond. This especially resonates in the articulations of Nigeria's foreign policy, which places Africa at the centre of its foreign engagements, its commitment to global peacekeeping operations and its efforts at mediation and development co-operation in West Africa, in particular. However, since its return to an electoral democracy in 1999, Nigeria has struggled to duplicate its assertive and activist foreign policies of the 1970s and 1980s, and its status as 'regional hegemon' or 'pivotal state' has been called into question. Critics list numerous factors that have led to this gridlock – from a chaotic post-1999 political economy due to fluctuating oil prices and economic difficulties to the failure to deal with the Boko Haram insurgency. Compounding these maladies, a corrupt elite and docile leadership have done little to accomplish the regional goals of ECOWAS and the AU. On a broader scale, Nigeria's election to the UN Security Council in January 2014 bought it little clout globally, especially in light of the Jonathan administration's inability to adequately combat Boko Haram. Furthermore, on a continental level, the demographic and economic giant has all but lost its pre-eminence to post-apartheid South Africa as 'the voice of Africa', as little has been done to further evolve the country's foreign policy past its decolonisation and anti-apartheid agenda. There is a need for strong and legitimate leadership that will build a more diversified economy and stronger institutions to drive a clean government and safeguard the rule of law. It is thus crucial that the public policymaking process be democratised, including for foreign policy. It is only by doing so that Nigeria can close the gap between its domestic realities and its regional, continental and global ambitions, and foster an interest-driven foreign policy in line with the spirit of the 1999 constitution.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

|      |  |
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| EBID | ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development |
| PDP  | People's Democratic Party                  |
| SAP  | Structural Adjustment Programme            |

## INTRODUCTION AND THE *PROBLÈMATIQUE*<sup>1</sup>

In theory, foreign policies are anchored by visionary and strategic thinking with a view to projecting, protecting and enhancing a country's core national interests. To the extent that the foreign policy of a country is intended to valorise its critical national, security and geopolitical interests, realism ought to trump idealism, much in the same way that foreign policy doctrines bow before national interests and doctrinarism gives way to flexibility. Hegemony, not self-abnegation, is the name of the game; or, alternatively, a judicious balance between these antinomies. Foreign policies are signposted by inconsistency, insofar as they are expected to yield dividends and be reciprocal. Thus, 'foreign policies are ... naturally amoral, incoherent and inconsistent unless they unambiguously serve the national interest'.<sup>2</sup> In consequence, doctrinarism is not permitted; 'countries should always change as every policy exigency demands'.<sup>3</sup> Further, an umbilical cord binds foreign policies and national interest.

There appears to be a fit between much of the foregoing and the great powers. On the other hand, weak or fragile African states – including those, such as Nigeria, that are endowed with population, size and enormous natural resources – are ensconced in a perennial struggle to translate visibility into influence; transit from ascribed status to actual power; and bridge the gap between promise and manifestation. Nigeria has struggled since the return of electoral democracy in May 1999 to duplicate its relatively assertive and activist foreign policies of the 1970s and 1980s, as well as its peace restoration efforts in Sierra Leone and Liberia in the 1990s.

Several factors explain this impasse: a chaotic post-1999 domestic political economy, worsened, since 2009, by the Boko Haram Islamist or terrorist group's activities in the country's north-east region; a docile, self-centred and venal ruling elite, coupled with an incompetent former ruling party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), bereft of the moral courage to critically interrogate and proffer solutions to Nigeria's vexed national question; and seemingly weak and incompetent presidents since 1999 who have done precious little, beyond grandiose public grandstanding, to realise the goals of ECOWAS and the AU.

The aggregate of the foregoing is that Nigeria, the continent's demographic giant – as well as, since May 2014, its nominally biggest economy<sup>4</sup> – has lost its allure globally and has all but lost its pre-eminence in Africa to South Africa, the other giant. After Abuja was elected in January 2014 for the fourth time since 1960 as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (previous terms being in 1966–67, 1978–79 and 1994–95), a Nigerian editorial suggested that the election had 'led to the irony and the poking of fun at a country becoming a member of the UN Security Council in a context where its own

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1 The complex of issues associated with the topic, considered collectively.

2 Agwu FA, *Themes and Perspectives on Africa's International Relations*. Ibadan: University Press Plc, 2013.

3 *Ibid.*

4 A title it has since lost back to South Africa in August 2016, after the appreciation of the rand and the decline in oil revenues.

insecurity raises global concerns'.<sup>5</sup> Nigeria may be West Africa's conductor and ECOWAS's pacesetter, but even in this circumscribed sphere of influence it has been a contested player, capitalising inconsequentially on its numerous diplomatic engagements. Dr Dapo Fafowora, scholar–diplomat, has argued that the country no longer has a foreign policy.<sup>6</sup> He may have exaggerated Nigeria's precipitous decline, but compared to the other giant, it is legitimate to interrogate the goals and expectations of the country's contemporary foreign policy thrusts at three levels of analysis: global, continental and regional.

Nigeria's power and influence have remained largely potential, begging for focused and committed leaders to be actualised. Abuja remains several streets behind in its quest to develop into 'a regional and global superpower with national wealth and a strong and vibrant democracy'.<sup>7</sup>

The major *problématique* of this paper is that, due to the drag that the woes and worries of Nigeria's domestic political economy have spawned and the widening gap between the country's illusion of grandeur and the contemporary stark reality, there is hardly any fit between the type of state Nigeria's foreign policies project externally and the realisation of those policies' enunciated goals. Its Africa-centred foreign policy, bereft of those critical elements that made it irresistible from the 1960s to the early 1990s – notably the decolonisation agenda and the anti-apartheid struggle – now lies in tatters. As the PDP has few redeeming features, only a brand new government, post-February 2015 general elections, can re-invent or renew a compass for Nigeria's foreign policy. This will necessarily be predicated on a recomposition of the state's social contract with Nigerians.

The remainder of this paper is divided into eight sections. The first interrogates the notion of a pivotal or hegemonic state. The second is a brief history of Nigeria's Africa centrepiece foreign policy. The third explores the contemporary domestic challenges that tend to vitiate a viable foreign policy, while the fourth analyses a major missing link: people-friendly political leadership at the highest level. The fifth, sixth and seventh sections, respectively, analyse Nigeria's policy thrusts at the global, continental and regional levels. The eighth and final section prognosticates briefly on Nigeria's short and medium-term future.

## ON THE NOTION OF A PIVOTAL OR HEGEMONIC STATE

The theory of the pivotal or hegemonic state speaks to classical realist foreign policy philosophy that underlines the rationality and capacity of critical states to dominate

5 See *Nigerian Tribune*, 'Nigeria and the UN Security Council seat', 10 November 2013.

6 Dapo F, 'When will Nigeria earn international respect again?', *The Nation*, 25 September 2014. Gambari argues that Nigeria does have a foreign policy but that this emanates neither from a national ideology nor from national political consciousness. See Gambari IA, 'From Balewa to Obasanjo: The theory and practice of Nigeria's foreign policy', in Adebajo A & AR Mustapha (eds), *Gulliver's Troubles: Nigeria's Foreign Policy after the Cold War*. Scotsville: UKZN Press, 2008, p. 72.

