

Nigerian Foreign Policy and Military Cooperation in Africa

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Abstract

This paper delivers a general background study of Nigeria's foreign and military cooperation in Africa. The paper argues that the focus of Nigeria's foreign and defence policies from 1960 till date was dictated and conditioned by the prevalent internal and external threats to national security and the urge to be Africa's security guarantor. Promoting democratic governance was not a major feature of policy since, immediately after independence, Nigeria was strongly focused on supporting the decolonisation of the African states through the instrumentality of the OAU. While most African countries were still under colonial rule, Nigeria's strategic interests were primarily to support peace, decolonisation and economic development in Africa. The paper also notes that, over four decades of its external relations before the return to civilian rule in May 1999, the most visible employment of Nigeria's armed forces in pursuit of the country's foreign policy objectives was in support of various UN peacekeeping missions within the African continent and around the world. In addition to this, it is also argued that a central goal of Nigerian foreign and defence policies from 1966 till date, was to fulfil its manifest destiny as a regional leader in sub-Saharan Africa, but not to promoting the democratisation of the African states. However, this paper makes use of a descriptive and historical approaches to analyse the salient characteristics of Nigerian foreign and defence policies before the return to the civilian government in 1999.

Introduction

A salient challenge faced by the Nigerian state upon independence on the 1st October 1960, was how to devise and direct its new diplomacy and international relations to address national security and developmental issues. As a sovereign state, the analysis of the conduct and direction of Nigeria's foreign policy architectures cannot be divorced from its defence policy during the period from 1960-1999. Defence policy is an instrument of a state's foreign policy, statecraft, the preservation of sovereignty and independence (Omede, 2012: 294). Nigerian defence policy objectives include the "security and stability in the West African sub-region through collective security" (Bello, quoted in Haastrup, and Lucia, 2014). From 1960-1999, Nigeria's perception of its national security in West Africa, and, in an African context were characterised and orchestrated by three elements: a sense of vulnerability; a strong representation of the connection between national and (sub) regional security; and the perceived necessity to be a guarantor of West Africa's stability, as well as Africa's regional leader (Haastrup, and Lucia, 2014).

Nigeria's sense of vulnerability became obvious after the first military coup of 25 January 1966 which abruptly ended the First Republic, the killing of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa- Nigeria

s Prime Minister, and the eruption of ethnic and political rivalries in civil war (1967-1970). In addition, the negative developments on the continent resulting from the Cold War shattered the naïve optimism of the immediate post-independence period, provoking an unprecedented commitment to a modernisation and augmentation programme that encompassed all segments of Nigeria's military power as an instrument of statecraft (Bassey, 1993: 253). Furthermore, Nigeria's vulnerability after the First Republic was also externally driven. For example, the decisions of Nigeria's traditional allies – Britain and the United States of America – not to supply the Federal Government of Nigeria with weapons to prosecute the civil war in 1967 and the consequent adoption of more activist foreign policy options, as well as the increasing importance of crude oil as the mainstay of the economy from the 1970s, led to a total modernisation of the Nigerian military and a new foreign policy orientation (Fawole, 2008).