7 Sisk TD, 'Nigeria and South Africa', in Soldaro MJ (ed.), *Comparative Politics: A Global Introduction* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). New York: McGraw Hill Higher Education, 2008, pp. 762–797.

their immediate environment. This is either the result of a conscious choice borne out of pertinent national interests or a reflection of historical circumstances. In the former, choice is informed by capacity; in the latter, capacity matters little in the face of a *fait accompli*. This point is important in light of what the Nigerian ruling elite has conceptualised since independence as the country's historic and manifest destiny, not only in West Africa but also across the entire continent.<sup>8</sup>

Hegemonic states have the capacity to be predatory and overbearing, although this remains largely latent. It is a constant, if quiet, reminder to errant or noisy neighbours that power – and the powerful – rules the roost. Hegemonic states do not allow themselves to be 'rendered redundant by a dovish or ultra-accommodating or all comers' attitude'<sup>9</sup> capable of negating their vital national interests. More importantly:<sup>10</sup>

(T)here is no country that seriously lays claim to regional hegemony or the so-called manifest destiny ... that does not possess both for rhetorical and political pragmatism, an area of emphasis or influence in its foreign policy. It is the extent to which a country successfully asserts itself in this perimeter of influence that determines the seriousness with which it is perceived in the zone and beyond.

Further,<sup>11</sup>

there is ... no country with a serious foreign policy framework that does not define and take seriously its bellwether region, the orbit of its vital interests, determined by how that orbit best serves its core national interests.

Is Nigeria a hegemonic or pivotal state in West Africa and on the African continent? The response from the literature is mixed. On the one hand, the logic of rhetorical pragmatism will answer in the affirmative by pointing to a litany of high-profile foreign policy speeches by high-profile Nigerian officials since 1960, as well as to concrete policies and tangible efforts by the Nigerian state in the areas of African integration and co-operation, conflict resolution and peacekeeping, and political stability and democracy support. At the 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly on 10 October 1961, Dr Jaja Wachukwu, Nigeria's foreign minister, enunciated a foreign policy doctrine for the country:<sup>12</sup>

[Nigeria's] foreign policy is based on three basic pillars: the concept that Nigeria is an African nation; it is part of the continent of Africa and therefore it is completely involved in anything that pertains to that continent that it cannot be neutral and must never be considered as a neutralist country ... We are independent in everything but neutral in nothing that affects

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8 For the Nigerian ruling elite, this destiny is akin to the 1823 Monroe Doctrine on US–Latin America relations. Named after its author, US president James Monroe, the policy states that 'any efforts by European countries to colonize North or South America would be viewed as aggressive acts and could require US intervention'. See AFP, 'Kerry says two-century US Latin American policy over', 18 November 2013.

9 Agwu FA, *op. cit.*, p. 566.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 509.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 511.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 514.

the destiny of Africa. The moment Africa is affected, we are involved. We want to make this absolutely clear! Nigeria finds herself involved in anything affecting the African continent anywhere, any square inch of African territory we are involved ... The peace of Africa is the peace of Nigeria. Its tribulations are our tribulations and we cannot be indifferent to its future.

On 2 October 1963 Nigeria's first president, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, was more forthcoming:<sup>13</sup>

In our policy towards African states, we have always played the role of a good neighbour. We have given human and economic aid to independent African countries without any strings. We are determined that our independence should be used to enthrone justice, understanding and cooperation throughout our historic continent. Our foreign policy, particularly in the pursuance of African unity, has been based on closer cooperation in the social, cultural and economic fields.

To be sure, a dominant theme in the literature on regionalism is the inexorable linkage between hegemonic leadership and effective or productive integration.<sup>14</sup> In West Africa, Nwoke<sup>15</sup> is more categorical: to fast-track ECOWAS, there is the need for a locomotive role, that is to say, 'leadership support by one of the cooperating nations which has the market depth and resource base'; for him, only Nigeria fits the bill. At the continental level, notwithstanding the characterisation of Nigeria's foreign policy by Nwoke<sup>16</sup> as at once 'un-progressive' and 'stagnant', the country appears to have deployed its relatively significant financial muscle to compensate for its apparent ideological vacuity and timidity in driving the decolonisation and anti-apartheid agendas of the Organization of African Unity.

There is no unanimity or consensus on this issue. While some analysts do not deny Nigeria's status as an anchor/pivotal/hegemonic state on the continent, they argue that this status has tended to serve Western and not Nigerian or African interests.<sup>17</sup> Agwu is representative of this position. He regards Nigeria as being the West's platform or anchor state in Africa – although the state is dysfunctional to many of its citizenry, the US and many other developed countries find it very functional. In the post-Cold War era, Abuja is little more than 'the effectuation of the principle of African Solution[s] to African Problem[s], being the only country, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, that can willingly and enthusiastically mobilise to deal with African conflicts'.<sup>18</sup> Further, whereas Abuja often regales itself about its so-called 'strategic partnership' with Washington, this

13 *Ibid.*, p. 514.

14 Ogwu JU, 'Epilogue', in Ogwu JU (ed.), *New Horizons for Nigeria: World Affairs*. Lagos: NIIA (Nigerian Institute of International Affairs), 2008, pp. 353–356.

15 Nwoke CN, 'External power interests in the Gulf of Guinea: Implications and imperatives for Nigeria's foreign policy', in Nwoke CN & O Oche (eds), *Contemporary Challenges in Nigeria, Africa and the World*. Lagos: NIIA for NSIA (Nigerian Sovereign Investment Authority), 2014, pp. 344–388.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 377.

17 Agwu FA, *op. cit.*, p. 640.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 641.

is a gross misconception. 'All that Washington does,' writes Agwu,<sup>19</sup> 'is use Nigeria as an instrument of its foreign policy in Africa, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa and, indeed, other parts of the world where Nigeria could indulge it with Abuja's accustomed docility.'

Perhaps more pernicious, from the perspective of the AU's anti-imperialist policy on the Ivorian and Libyan crises in 2011, was Nigeria's apparent readiness to be instrumentalised by Paris. This policy was criticised by many informed Nigerians, not least because it is humiliating to be abused simultaneously by US and French imperialism.

A more benign school of thought argues that Nigeria qualifies as a hegemonic or pivotal state because it not only accepts being looked upon for help by its neighbours but has also raised good neighbourliness to a canonical foreign policy principle. For Sisk,<sup>20</sup> 'much of the future of Africa depends on internal politics by these two [South African and Nigerian] complicated and vibrant societies'. Mustapha<sup>21</sup> appears to agree with those for whom Nigeria is West Africa's 'caretaker', its 'anchor state', playing the role of a 'middle power'.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps many would agree with Saliu's<sup>23</sup> observation that, in the 1970s and the 1980s, Nigeria was generally regarded as Africa's authentic voice. Nigeria has nearly always appeared passionate about its regional agenda and continental commitments, but admittedly with varying levels of motivation by successive governments since 1960.

## AFRICA THE CENTREPIECE OF NIGERIAN FOREIGN POLICY THRUSTS

In 1976 the Adebayo Adedeji Report on Foreign Policy enunciated the concept of Africa as the centrepiece of Nigeria's foreign policy. Under Ibrahim Agboola Gambari's watch as foreign minister, between 1984 and 1985, the 'concentric circles' principle was articulated by the country's foreign policy elite as the conceptual framework for Nigeria's international relations. Four circles were identified:

- the innermost circle of national interest, dealing with Nigeria's security, independence and prosperity, with an umbilical cord to its immediate neighbours;
- the second circle, involving Nigeria's relations with West Africa and ECOWAS;
- the third circle, relating to continental issues, including African unity and co-operation, peaceful settlement of disputes, development and, invariably, democratisation; and
- the fourth and last circle, focusing on Nigeria's relations with extra-African organisations, institutions and states.<sup>24</sup>

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19 *Ibid.*, p. 642.

20 Sisk TD, *op. cit.*, p. 763.

21 Mustapha AR, 'Challenges for Nigeria's foreign policy in the post-Cold War era', in Adebajo A & AR Mustapha (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 369–382.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 369.

23 Saliu HA, 'New options for Nigerian foreign policy', *Nigerian Journal of International Studies*, 38, 1 & 2, December 2013, pp. 167–200.

24 Gambari IA, in Adebajo A & AR Mustapha (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 58–80.

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The Goodluck Jonathan government (2010–2015) has demonstrated that there is no one-to-one correspondence between fabulous oil wealth and a nationalist or progressive foreign policy

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Undergirding the country's 'Africa centrepiece' foreign policy is the sentiment that Nigeria's destiny is closely tied to the fact that 'all black people share a common experience – the experience of humiliation in the contemporary world'.<sup>25</sup> While continuity has been the name of the game, regime idiosyncrasies have also come to the fore. There is a trend in Nigeria according to which an activist foreign policy is predicated upon buoyant oil receipts, thus Sisk's<sup>26</sup> argument that Nigeria's fortunes were buoyed by 'a rapid expansion of oil production along with the bounty provided by the escalation in global oil prices during the mid-1970s'. To be sure, oil became a veritable foreign policy tool during the 1970s, as seen in the active, but invariably costly, foreign policy thrusts of the Murtala Mohammed/Olusegun Obasanjo military government (1975–1979) and, to a lesser extent, that of Yakubu Gowon, notably post-civil war and Mohammed/Obasanjo's immediate predecessor (1966–1975). This implies that governments affected by falling oil prices will be unable to undertake an activist foreign policy. As this paper will show, this is not always true; the Goodluck Jonathan government (2010–2015) has demonstrated that there is no one-to-one correspondence between fabulous oil wealth and a nationalist or progressive foreign policy.

The 1970s were golden for the country, in terms of oil revenue. The government not only undertook massive infrastructural projects at home but also sponsored development programmes across the continent. Nigeria was prominent in the struggle to abolish white minority rule in Zimbabwe, Namibia and, most importantly, apartheid South Africa, and to mobilise extra-African support for the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola rather than the US-backed National Union for the Total Independence of Angola. Nigeria also instigated and inspired, with Togo, the formation of ECOWAS in 1975.

The foreign policy of the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa government of the First Republic (1960–1966) has been described as moderate and timid, with a pragmatic and non-ideological approach.<sup>27</sup> The lack of massive oil receipts cannot adequately explain this, however. Factors such as strong pro-Western sentiments among the ruling elite and the lack of strong leadership come into sharp focus. The same could be said about the presidency of Shehu Shagari in the Second Republic (1979–1983), which inherited a massively depleted national treasury but was worsted by its own ruinous and manifestly corrupt ways. This explains its lacklustre foreign policy.

Although partly constrained by the exigencies of orthodox market reforms dictated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the foreign policies of the Ibrahim Babangida (1985–1993) and Sani Abacha (1993–1998) military juntas were equally active, at least in the country's regional precincts. It would appear that, in Liberia and Sierra Leone respectively, the generals had self-regarding agendas – the one partly to save his friend, Samuel Doe; the other, partly to deflect and escape harrowing internal contestation.

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25 Agwu FA, *op. cit.*, p. 512.

26 Sisk TD, *op. cit.*, p. 776.

27 Gambari IA, in Adebajo A & AR Mustapha (eds), *op. cit.*

The Jonathan government (2010–2015), like its predecessor, the Umaru Yar'Adua administration (2007–2010), of which it was partly an extension, experienced cyclical swings from a significant oil revenue dip early on, through years of plenty and buoyancy and back to the status quo ante in the last quarter of 2014. Industrial-scale and illegal oil bunkering and sundry technical problems conspired to diminish oil revenues by as much as 42% between June and July 2013 alone.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the drop in global oil prices starting in late 2014 (hovering around \$30 in early 2016) has placed downward pressure on foreign exchange reserves and government budgets – especially since oil accounts for up to 70% of Nigeria's national budget.<sup>29</sup> The Nigerian people, who have little to show for the years of plenty, have been subjected to a regime of economic austerity measures since November 2014.

## DOMESTIC CHALLENGES

A common axiom in foreign policy analysis is that foreign policies are a function of domestic determinants; as the domestic policy goes, so goes the foreign policy. Besmirched *ab initio* by what Mustapha<sup>30</sup> refers to as 'the fractious nature of the Nigerian state', the formulation of the country's foreign policies has been undermined by the absence of a 'single dominant and coherent nationalist movement capable of establishing a hegemonic hold on the national imagination'. In the absence of an Nkrumah, Mandela or Senghor, Nigeria has had no undisputed national leaders who could bring cohesion to the country's national interests. The result is that since 1960, a fractious ruling elite, specialising in the art of instrumentalising ethnicity and religion to divide the people in order to win and retain power, has been unable to forge an overarching national consensus on what concretely constitutes Nigeria's national interest. Thus, Dudley<sup>31</sup> said, almost resignedly, that Nigeria's national interest is little more than what any set of government officials in power at any point in time says it is.

Looming large, therefore, is the absence of an idea of Nigeria as a meaningful entity with an ethical core, creating an incoherent sense of collective social citizenship. Nigeria has

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- 28 According to Nigeria's central finance ministry, during this period the country's oil revenues fell from NGN 863.02 billion (\$5.39 billion) to NGN 497.98 billion (\$3.1 billion). (NGN is the currency code for the Nigerian naira.) See *Punch*, 'Nigeria's oil revenue drops by 42%', 24 August 2013. During the 2013 summer, oil theft caused crude output to drop to less than 1.9 million barrels per day (bpd), the lowest since 2009 when production briefly dropped to a 20-year low of 1.5 million bpd. See *Punch*, 'Theft knocks Nigeria's oil output to 4-year low', 28 August 2013; Walker A, "'Blood oil" dripping from Nigeria', *BBC News Africa*, 27 July 2008.
- 29 Stein C, 'Is Nigeria's promise a pipe dream?', *US News*, 17 February 2016, <http://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2016-02-17/nigerias-challenges-rise-as-oil-prices-fall>, accessed 23 August 2016.
- 30 Mustapha AR, 'Challenges for Nigeria's foreign policy in the post-Cold War era', in Adebajo A & AR Mustapha (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 369–382.
- 31 Dudley BJ, *An Introduction to Nigerian Government and Politics*. London: Macmillan Nigeria, 1982.

been particularly afflicted by conflicts over the distribution of political and economic goods, making endemic both mass political alienation and a lack of social citizenship.<sup>32</sup>

Within the context of this chaotic complex, Medard<sup>33</sup> invokes the spectre of Nigeria's fragile economic and political system unmatched by its regional ambitions. Other analysts have drawn attention to the fact that only by being strong at home can the country effectively contribute to solving problems abroad; that a state at war with itself cannot project power abroad; and that foreign policy goals are susceptible to present and pressing threat.<sup>34</sup> Agwu surmises that Nigeria has been diminished by intense national challenges, impairing its 'reckoning as a strategic actor in the sphere of Africa's intra-national relations as well as the continent's relations with the rest of the world'.