Conceptual Issues

Foreign Policy has been defined by various scholars in different ways that almost makes it not to have one acceptable definition. Hence, Dauda (2015) disclosed that foreign policy just like any other social science concept has defied one universally accepted definition notwithstanding the many attempts that have been made by scholars to define it. Chafe (1994) argued that the primary requirement for debating anything is to first and foremost understand the actual thing being talked about. To Northedges (1968), foreign policy is defined as the interplay between the outside and inside. Universally, a country's foreign policy is designed to promote and defend its national interests. Therefore, "foreign policy is the product of an interaction between the decision-makers of that state and the environment in which they are placed. There is a close relation between domestic policies and foreign policy of a nation as foreign policy is the reflection of domestic policy of that region" (Ahmed, 2019, p.5). From the technocrat's point of view, foreign policy is defined as a strategy with which institutionally designated decision_makers seek to manipulate the international environment to achieve a certain national objective (Chibundu, 2003). Uhomoihi (201, p.8) defined foreign policy "as a system of activities". By this assertion, he referred to the systemic nature of Foreign Policy as a set of ideas and processes interwoven to enable a state achieve its core objectives internationally.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts a Regional Security Complex theory as its theoretical construct. Regional Security Complex theory was coined and developed by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever and later advanced in 2003 to describe structures in international relations. The theory argued that international security is surveyed from a regional standpoint, and relations among state actors are often predicated on geographically clustered arrangements. The regional security complex is viewed from its distinct and stable arrangement of security interaction among state actors. Though, varies on various degrees anchored on national interest. It is pertinent to note that the interaction among member states who have relative homogeneity of the same region is very high compared to members of Regional Security Complexes, (RSCs) outside the geographical cluster. Regional is geographical and usually consists of neighbouring sovereign states distinct in natural barriers such as deserts, oceans, and mountains, among others (Buzan and Wæver, 2003). A region "chooses the actors; the actors do not choose the region" (Buzan, 1983, p.113). This suggests that the RSC's primary focus is on playing a dominant role in local matters and equally defining national security priorities in international disputes. Morgenthau (1946) argued that the diplomacy of collective security must aim at transforming all local conflicts into world conflicts. If this cannot be one world of peace, it cannot help being one world of war. The theory is relevant to this study because it explains the relationship among the West African countries towards the formation of ECOMOG to forestall security threats in the West Africa Sub-region. ECOMOG is a product of ECOWAS Protocol anchored on contiguity and propinquity. There is no successful regional security organization without endowed state actor(s). The fulcrum of Nigeria's foreign policy is Afrocentrism, which was made clear through Alhaji Tafawa Belewa's speech in the United Nations General Assembly in 1960. Every successive administration in Nigeria has continued the Afrocentric foreign policy thrust, which has provided

the platform for hegemonism as alleged by many scholars.

Nigeria's Foreign and Defence Policies in the First Republic, 1960-1966

One of the pre-eminent points in the history of Nigeria's defence policy and foreign relations is the marked reorientation from a period of conservatism and self-effacement to a more dynamic posture under Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa in the First Republic (Bassey, 2011: xxvii). More specifically, after independence, Nigeria inherited a military establishment that was equipped to play an essentially internal security role. It was small relative to the size of the country at the period under examination and was not only immobile but also had an inadequate logistical base (Peters, 1977). Nigeria's defence policy was based on the need to maintain internal security and the country's foreign policy interests, which were closely aligned and intertwined with British and Commonwealth interests. The military that Nigeria maintained during the First Republic can, at best, be described as a constabulary force, thus the army lacked the operational capacity to operate beyond Nigeria's borders. There was no air force to provide air mobility and ground support, and the navy was virtually and essentially a harbour patrol unit. This is because Britain had not felt that it needed to establish a strong defence base system in the country before the country was granted independence. In this regard, the British colonial rulers failed to realise that a strong defence system would have helped the newly independent state to strengthen its external relations and to cope with the emerging security challenges which the country might face in its external relations.

Nigerian National Security and Foreign Policy under Military Rule,

Nigerian foreign and defence policies underwent a dramatic transformation during the initial period of military rule from 1966 to 1979. This period is here discussed in three phases.

The First Phase: The Civil War; 15 January 1966-25 July 1967.

Major General Aguiyi Ironsi, the first military Head of State after the coup d'état in January 1966, inherited a weak political system characterised by a chauvinistic political structure, politicisation of the army, a weak defence system and the July 1966 civil war which followed the secession of the former Eastern Region (Dudley, 1973), led by Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu. After six months of Ironsi's reign, a second military coup ensued which led to the death of Ironsi and the installation of Major General Yakubu Gowon as the second military Head of State on 27 July 1967.

The Second Phase: The Civil War and Nigeria's Foreign and Defence Policies, 1967-1975.

One of the significant markers and turning point in this period was the significant personnel increment of the Nigerian armed forces (Abegunrin, 2001: 109). For example, to balance and strengthen the security situation in the country, Gowon increased the size of the Nigerian armed forces to about 200,000 men, compared to the 10,000 mainly ceremonial and policing personnel under Balewa's regime. Balewa's belief that there was no credible threat to Nigeria's sovereignty and territorial integrity had been revealed to be ill-conceived and parochial (Aluko, 1981). The civil war had both internal and external implications for Nigeria's national security and foreign policy. First, the external dimension underscored the threats to territorial integrity by the armed forces of Nigeria's neighbouring states (in particular Cameroon and Chad); the attempt by foreign mercenaries to overthrow the government of the neighbouring Republic of Benin; the need for military stabilisation through peace-keeping (Tanzania); anti-imperialist struggles in Southern Africa during the Gowon regime (notably in Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe), the OAU's core objective of a Pan-African Force against the racist and imperialist domination of the African continent (Bassey, 2011), were all direct threats to Nigeria's security (Aluko, 1981).