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The major reason why Nigeria's foreign policy limps along is the inability of the elite to rule the roost

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The major reason why Nigeria's foreign policy limps along is the inability of the elite to rule the roost. Since 1999 Nigeria has been stymied by the odious combination of a venal oil industry; a privatised power/electricity sector that has harvested nothing but darkness despite over \$36 billion worth of investments in a decade; corruption that notched up several levels under Jonathan's watch, with \$7.92 billion lost to corruption in one year; a multibillion naira oil subsidy scam; and galloping poverty across the land despite crude oil prices reaching three digits over two years, until November 2014.<sup>35</sup> Added to this

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32 Mustapha AR, *op. cit.*, p. 370.

33 Medard JF, 'Crisis, change and continuity', in Adebajo A & AR Mustapha (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 314–333.

34 Adebajo A, 'Hegemony on a shoestring: Nigeria's post-Cold War foreign policy', in Adebajo A & AR Mustapha (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 1–37; Ogwu JU, *op. cit.*, pp. 253–356; Okonta I, 'The disease of elephants: Oil-rich minority areas, Shell and international NGOs', in Adebajo A & AR Mustapha (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 116–137; Ogunsanwo A, 'The Arab Spring and contemporary challenges in Nigeria', in Nwoke CN & O Oche (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 239–254.

35 See *Nigerian Tribune*, 'The unending fraud in the petroleum sector', Editorial, 5 November 2013; *The Nation*, 'Farce imitates life (Nigeria's flared gas can generate her electricity need, says minister; Nigeria's power plant to rely on Niger Republic's, says another minister)', Editorial, 10 December 2014; *The Nation*, 'Jonathanomics: Pay a premium for darkness', 11 December 2014; Oluwajuyitan J, 'Celebration of corruption', *The Nation*, 11 December 2014; Akinkuotu A, 'One big mental ward', *Tell*, 22 December 2014. On corruption, see Leadership, 'Nigeria lost \$7.92 billion to corruption in one year', 17 December 2014. Small wonder the powerful Nigerian Labour Congress lamented in August 2014 that except for the negativities – serial acts of impunity; abuse of human rights; harassment of the media; disruption of peaceful protests; and diminishing jobs – Nigeria hardly has anything to show for 15 years of democracy. See Agboola T, 'Labour: Nothing to show for 15 years of democracy', *The Nation*, 18 August 2014. For Mustapha AR, *op. cit.*, p. 274, while democratisation may be central to Nigeria's national interests, it is hardly meaningful without the structural transformation and development of the economy and social equity in distributing the gains and fruits thereof. While Nigeria earned NGN 39 trillion in four years, misery stalks no fewer than 70% of Nigerians. For an editorialist, 'nothing symbolises the poor governance quality in Nigeria than the bewildering irony of a polity that is awash with cash, yet rich only in misery. It is a forlorn metaphor that has dogged the Nigerian state since the days of the oil boom in the 1970s and it seems to earn reinforcement today more than before'. See *The Nation*, 'Rich country, poor citizens', Editorial, 17 July 2014.

sombre picture is a vexed domestic political front suffocated with relentless propaganda by an infamous group, Transformation Ambassadors of Nigeria, bent on re-electing Jonathan on the cheap; Boko Haram's roller-coaster in the north-east, taking over swathes of territory with ease and accentuating Nigerians' worries about the rapidly diminishing capacity of a once-professional military to maintain the country's territorial integrity; and the rising flow of refugees, put at over 58 000 in September 2014.<sup>36</sup>

In consequence, the capacity of the Nigerian state to dominate at the regional and continental levels has been downgraded. This phenomenon can also be attributed in part to the quality of the country's diplomacy, which has been compromised due to falling standards of statecraft; poor image branding; and a gradual erosion of professionalism through, among others, the undue, yet persistent, politicisation of the ambassadorial corps.<sup>37</sup> A major portion of the explanation lies, however, with the quality of the country's political leadership at the highest level.

### NIGERIA ON AUTO-PILOT?

There is little doubt that leadership is key to the nature and character of foreign policy, whether activist, tepid or laid-back. If it is true, following Osuntokun,<sup>38</sup> that 'foreign policy reflects the personality of individual leaders', and yet Nigeria's foreign policy has been marked more by continuity than by change, there is something to be said about Nigerian leaders not being always alive to their responsibilities.<sup>39</sup>

Most post-independence Nigerian leaders were clearly ill prepared for the office. Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the First Republic's prime minister, was deployed by his superior, Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto,<sup>40</sup> who preferred to run the north. Major-General JTU Aguiyi-Ironsi, who made history as Nigeria's first military head of state, was an accidental leader, having stepped into the vacuum created by the failure of the radical majors' coup of 15 January 1966. General Yakubu Gowon, Aguiyi-Ironsi's successor after the July 1966 counter-coup, benefitted from crude military/ethnic machinations that

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Confronted with a largely thieving ruling elite, Sisk TD, *op. cit.*, pp. 781–782 is right to say that Nigeria has 'one of the worst mal-distribution of wealth patterns in the world'.

36 See *The Economist*, 'Unrest in the home of peace', 27 September 2014; *Punch*, 'Recovering lost territory from terrorists', 20 June 2014.

37 Alli WO, 'Nigeria: State weakness and foreign policy', *Nigerian Journal of International Studies*, 38, 1 & 2, 2013, pp. 112–148. Thus, according to columnist Olatunji Dare, 'in the wake of the Chibok abductions, when the accident-prone Jonathan administration stumbled from miscue to egregious miscue in a perfect calendar of blunders; day after day, Nigeria took a pummeling in the global news media, and the Foreign Minister who should have been the international face of Nigeria at such a time was nowhere to be found'. See Dare O, 'Where is our foreign minister', *The Nation*, 23 September 2014.

38 Osuntokun A, 'Gulliver and the Lilliputians: Nigeria and its neighbours', in Adebajo A & AR Mustapha (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 141–158.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 38.

40 A traditional title held in the Sokoto Caliphate in north-western Nigeria.

sidelined his superiors. Obasanjo, both as military head of state (1976–1979) and elected president (1999–2007) in two massively flawed electoral processes, was, by his own admission on both occasions, a reluctant leader.

The other two political generals before him – Babangida and Abacha – had no business being in power. The first ran a duplicitous transition programme for eight years seeking perpetuity in power; the other had, by most accounts, not passed any examination in his life, including in the military. Yar'Adua had signalled his intention to go back to the classroom in 2007, after serving as a two-term governor, when Obasanjo imposed him first on the ruling PDP and, eventually, on the country as a terminally ill president. Jonathan, then his deputy, would become Nigeria's acting president in 2010 by default following Yar'Adua's demise. History merely repeated itself in his favour: a few years earlier he became Bayelsa state governor after his boss, the notoriously corrupt Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, had been removed from office.

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It is doubtful whether these leaders ever had any strategic vision or commanding ideology about what to do in power – and with power. Few appeared to have conceptualised politics as a public vocation, let alone as an emancipatory and humanistic project to snatch an ever-increasing number of Nigerians from the jaws of poverty, ignorance and disease and project abroad a country able and willing to fulfil its historic responsibility to Africa and the globe. This explains why, except for isolated pockets, they all wobbled and stumbled in both domestic politics and foreign policy. Particularly obnoxious was the uncritical and wholesale acceptance of orthodox market reforms, in various guises and disguises, by these leaders since the advent of Babangida in August 1985. Millions of Nigerians were left at the mercy of the harsh realities of the market as the leaders refused to maintain a proper balance between the caprice of the market and the judicious application of public policy. Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) policies weakened and hollowed out the Nigerian state and were more or less successful in muscling society to serve markets, not the people. They also drove a wedge between state and citizens and further exacerbated the state's legitimacy deficit.

Nigerians had hoped that, at his second coming, Obasanjo had learned his lessons and would run a competent and clean government and fix Nigeria. For all his mastery of the jargon of the international development community – due process, accountability, transparency, good governance, etc. – Obasanjo was a huge disappointment. He, who had a public spat with Babangida after accusing his government of implementing SAPs without a human face, did the same thing when he was in power. He, who had been a director of Transparency International, paid no more than lip service to fighting corruption and ended up using the anti-corruption agencies his government reluctantly set up for egregious partisan witch-hunts. His flawed personality may have done him in. 'Obasanjo is an authoritarian personality,' wrote John Campbell, US ambassador during Obasanjo's reign, 'who regularly intimidated and humiliated his closest associates.'<sup>41</sup> Similarly, the

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41 Campbell J, *Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink*. Ibadan: Bookcraft, 2010, p. 90.

PDP – self-styled ‘Africa’s largest party’ – ‘stood for nothing except power for its leaders, and the public knew it’.<sup>42</sup>

Jonathan promised so much in 2011 but delivered so little. On the three major dossiers that defined his government – massive oil theft in the Niger Delta; the Boko Haram Islamist insurgency in the north-east; and the moribund electricity sector – the president showed a copious lack of capacity to lead and govern. Whereas the US intelligence community warned in its *World-Wide Threat Assessment 2014 Report* that unless the Nigerian government overcame its inertia, corruption and inept approach, terrorism would continue to make gains and weaken the state from within,<sup>43</sup> Jonathan made a landmark distinction between stealing and corruption during his televised May 2014 speech and insisted that much of what goes on in the country was the former, not the latter. He turned governance into a tragicomic affair, a charade, a jamboree. His government took the squandering of public funds to new dizzy heights: at the 2013 UN General Assembly session, the Nigerian delegation of a staggering 567 was by far the largest; most of whom, by the admission of then foreign minister Aminu Wali, added no value whatsoever to the meeting.<sup>44</sup>

In the wake of the Chibok girls’ abduction in April 2014 by Boko Haram, Olatunji Dare, a foremost Nigerian columnist, argued that Jonathan has hardly shown<sup>45</sup>

the mental alertness and sure-footedness his office demands in handling [the] many crises that have rocked his administration. But the Chibok abduction and his manner of dealing with it has exposed his inadequacies as never before and not just to his compatriots who always had their doubts. Now, the whole world has a good idea of the leader of Africa’s most populous country and largest economy, home to the largest aggregation of black humanity.

‘Dr Jonathan would come to meetings,’ Dare continues, ‘without having mastered his briefing papers and would sometimes doze off.’ Finally:<sup>46</sup>

One of the worst-kept secrets in Abuja is that Dr Jonathan’s quarters in the Villa is a den where he and a coterie of revellers carouse far into the night. This kind of routine leaves little time for serious reflection on issues of state, and for cultivating the mind and the intellect, and may well account for the detachment, the lethargy, that is the hallmark of his style.

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42 The iconic Nelson Mandela made this observation on Nigerian leaders: ‘[Nigerian] leaders have no respect for the people; they believe that their personal interests are the interest of the people. They take people’s resources and turn it into personal wealth. There is a level of poverty in Nigeria that should be unacceptable. *I cannot understand why Nigerians are not angrier than they are*’ (emphasis added). Cited in Oyebola A, ‘Centenary celebrations: A nation in pretence (1)’, *The Guardian*, 5 June 2014. See also Campbell J, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

43 See *Punch*, ‘Recovering lost territory from terrorists’, 20 June 2014.

44 See *The Nation*, ‘Big for nothing’, 18 September 2014; Dare O, ‘Jamborees without end’, *The Nation*, 16 September 2014.

45 Dare O, ‘JEG: No second term’, *The Nation*, 13 May 2014.

46 *Ibid.*

Jonathan appeared so overwhelmed by the exigencies of Nigeria's domestic politics that he apparently settled for a diminished role in ECOWAS, let alone in the AU. Examples abound. First, as part of his government's anti-terrorist strategy with Nigeria's immediate neighbours, Jonathan made multiple trips to Chad to parley with Idriss Déby, the country's president and a suspected Boko Haram backer. A few years earlier the visits would have been the other way around. Jonathan's leadership is several streets behind Murtala Mohammed's 'tough, inflexible, strong-minded and aggressively intolerant personality as head of state'<sup>47</sup> that informed Nigeria's Angola policy in 1975–6. While the Balewa government prioritised domestic problems above foreign challenges out of choice, the Jonathan government was compelled to do so,<sup>48</sup> subdued principally by the Islamist insurgency as well as by rampant corruption and crashing oil prices.