These were conceived as threats beyond the country's territorial threshold and the need for a coherent and strong military instrument as an instrument of foreign policy became fundamental after the First Republic. Second, the internal dimension had four major effects. First, an ongoing domestic economic crisis and ethnic tension. About 30,000 Igbo civilians were killed in a struggle

for power with the Hausa-Fulanis and around 1 million refugees fled to the Igbo homeland in the East (The BBC, cited Omede, 2012). Second, by the end of the civil war in 1970, the Nigerian Armed Forces had lost their internal cohesion and pan-Nigerian outlook and were polarised along ethnic divides (Osunyikanmi, 2011). Third, the general restructuring and expansion of the Nigerian military by Gowon's regime (Bassey, 2011). Fourth, the general appreciation and acceptance of the essential need for the military instrument as an imperative parameter within Nigeria's strategic environment to deter internal threats became the guiding foreign policy objectives of Gowon era (Bassey, 2011).

Another strategic reason for a redirection in the national security policy during and after the civil war were the threats posed by the French mercenaries in the former French colonies (Cote d'Ivoire, Benin Republic and Gabon) against the Nigerian state during the civil war, which underlined Nigeria's vulnerability and the need to mend ties with her neighbours to prevent them being used as a launching pad for external attacks (Cyril, 2008). Similarly, Abegunrin (2003), notes that the influence of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and Portugal in giving assistance and encouragement to Biafra was a calculated attempt to balkanise the country and the unwillingness on the side of all Western powers including Britain and the USA (Britain changed her attitude after the Soviet Union had agreed to supply Nigeria with military aircraft in August 1976) to sell ammunition to Nigeria at the inception of the civil war persuaded the Nigerian leaders that their previous pro-Western foreign policy orientations needed urgent review, (Aluko, 1981). The power politics that operated in the international system also informed Gowon that the former imperial powers were motivated by the desire to maintain their economic and strategic dominance in Africa (Bassey, 2011).

Furthermore, this new approach to security and foreign policy in Gowon's regime became clear in its radical departure from the pro-Western policy of the Balewa administration concerning the regional defence system in Africa. Overall, the Gowon regime's foreign and defence policies were more radical than the pro-Western policy during Balewa's government. Although Gowon had realised the need to strengthen the country's defence force to deter both internal and external threats, nurturing democracy across Africa was not the priority of his regime. Of course, the promotion of democratisation internally and externally would not have been in the national interest of the Nigerian state, considering its military regime and while most countries in Africa were still under colonial rule.

Murtala Mohammed/ Olusegun Obasanjo Regime; 1975-1979

The third phase of Nigeria's foreign and defence policies came under the brief but radical regime of General Murtala Mohammed (Idang, 1989), which brought about a significant redirection and shift in substance and style in the Nigerian foreign and defence policies (Nweke, 2014) between July 1975 and February 1976. (Gambari 2008), notes that the new radical assertiveness in the Gowon administration was undoubtedly reinforced and galvanised by the post-civil war economic prosperity of the oil boom. The increase in national economic power occasioned by the oil revenues increased the confidence and means of the regime to pursue a dynamic, active and effective policy in Africa and to influence the decisions of extra-regional powers (Bassey, 2011).

Accordingly, Murtala's regime sought to differentiate itself as much as possible from that of his predecessors – Balewa, Ironsi and Gowon. Surprisingly, as part of his regime's reform agenda to purge the military, he retired General Gowon and other generals within the armed forces (Eghosa, 1998) and fittingly pointed out and identified the military element as crucial and the most fundamental instrument of foreign policy (Aba, 2013: 80). Diplomatically, General Murtala Mohammed's radical commitment towards making Africa the cornerstone of Nigeria's foreign policy cannot be over-emphasised. For example, Nigeria's decision to recognise the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) as the sole legitimate representative of the people of Angola in 1975 and the diplomatic, financial and material support of Nigeria to liberation struggles in Southern Africa underlined its commitment to and support for anti-colonial and anti-racist groups in Africa. Nigeria was instrumental in convincing the Organisation of African Unity's (OAU) opinion in favour of recognising the MPLA (Gambari:

2008). General Murtala's unilateral action, to intervene in the internal affairs of the Angolan state in violation of a previously agreed OAU resolution, was in response to intelligence reports that apartheid South African troops were already engaged in combat inside Angola on the side of the Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), one of the three guerrilla factions engaged in the struggle for the total control of the newly independent country (Fawole, 2003). Accordingly, in a memorable speech to the OAU extraordinary session summit conference at Addis Ababa in January 1976, General Mohammed asserted that "Africa had come of age and did not need foreign councillors to warn Africans against communism and the alleged Soviet-Cuban threat, (General Murtala Mohammed, quoted in Gambari, 2008).

Nonetheless, General Murtala Mohammed's regime was short-lived in contrast to the previous regimes and his concomitant non-pro-Western foreign policy commitment is no doubt second to none in the history of Nigerian foreign policy in post-independence Nigeria. Nigerian positioning of its foreign policy in the OAU during the General's regime was similar to the previous regime but took a more Afro-centric posture to pursue its national interests. African neo-conservatism was not the core objective, however, but rather self-governance and the decolonisation of African continent. General Murtala Mohammed was assassinated in an aborted coup in February 1976.

Categorically, it was obvious to most observers that, if the Angolan issue was a true pointer, General Murtala Mohammed had made history in his primary foreign policy objective in making Nigeria's foreign policy much more non-aligned than hitherto. He was succeeded by his deputy, General Olusegun Obasanjo, (Oye, 1980). During the Obasanjo regime, Nigeria stepped up its strong position and support for the ZANU/ZAPU Patriotic Front, whose guerrillas were inflaming the war of self-determination in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) when the white minority regime of Ian Smith, its British-born Prime Minister, had unilaterally recognised a selected few local leaders to whom to unconstitutionally transfer power to at the expense of the majority groups (Abegunrin, cited in Fawole, 2008).

In addition, ECOWAS – the policy instrument of Nigeria's diplomatic and financial endeavours did not receive much attention from the Obasanjo regime. This discontinuity in policy as compared with the activism of his predecessor, General Muhammed, however, marked the beginning of economic reliance on erratic and dwindling oil revenues, (Gambari, 2008). This situation actually affected his commitment to his Afrocentric posture in foreign policy. In the final analysis, during the last years of his regime, General Obasanjo, possibly due to the temporary rejuvenation in oil revenues, returned to the activist policies of his predecessor. Obasanjo ended up nationalising British Petroleum over the Rhodesian question in which Britain was obdurate to true Rhodesian independence. General Obasanjo's foreign policy in this period was further notable for the leading position of Nigeria against the apartheid regime in South Africa (Tarija, 2014: 292). It was on these historic grounds that Obasanjo handed over power to a democratically elected president, Shehu Shagari in October 1979, (Fawole, 2003).

General Muhammadu Buhari-Idiagbon Regime, 1983-85

Major General Muhammadu Buhari became the new Head of State in 1984. Buhari's basic justification for the coup that terminated the Nigerian Second Republic (1979-1983) was to change Nigeria's rapidly deteriorating economic situation and improve the well-being of most Nigerians (Ojo, 1993: 119). As an offshoot of Murtala Mohammed/Olusegun Obasanjo administration towards an Afro-centric foreign policy, Buhari was not deterred by the realities of the economic situation to articulate an aggressive foreign policy posture. The regime kept Africa as the centrepiece of Nigerian foreign policy and attempted to redress the shifts and weaknesses of the Shagari administration. As usual, it was not deterred in its constructive engagement towards South Africa and Namibia's agendas for independence.