Second, Jonathan was conspicuous by his absence at the crucial 19<sup>th</sup> AU summit in July 2012 in Addis Ababa, where South Africa's Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma was elected as the chairperson of the AU Commission in a contest in which, rather curiously, Nigeria had staked its integrity on the incumbent, the Gabonese Jean Ping, who had no known pro-Nigerian sentiments. South African President Jacob Zuma was present and effectively so.<sup>49</sup>

Third, and finally, a bewildering lack of sound judgement almost saw Jonathan running against President Thomas Boni Yayi of Benin for the AU chair, in a flagrant violation of the organisation's unwritten norm that big states do not seek important organisational positions, the same principle Abuja insisted South Africa had violated in advancing Dlamini Zuma's candidacy.<sup>50</sup>

## GLOBAL EXPECTATIONS

Given Nigeria's size, population and immense natural resources, its independence in October 1960 and subsequent admission into the UN elicited considerable optimism both within and outside the continent. It was seen as a trusted voice for both African countries and the African diaspora. Nigeria was expected to use the UN platform to pursue and advance the continent's interests as well as its own, howsoever defined and understood. In the process Nigeria was expected to work with other sovereign nations to strengthen multilateralism as a potent tool for interrogating global problems.<sup>51</sup>

Nigeria has consistently campaigned for the democratisation of the UN Security Council, to make it more egalitarian. It assiduously pushed for UN reforms to have wound down by the end of 2014. Notwithstanding the formidable Islamist threat to its territorial integrity since 2009, as well as the governance deficits explained above, Nigeria appears to remain

47 Agwu FA, *op. cit.*, p. 577.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 531.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 552.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 552.

51 Gambari IA, 'Nigeria and the United Nations: The pursuit of national interest through multinationalism in a changing world order', in Ogwu JU, *op. cit.*, pp. 187–198.

relevant in the global body. In Abuja's latest election as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, in November 2013, it garnered an impressive 186 of 193 votes.

The country's role in international peacekeeping, 'one of the most significant and generally positive activities of the world body',<sup>52</sup> is fabled, and its contributions in other areas are well documented. These include well-qualified Nigerians who have, over the years, occupied key leadership positions in some of the UN's main organs; the country's successful projection of itself as a dependable and sturdy voice for African interests, the most emblematic being, in relation to Liberia in the 1990s, fighting for and defending 'the then novel idea of co-deployment of troops by a sub-regional organisation and the UN',<sup>53</sup> and its insistence, in 1995, that UN military observers should not be withdrawn from Liberia.<sup>54</sup>

Nigeria has fulfilled one of the core objectives of its foreign policy, namely the promotion of international peace and security, through its involvement in at least 40 of the UN's 55 peacekeeping missions in places as diverse as Lebanon, Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia, Somalia and Angola. Four of these missions were commanded by the country's senior military officers. Abuja has been praised for the orderly behaviour of its military and paramilitary personnel. Since the Zaire crisis in 1960 Nigeria has spent about \$13 billion on peacekeeping operations and sent over 250 000 members of its armed forces to UN-sponsored missions globally.<sup>55</sup>

However, on two key international issues – the Haiti earthquake in 2010 that left much of the Caribbean country in ruin and the 2008 attempt by a young British-Nigerian, Abdul Mutallab, to bomb a US-bound jet – Abuja was found wanting. Its below-par response to the former betrayed a rather tepid attitude to the oldest independent African diaspora conclave in the Western hemisphere. On the latter, Yar'Adua's inexplicable refusal to hand over power to Jonathan, his deputy, created an avoidable power vacuum and precipitated policy bungling on the issue.<sup>56</sup> On both counts, the country's image took a hammering. As Mandela said, 'the world will not respect Africa until Nigeria earns that respect' and 'the black people of the world need Nigeria to be great as a source of pride and confidence'.<sup>57</sup>

## CONTINENTAL DIPLOMACY

Until 1994, driven by its Africa centrepiece foreign policy, Nigeria appeared wholly committed to the goal of total decolonisation of the African continent and the complete eradication of apartheid from South Africa. It committed considerable human, material,

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Nigeria has fulfilled one of the core objectives of its foreign policy, namely the promotion of international peace and security, through its involvement in at least 40 of the UN's 55 peacekeeping missions

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52 *Ibid.*, p. 90.

53 Gambari IA, in Adebajo A & AR Mustapha (eds), *op. cit.*

54 Gambari IA, in Ogwu JU, *op. cit.*, pp. 188–189.

55 See Agbakwuru J, 'Nigeria spends \$13 billion on peacekeeping – Ex-Polish envoy', *Vanguard*, 31 October 2013.

56 Agwu FA, *op. cit.*

57 Cited in Oyebola A, 'Centenary celebrations: A nation in pretence (1)', *The Guardian*, 5 June 2014.

emotional and financial resources to this cause and mobilised global moral support for its realisation. The literature speaks to a continental policy driven more by altruism and morality than by rationality. During this period, the Babangida government rolled out a technical aid corps programme targeted at less endowed sister African states, multiple peacekeeping operations and numerous aid payments in cash and kind.<sup>58</sup> Between 1977 and 2002 Nigeria mediated in the Tanzania–Uganda conflict, the Western Sahara dispute and the Ethiopia–Somalia war.

The Nigeria Trust Fund, with a seed amount of \$80 million, was set up in July 1975 within the ambit of the African Development Bank. All other African states could borrow at relatively low interest rates determined by the bank.<sup>59</sup>

In sum, Nigeria has served as the arrowhead of many continental and regional initiatives and institutions, but has often taken the back seat and not had Nigerians take up positions.<sup>60</sup> For Akinteriwa,<sup>61</sup> ‘Nigeria has contributed enormously to the protection of the interests of other African states in diverse ways, at times beyond her capacity.’

In 2001, alongside Algeria, Egypt, Senegal and South Africa, Nigeria was a major driver of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development and the African Peer Review Mechanism. In May 2006 Nigeria helped broker an agreement intended to bring peace to Darfur in Sudan.<sup>62</sup> By 2013 it had about 6 000 peacekeepers in various flashpoints on the continent. Some 4 000 of them were in Darfur. In 2016 it contributed \$16.96 million to the total AU budget of \$522 million.<sup>63</sup>

Clearly something has shifted in Nigeria’s continental diplomacy: whereas the old era of decolonisation and anti-apartheid has lapsed, with Abuja as arguably the arch-defender of Africa’s sovereignty, in the new post-decolonisation, post-apartheid era a weakened and challenged Nigeria is no longer in charge. Fafowora<sup>64</sup> has argued that there is ample evidence to conclude that Nigeria’s counsel now counts for little and that ‘Nigeria is no longer able to mobilise support for its candidates in such vital regional organisations’. This includes the country’s losing streak in critical elections in the AU or some of its economic agencies, as well as a two-time loss of important positions in the African Development Bank. Small wonder the contention that ‘with the end of colonialism and

58 Agwu FA, *op. cit.*, p. 544.

59 Ogunsanwo A, in Nwoke CN & O Oche (eds), *op. cit.*

60 Agwu FA, *op. cit.*, p. 567.

61 Akinteriwa BA, ‘Reciprocity and Nigeria’s African policy: Beyond the challenge of incapacity’, in Nwoke CN & O Oche (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 275–314.

62 Sisk TD, *op. cit.*, p. 763.

63 *Premium Times Abuja*, ‘Nigeria to contribute \$17 million to AU budget in 2015’, 28 July 2014, <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/164034-nigeria-to-contribute-17-million-to-au-budget-in-2015.html>, accessed 23 August 2016.

64 Fafowora D, ‘When will Nigeria earn international respect again?’, *The Nation*, 25 September 2014.

apartheid and in light of the differences or rivalry between Nigeria and South Africa at the moment, the Nigeria Africa centrepiece policy can at best be said to be in disarray'.<sup>65</sup>

It is doubtful if Nigeria ever had a coherent post-apartheid South Africa policy.<sup>66</sup> Otherwise it would have taken serious policy steps, before and after political change came to South Africa in 1994, to build a strong and diversified agro-industrial economy able to match South Africa's sophisticated manufacturing economy. Had it done this in a deliberate and deliberative manner, Abuja would not have been caught unawares by the rise of Pretoria, whose impressive economic and commercial strength has now found its way to Nigeria. While Nigeria's banking subsidiaries have made their presence felt in several African countries, more work remains to be done to match South Africa's economic muscle on the continent.<sup>67</sup> Without a coherent post-apartheid South Africa policy, Abuja has been ensconced in a game of catch-up with Pretoria economically and otherwise. Despite its becoming Africa's nominally biggest economy in April in 2014, Nigeria has remained several streets behind South Africa in areas such as governance and infrastructure.<sup>68</sup> A combination of falling oil revenues, a stronger rand and the unpegging of the naira against the US dollar meant that South Africa overtook Nigeria again in August 2016.<sup>69</sup>

Since it outlasted Abuja in the AU Commission chairperson election in 2012, what has been referred to as South Africa's challenge to Nigeria's 'primus inter pares' position on the continent is becoming 'more muscular than ever, not just on account of its stronger and more functional system (from the economic to the diplomatic), but also on account of its more vibrant politics and stronger military, having deployed its Navy to the West African coast in the heat of the post-election crisis in Côte d'Ivoire without any attempt at counter-deployment by Nigeria, even if it were to be a mere sabre-rattling'.<sup>70</sup> In both the Ivorian and Libyan crises, Nigeria's position, which tallied with that of France and the UN but was antithetical to that of South Africa and the AU, was deftly presented by Pretoria as being pro-imperialist. At the Shehu Musa Yar'Adua memorial lecture in Abuja in December 2011, Zuma rationalised South Africa's position on Libya as meant to defeat the neo-colonial agenda of the West in enforcing a no-fly zone. Abuja was pilloried for

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65 Agwu FA, *op. cit.*, p. 563.

66 A senior researcher at the NIIA who worked with the two countries in 2001 to rationalise the multilateral organisations to which both countries belonged stated that Abuja did indeed have a South Africa policy. He also said that the Bi-National Commission had proved to be a useful platform for ironing out issues of common interest and concern to both countries. Interview, Lagos, 21 November 2014.

67 In 2003 Nigeria had only three banking subsidiaries in the rest of Africa; by 2013 the number had grown to 44 in 33 countries. See 'Nigeria/South Africa: economic giants change places', *Africa Confidential*, 54, 23, 15 November 2013.

68 In addition, 'these raw numbers do not detract from the depth and sophistication of South Africa's financial markets, infrastructure, institutional strength and corporate governance versus Nigeria's oil-dominated economy but they do underline that it is losing relative strength', *ibid.*

69 *BBC News*, 'South Africa regains Africa's "biggest economy" title from Nigeria', 11 August 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-37045276>, accessed 30 September 2016.

70 Agwu FA, *op. cit.*, p. 568.

supporting Alassane Ouattara rather than Laurent Gbagbo in the post-election imbroglio in Côte d'Ivoire in 2010–2011. This position was said to contradict 'the non-extra African intervention strand in [Nigeria's] Africa centrepiece policy, putting Abuja in the frame of an enemy of an African interest'.<sup>71</sup>

In September 2014, back-to-back cash-for-arms scandals totalling \$15 million and allegedly involving high-profile Nigerian state officials and prominent politically exposed persons<sup>72</sup> were forfeited to the South African treasury.<sup>73</sup> Described by Dare<sup>74</sup> as 'a diplomatic fiasco with criminal undertones', this singular foreign policy faux pas betrays a ruling elite that sets little store by national image, branding and packaging. It also evinces an Africa policy, under Jonathan's watch, bereft of public morality, coherence and focus.

## REGIONAL DIPLOMACY

Nigeria has always pursued a policy of good neighbourliness and solidarity in West Africa. This is hinged on Abuja's enlightened self-interest, typified by a huge market for industrial goods and investment. In view of its 'manifest destiny' doctrine and seeming capacity to implement it, Nigeria has, since 1975, at ECOWAS's founding, deployed both bilateral and multilateral diplomacy to invest in peace and security. The result has been a rich harvest of protocols and mechanisms: the 1991 Abuja Declaration of Political Principles; the 1999 ECOWAS Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security; and the 2001 Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.<sup>75</sup>

Nigeria is the principal funder of the Lomé-based ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID), accounting for 60% of its equity. It does not control the bank's activities, however. For Ogunsanwo,<sup>76</sup> the EBID 'is the only such financial institution in the world where the country providing such proportion of equity does not also provide the executive head of the bank'. There were also other important *démarches*.

71 *Ibid.*, p. 554.

72 See *The Nation*, 'Federal government as money launderer? No explanation can remove the illegality and odium of the \$9.3 million cash haulage scam', Editorial, 23 September 2014. The All-Progressive Congress, the main opposition party, told the Jonathan government that 'nowhere else does a government engage in illegal black market movement of money or arms – both signatures of terrorism world-wide'. See Jibueze J, 'Outrage over \$5.7 million arms deal', *The Nation*, 8 October 2014.

73 On the contrary, South Africa's high commissioner to Nigeria disclosed in a TV interview in Lagos in November 2014 that the money had been repatriated to Nigeria.

74 Dare O, 13 May 2014, *op. cit.*

75 Akindele RA, 'Nigeria's multilateral diplomacy, 1960–2012: Structure, process and preoccupation', *Nigerian Journal of International Studies*, 38, 1 & 2, December 2013, pp. 1–46.

76 Ogunsanwo A, 'Bilateralism and Nigeria's foreign policy', *Nigerian Journal of International Studies*, 38, 1 & 2, December 2013, pp. 47–76.

- In the 1970s the Gowon regime provided economic assistance and cheap oil to several of ECOWAS's neighbours.<sup>77</sup>
- During the Second Republic, under Shagari's watch, Nigeria led two peacekeeping efforts, described by Gambari<sup>78</sup> as 'costly and frustrating', to reconcile warring Chad factions.
- Felix Malloum, one of Chad's early leaders, was hosted in Nigeria between 1977 and 2002, with a view to easing the peace and reconciliation process. Nigeria also furnished grants for the renewal of Ndjamena, Chad's capital.<sup>79</sup>
- Nigeria picked up the bill for the Liberian section of the Trans-African Highway named after Babangida; settled the country's debt to the African Development Bank; and invested \$25 million in the joint Liberia–Guinea Mifergui iron ore project and \$4.5 million in the Liberian National Oil Corporation.<sup>80</sup>
- In Sierra Leone, Nigeria alone provided 70% of the 12 000 troops to the ECOWAS Monitoring Group mission.<sup>81</sup>

Since the 1990s West Africa has increasingly been the focal point of Nigeria's Africa policy. Securing the region in light of growing intra-state conflicts – including the hitherto peaceful Côte d'Ivoire in September 2002 and northern Mali in 2012/13 – and mitigating their creeping contagious effects (including refugee influx and subregional insecurity and instability) are Nigeria's main foreign policy preoccupations. Akindele<sup>82</sup> has underscored Abuja's 'generous investment of time, attention and resources on the maintenance of peace and security' in the region and on the continent.