In addition, the OAU liberation committee, which was banned by Shagari's administration, was promptly restored and Ibrahim Gambari was appointed as Nigeria's Foreign Minister, who vigorously championed the struggles of the Frontline States (Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) and asserted Nigeria's commitment to the liberation struggles in Southern Africa. Under his regime, great attention was paid to the

Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) on November 11, 1984, whose territory had been unjustly overtaken and occupied by Moroccans after the abdication of Spanish government in the country (Nwanolue and Iwuoha, 2012). On the issue of national security, the regime dealt decisively with threats from Chad and Cameroon by mounting and staging military surveillance along the borders between Cameroon and Nigeria (Ojo, 1993: 119). It also upgraded the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) to University status, built an Air Force and Naval academy, created the N30 million armoured personnel carrier in Bauchi, and modernised the military. Under his regime, the hitherto-defunct Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria resumed production of military explosives and arms and a research and development department was established within the Defence Ministry.

Two major factions constituted threats to the Nigerian state during Buhari's administration, however. These factions include Buhari's faction and Major General Babangida's faction. Buhari's faction viewed his decision on ethics and corporal punishment as a choice between applying rough and ready justice and risking public persecution, a possibility which threatened to increase the instability of the regime. The other faction opposed Buhari on the question of political detainees, believing that the detainees should be charged or put on trial, or conditionally released. Buhari was not able to pursue a vigorous and assertive foreign policy as positioned by the Murtala/Obasanjo regime because of the debt trap, coupled with a sharp decline in oil prices and the inability of OPEC to suggest alternative economic arrangements, to which Nigeria was forced to devalue its currency. Consequently, the military junta headed by General Muhammed Buhari was short-lived and widely viewed as repressive as all political activities were banned and there was no specific date for handing over power to a democratically elected government until General Ibrahim Babangida audaciously seized power in another military putsch in August, 27, 1985, (Emmanuel, 2014).

General Babangida's Regime, 1985-1993

General Babangida's regime shared a similar experience to the regimes of his predecessors-Major General Yakubu Gowon and major General Murtala Mohammed in terms of a strong recognition of the military as an instrument of statecraft and in the perception of threats to national security (Fawole, 2008). His defence strategy underscored his confrontational policy posture towards South Africa, while the forceful reaction of Babangida's regime to the expanding presence of South Africa on the island of Bioko (Equatorial Guinea) and Liberian operations suggest the application of this policy direction towards contiguous territories (Bassey, 2015). In other words, the strategic position of the island of Bioko in Nigeria's "triangle of survival" (TOS) underscored constant monitoring to prevent infiltration and deterioration in the geography and military status quo as in other neighbouring states, and to secure Nigeria's membership as a signatory of the Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance of Defence, (PRMAD) of May 1981. Such a defence policy objective was seen by Babangida as a national interest element of the highest order.

At the regional level, Nigeria's defence policy received a great boost. For example, the intervention of Nigeria in the Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars (1990-2000) led to the formation of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in August 1990. Nigeria spearheaded the formation of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in August, 1990, despite opposition from Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire and a number of other states in the West African sub-region and, without any financial support from the OAU, the United Nations, or the West, Nigeria organised and spearheaded total military co-ordination between Ghana, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Guinea to supply the armed force which intervened in Liberia's crisis (Babawale, 1997).

In addition, during the Babangida regime, Nigeria played a leading role in the OAU's observer group in Rwanda (NMOG) in 1993, before the UN dispatched a larger peacekeeping force for intervention in 1994 (Gambari, 2008). ECOMOG therefore best underscores the immense potential and possibilities of regional leadership for Nigeria in the West African region and the African continent as whole. Aside from the recognition and perception of threats to Nigeria's security from its neighbours during this period, internal threats constituted one of the greatest

challenges in Babangida's period. For example, on April 22, 1990, a group of anti-northern rebel officers launched a bloody abortive coup against Babangida's regime, leading to the arrest and detention of more than 400 hundred soldiers. After regaining total control of the internal security situation in the country, Babangida made known his plan to overhaul the security system and pressed ahead with his strategic plan to restore civilian order on the 1st of October 1992. Before this period, forty-two military rebels were executed by July after sentencing by a special military tribunal, followed by an additional twenty-seven officers who were executed by September (Mathews, 2015). Despite the constructive sub-regional and continental foreign policy approach of Babangida's regime, it failed to return the country to civilian rule since the results of the mostly free and fair presidential election of June 12, 1993, were annulled. This cancellation attracted both internal and external criticisms, international isolation and sanctions from the international community, setting the scene for Nigeria's future political uncertainties and internal fragility before the return to democracy in 1999. Babangida's decision to bring peace and stability to Liberia through the formation of the ECOMOG in 1990 was underlined by his interest in securing Doe's military government against Charles Taylor's insurrections. Nurturing democracy was not the priority, but regime stability and to deter potential external adversaries.

General Sani Abacha, 1993-1998

General Sani Abacha was a key player in the Babangida regime. He shifted the predominant inclinations in Nigeria's defence policy to their logical limits with the continued expansion of war in Sierra Leone and military engagement on the Bakassi Peninsula (Bassey, 2018). His strategic interest in Bakassi was to secure the oil-rich peninsula against all forms of incursion from Cameroon. In sharp contrast to the US isolationism in Liberia, the British government played a more active role in the Sierra Leone peace process but its assistance to ECOMOG was limited due to Tony Blair's governments fierce opposition to the Abacha regime in Nigeria (Kabia, 2016), arising from the regime's distinctive pattern of economic mismanagement, including arbitrary change, deficit financing, capital flight and the chronic and unrecorded leakage of funds, (Amuwo, 2014).

Following Abacha's demise in 1998 and his failure to return power as previously predicated in his maiden address to the nation in 1998, General Abubakar took over from him and addressed the nation on his commitment to uphold the October 1998 hand-over schedule to civilian government by Abacha (Dagne, 2017). To prove the readiness and commitment of General Abubakar, in August and September 1998, he embarked on a series of rapid and dramatic economic and political reforms in the country. He replaced Abacha's top security cabinet and immediately dissolved the five main political parties set up by Abacha. General Abubakar made all concerted efforts to appeal to Nigerians in exile, notably Professor Wole Soyinka, to come home and contribute to the democratic transition process. General Abubakar outlined details of the transition dates, with local polls on December 5, 1998, gubernatorial and state polls on January 9, followed by the National Assembly's polls on February 20, 1999, and presidential polls on February 27. Nigeria returned to a democratically elected government in May 29, 1999, which marks its Fourth Republic

Nigeria has borne the greatest burden in terms of peacekeeping in Africa. By 1999, it was estimated that Nigeria had committed over 13 billion US dollars to peacekeeping operations in West Africa (Bamali; 2009). Over the years, there has been a national outcry over the way and manner the leaders have waded into trouble spots in the sub-region without any tangible benefit. Because of this, in 1998, Nigeria decided not to contribute troops for the ECOMOG mission in Guinea-Bissau (Galadima; 2011). It was however not surprising that the operation collapsed without Nigeria's participation. After his inauguration in 1999, President Obasanjo wanted to scale down Nigeria's commitment and burden in sub-regional military engagements. In his speech at the United Nations General Assembly in 1999, Obasanjo noted that, for too long, the burden of preserving international peace and security in West Africa has been left almost entirely to a few states in the sub-region. Nigeria's continued burden in Sierra Leone is unacceptably draining Nigeria financially. For our economy to take off, this bleeding has to stop. Nigeria

spent on the ECOMOG operation about one million US dollars daily (George; 2012). However, rather than withdraw all of the 12,000 troops from Sierra Leone under pressure from the UN, Nigeria decided to leave some 3500 troops to serve under UNOMSIL, Operation Sandstorm and in Operation Save Freetown to pacify the Sierra Leonean capital city. The Nigerian Contingent (NIGCON) to the UN mission in November 1999, included 8 staff officers, and 4 military observers and became the largest troop from all the troop-contributing countries. However, this scaling down was just a temporary adjustment as the pressure on Nigeria to remain became stronger and because of the president who was to become more active in sub-regional security management. General Abubakar, former military Head of State, noted that Nigeria can claim a fair share of the glory for peace that is enjoyed in Sierra Leone today. (2009:95). Nigeria again participated from 2003 in the UN Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL). In this operation, according to General Bamali, Nigeria was left to lift its troops and those of the Gambia and Guinea for the ECOMOG operation in Monrovia (Bamali; 2009). The Côte d'Ivoire crisis was a particularly unpleasant experience for West African leaders because the country was regarded as one of the most stable in the sub-region. The crisis was to present a different kind of security challenge to ECOWAS. The keenly contested elections in October 2000 followed an intense power struggle between Laurent Gbagbo and his allies on the one hand and Alassane Ouattara and his supporters on the other hand in the light of an intense debate over who is truly an Ivorian (Ouattara has Burkina paternal heritage). Following gun duels in Abidjan and other urban centres in the country in 2002, Obasanjo despatched Nigerian Alfa fighter planes to foil a military coup d'état only to be manoeuvred to withdraw soon thereafter. A rebellion led by disgruntled soldiers under the name of Movement Patriotique du Côte d'Ivoire, soon made the situation worse, breaking the country into two parts. Nigeria was to provide buffer troops to separate the two warring groups, now identified as the Northern and Southern forces.