Boko Haram's escalating insurgency in north-east Nigeria, as well as the fall-out from terrorist groups' occupation of northern Mali and the Libyan debacle, has, since 2013, raised the stakes. Small wonder Nigeria has intensified bilateral and multilateral partnerships with its immediate neighbours – Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger. However, the fact that these partnerships were boosted only after France had hosted a summit on the Islamist sect in Paris in May 2014 – rather than Nigeria's organising one in West Africa – perhaps best demonstrates the complexity of Abuja as a regional pivotal

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77 Gambari IA, in Ogwu JU, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

78 Gambari IA, in Adebajo A & AR Mustapha (eds), *op. cit.*, p. 66.

79 Osuntokun A, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

80 Nigeria also invested in Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, yet it made neither political nor economic capital out of this. Liberians lament that the British and the Chinese have taken over their country, with Nigeria conspicuous by its absence. Roundtable discussion with a group of researchers at the NIIA, Lagos, 20 November 2014. Also see Adebajo A, *op. cit.*

81 Providing for Peacekeeping, 'Peacekeeping contributor profile: Nigeria', <http://www.providingforpeacekeeping.org/2015/04/24/peacekeeping-contributor-profile-nigeria/>, accessed 23 August 2016.

82 Akindele RA, *op. cit.*

state: it is the main driver of, and biggest spender for, the regional body, but does not appear to command its respect and loyalty.<sup>83</sup>

Jonathan's active presence at the Paris summit was curious, going against the grain of Nigeria's historically tense relations with France since the Nigerian civil war (1967–1970), when Paris actively supported the country's dismemberment. France is Nigeria's natural rival in the region, and has consistently sought to undermine Abuja's power projection in its backyard. A combination of factors led to the faux pas: the apparent failure of the good neighbourliness policy; desperation over the severe challenges posed by Boko Haram's ever-expanding continental and global networks; radicalisation in Niger, Chad and Cameroon following the increased Boko Haram presence in those countries after a crackdown by the Nigerian military in 2013;<sup>84</sup> and an apparent lack of strategic thinking.

Jonathan should have tapped into and activated existing protocols and agreements on security. In December 1984 Nigeria, Benin, Ghana and Togo entered into a security protocol. A Joint Multinational Task Force was formed in 1998 by Chad, Niger and Nigeria to fight transnational crime, with its mandate expanded in 2009. In October 2013 Niger and Nigeria agreed to form a common front in the fight against Boko Haram and other terrorist groups through, among others, defence pacts and joint border patrols. In addition, there was evidence of increasing collaboration between Nigeria and Cameroon in May 2013.<sup>85</sup> In May 2014, at a summit on worsening insecurity in northern Nigeria and Mali, President John Mahama of Ghana declared: 'We must put in place measures that make clear that we will not allow any of our countries to be used to destabilise other nations.'<sup>86</sup> Some analysts see leadership failure in Nigeria's decision to attend the Paris summit. For Adebajo,<sup>87</sup> 'if Nigeria were truly a regional superpower, why would it need the president of France to bring it together with Benin, Niger, Chad and Cameroon?'

83 Nigeria was the butt of a joke by former Senegalese president Abdoulaye Wade in 2000 and a Beninese minister on the eve of Nigeria's 2007 elections. Wade said that ECOWAS without Nigeria would be preferable. The minister pleaded with Nigerians not to turn the elections into a disaster for the region. He added the rider: 'A politically and economically failed and corrupt nation cannot provide legitimate leadership at home and abroad.' Cited in Agwu FA, *op. cit.*, p. 568.

84 See ICG (International Crisis Group), *Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insurgency*, Africa Report 216, 3 April 2014, p. 25. In April 2014 a BBC report alleged that Boko Haram might have extended its tentacles to Niger, where some of its leaders embarked on a recruitment drive. See Kanu D, 'United against insurgency', *The Niche on Sunday*, 27 April 2014.

85 In that month, Cameroon's Rapid Battalion Intervention, which has an agreement with the Nigerian military Joint Task Force that allows both parties to chase criminals and bandits for up to 8km across the border, deployed about 1 500 troops to the Nigerian border. This was in response to Nigeria's offensive against the Islamists. In November 2012 the two countries created a joint body aimed at securing their common border through the agency of joint military operations and better intelligence sharing.

86 See Ola L & K Koodo, 'Suspected Boko Haram gunmen kill emir, policemen in Nigeria', *Reuters*, 31 May 2014.

87 Adebajo A, *op. cit.*

## CONCLUSION

Contrary to Saliu's contention that 'Nigeria has benefitted from her Africa policy' and that 'her diplomatic space has expanded as a continental leader',<sup>88</sup> it in fact enjoys waning influence and dwindling power at the global, continental and regional levels. Potent evidence of Nigeria's decline is that in West Africa, its 'natural backyard', not only is much of the region more stable and more economically prosperous than Nigeria but a growing number of West African countries are also joining or about to join the club of oil producers (including Ghana, Cameroon, Chad, Benin and Senegal) – at a time when oil's value is diminishing on the global market, devaluing the importance of the asset.<sup>89</sup> Worse, according to Omole,<sup>90</sup> 'most of these hitherto non-oil producing countries have more refining and energy generating capabilities than Nigeria. So, why should Nigeria continue to revel in the illusion of being a regional power?'

In order to reverse the Nigerian condition, the country requires tough and legitimate leaders who will build a strong economy and strong institutions to drive a clean government at home and a national interest-propelled foreign policy. Clean and accountable governance will boost Nigeria's leadership position everywhere.<sup>91</sup> As the previously governing PDP single-handedly ran the country aground since 1999 due to its copious lack of a coherent ideology of change to reposition Nigeria beyond an awkward transformation agenda sloganeering that compares Jonathan to Mandela, Martin Luther King, Barack Obama and John F Kennedy, it did not deserve to run the country any longer.

Genuine, popular and substantive democratisation at home and its promotion abroad is a social desideratum.<sup>92</sup> Jinadu<sup>93</sup> explicates this phenomenon as follows: 'The democratisation of national politics and governance processes requires and must be strengthened by the democratisation of public policy-making processes, including foreign policy ones, in inclusive, participatory, transparent and accountable ways in the spirit and letter of Chapter 2 [of the 1999 Constitution].'

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88 Saliu HA, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

89 Agwu FA, *op. cit.*, p. 583.

90 Omole B, *The New Rapprochement between Nigeria and France*, Public lecture at the NIIA, 23 February 2010.

91 Nwoke CN, *op. cit.*, p. 382.

92 Mustapha AR, *op. cit.*, p. 374.

93 Jinadu LA, 'Theoretical perspectives on Nigeria's foreign policy', in Anyaoku E (ed.), *Review of Nigeria's Foreign Policy: Issues and Perspectives*. Lagos: NIIA, 2012, pp. 35–38.

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