This early intervention helped to dictate the direction of ECOWAS policy on the very complicated crisis. At the request of President Gbagbo, ECOWAS deployed a peacekeeping force to monitor a ceasefire agreement between the warring forces. Nigeria was to contribute troops for the ECOWAS ceasefire monitoring assignment in the Country in 2002. Throughout 2003, Obasanjo undertook several missions across West Africa to ensure a unified approach to the Ivorian crisis. In early February 2004, the UNSC Resolution 1527 approved the efforts of ECOWAS and France to promote a peaceful settlement of the conflict and also empowered the ECOWAS mission in Côte d'Ivoire to stabilise the nation. Later in the same month, UNSC Resolution established the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) into which ECOWAS troops were later integrated. Meanwhile, Nigeria contributed military observers to the Côte d'Ivoire operations just as Ambassador Ralph Uwechue of Nigeria was appointed Special Representative of the ECOWAS Executive Secretary in Côte d'Ivoire to monitor and coordinate ECOWAS efforts in the country. The complexity of the Ivorian crisis, according to Sanda (2003), taught the Nigerian government to learn to take the backstage and adopt instead a multilateral diplomatic approach. This is because hitherto, Nigeria used to wade into these sub-regional internal political crises with a lot of enthusiasm. Nigeria has provided logistics and funding at very crucial moments in the organization's history of conflict management, resolution, peace-keeping and peace-building, (Akindele; 2003). Over 70 per cent of ECOMOG troops and 80 per cent of funds were provided by Nigeria, (Abubakar; 2009:195). Lt. General Martin Luther Agwai observes that the major accolades that the Nigerian Army won in the cause of participation in some of the PSOs have helped to project Nigerias image as an emerging power in Africa and an important factor in international politics, while General Malu states that without Nigeria's involvement and leadership, it was doubtful that peace could have been achieved, (Agwai, 2009, Malu, 2009).

Nigeria's Foreign Policy since the return to democracy in 1999 has been focused on promoting regional and continental peace and stability, socio-economic development, and leadership in Africa. One major aspect of this policy has been its military assistance in Africa. Here are some key points about Nigeria's foreign policy and military assistance in Africa:

1. Regional and Continental Peace and Stability: Nigeria has been actively involved in peacekeeping missions in different parts of Africa under the auspices of African Union

- (AU), United Nations (UN), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Nigeria has provided troops, close protection units, and logistical support in Sudan, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mali, and other conflict-affected countries in Africa.
2. Socio-economic development: Nigeria has been providing technical assistance, capacity building, and financial aid to different African countries to promote socio-economic development. For instance, Nigeria has signed bilateral air service agreements to increase air travel between African countries and has also signed different loan agreements with African countries to support sectors such as agriculture, health, education, and infrastructure development.
 3. Leadership in Africa: As the most populous country and largest economy in Africa, Nigeria has taken a leadership role to promote regional integration and cooperation. For instance, Nigeria plays a significant role in the AU, the ECOWAS, and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). Nigeria has also been actively involved in promoting democracy and good governance in Africa through its diplomatic efforts, and it has provided technical assistance to African countries to build democratic institutions.
 4. Military Assistance: Nigeria has provided military assistance to other African countries in different ways. For instance, Nigeria provided military training and support to Guinea-Bissau, when that country was experiencing a security threat from a military coup. Nigeria also provides military equipment and support to Cameroon, Chad, and Niger in their fight against Boko Haram insurgency.

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In doing the aforementioned, Nigeria has maintained strong policy coherence in implementing the instruments of its Afrocentric foreign policy and achieving modest success in attaining some of its objectives. There have been periods of lull but the essence of Nigeria's Foreign Policy as pan-African has never been in doubt and this has been consistently shown in military cooperation agreements both bilaterally and globally.

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