

“Paradigm for Analysis of Nigeria’s Foreign Policy”

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Abstract: *One of the basis for the pursuit and analysis of the Foreign Policy of any country including Nigeria is national interest. But national interest as a concept is associated with vagueness and impracticality that it can not provide adequate explanation for the analysis of foreign policy. More so, different nations have their distinct national interests. Therefore, to provide adequate grounds for the analysis of Foreign Policy, scholars in international relations as a field of study has come up with other explanatory paradigm for purpose of analyzing foreign policy behaviour of states such as systemic factors, national attribute factors and idiosyncratic factors. These factors constitute major trends in Nigeria’s Foreign Policy; so in this article we are focusing on the assessment of the factors in question using qualitative-historical approach as a method of data collection.*

Key Words: *foreign policy, Nigeria, National interest, international relations, paradigm*

I. Introduction

The notion of national interest is vague and so it is difficult to give a precise definition of the term. In spite of that, national interest is defined as the general long term and continuing purpose which the states, nation and the government see themselves serving. The national interest of a state is rooted in the social consciousness and in the cultural identity of a people. In other words, the national interest of a state is a product of social values which the people have. In practice, the national interest of a country is synthesized and checked by political leaders or policy makers. That is why national interest of a country is the interest of its leaders. It may also be the interest of a group such as the bourgeoisie or proletariat depending on which class is in power. It may as well be the interest of the President. Ibrahim Badamasi Babagida (IBB) maintained that he would like to think of national interest as national security interest. This is because to him the concept of national interest has become so vague and elastic (Emma Odi 1991:18) we have been warned by social scientists that national security has many tangible ingredients which may be more menacing than external military threat. It can take subtle forms such as subversion of core values through economic sabotage, counterfeiting, drug trafficking, espionage, and cultural subversion. We are all aware of the damage which these elements can cause on a nation’s psyche and survival. National security interests can be used to refer to such concepts as “self-preservation”, self-defence”, and even “survival”. In short national security means that the state should survive. It means it should live without serious threat to all values that are regarded as important or vital (Emma 1991:19). As a result of its vagueness and impracticality, national interest has failed to serve as adequate explanatory measure for the analysis of foreign policy behaviour of states. Therefore other parameters for the analysis of foreign policy evolved such as:

1. Systematic factors
2. National attribute factors
3. Idiosyncratic factors.

Systemic Factors

The following is subsume within the ambit of systemic factors:

International Interaction And Link:

Nation-state, it should be noted are actors within the international system; and that the attitude of one country to another country is a mere reaction. For example, Nigeria reacted to international event by intervening in the Liberian crisis through Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). By instituting peace in Liberia through Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) peace was invariable instituted in Nigeria by preventing the crisis from taking a dimension that would have involve the whole world. The activities of Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) shall be used here as a measuring rod to assess the systemic factor. The intervention of Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in the Liberian crisis which stated in 1989 was primarily to sue for world peace. The Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) which was made up of such countries as Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia, Togo and Mali operated in Liberia with the objective of:

- a) Imposing an cease-five in Liberia.
- b) Setting up an interim government
- c) Rehabilitation of destroyed essential services such as hospitals, electricity, water and food supplies etc.

Nigeria and of course other member of Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) invested huge Financial and human resources in Liberia to achieve the objective aforementioned. But one fact stood clear, the institution of peace in Liberia through Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) did not invariably bring peace in Nigeria or other nations of the world. Note that in spite of the fact that the Liberia crisis was resolved through Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the Nigerian society itself is immerse in crisis as exemplify by the crises in Kaduna, Kano, Jos and the most recent bomb explosions in the Northern part of Nigeria due to Boko Haram activities. The death rate recorded in the crisis that occurred in the aforementioned cities when put together far outweigh that of the Liberian crisis. Thus, systemic factor in itself is not a perfect explanatory model for the analysis of Foreign Policy.

II. National Attribute Factor

National attribute factor refers to those factors that are inherent within a nation-state. These factors are discussed below:

- a) **DEMOGRAPHY:** Such variables as population, skill, ethnic composition, etc. are inherent in demographic factor. Here, the analyst would be interested in knowing, what impact the population, skill and ethnic variables can be brought to bear on the foreign policy of a country. In focusing for example, on population as a variable, we should not fail to ask such pertinent questions as “How many fall within the labour force” and “How many constitute the dependent proportion in terms of the old and young. Note that if the labor force is high the country will be powerful because the labour force will contribute meaningfully, to the progress of a nation. Generally a large, quantitative and skillful population can act as a deterrent for a nation. A nation so endowed can not be easily attacked and defeated.
- b) **ECONOMIC FACTOR:** A vibrant economy is surely bound to pave way to a vibrant foreign policy. America for example is able to exercise global influence because she has a strong economy. Secondly, Nigeria was able to survive the civil war of 1967 – 1970 because of all the monies she spent for the execution of the war. To that extent, it could be asserted that Nigeria had a strong economy. But where the economy is weak a nation can not operate a vibrant foreign policy.
- c) **MILITARY FACTOR:** The military factor has to do with the quality and quantity of the armed forces: How are they educated, trained, equipped and what is the numerical strength of the armed forces? Where you have a large, well trained and equipped army such a nation is sure to pursue a vibrant foreign policy. But the reverse is the case where the army is weak.
- d) **GOVERNMENT FACTOR:** The type of government in operation suffice to influence the foreign policy of a nation. It could be that it is democratic or totalitarian or autocratic government that is in place, note should be taken of the fact that Autocratic government for instance does not attracts acceptability from the International Community. So, the type of government in operation can go a long way in influencing a nation’s foreign policy.
- e) **GEOGRAPHICAL FACTOR:** Geographical factor can place a country in a privilege and advantageous position for the formulation of a vibrant foreign policy. For example, USA is surrounded by pacific Ocean which give her security advantage, USSR is surrounded by Siberian Islands whose exceeding coolness give USSR security advantage. This privilege position is responsible for both USA and USSR embarking on expansionist foreign policy as major element in their foreign policy drive. If these security advantages were to be missing geographical factor would have impacted differently in the foreign policy of both USA and USSR.

Idiosyncratic Factor:

This factor emphasizes national leadership a group of decision makers. The decision makers to a great extend influence the behaviour of a state toward another state. According to the “great-man or woman’s theory, single individuals”-“devils or saints” are capable of shaping events. Idiosyncratic factors emphasize the conduct of foreign policy in accordance with the whims and caprices of the individual decision maker. Great men of history such as Charles de Gaulle, Stalin, Churchill, Hitler, Mussolini etc changed the course of history. In Nigeria, IBB was influenced by idiosyncratic factor to register a formal application for Nigeria membership of OIC in January, 1986. secondly, President Shagari’s response to Nigeria Cameroon Border crisis in 1981 was a function of idiosyncratic factor.

Nigeria-Cameroon Border Crisis will be used to assess this factor. Nigeria’s response to this crisis is a classic demonstration of idiosyncratic factor. According to G. Aforika Nweke, two Nigeria Patrol boats at Ikinga a border town with a population of 15,000 in Cross River State, spotted non-Nigeria Patrol vessels inside Nigerian territory. Moving forward to identify, the vessels, the Cameroonian gendarmes in those vessels opened

fire on one of Nigeria’s patrol boats, killing five Nigerian soldiers, wounding at least three others. The second Nigeria Patrol boat fought its way to retrieve the attacked boat and casualties. For some days after the shooting a Cameroon helicopter continued to fly over Ikang at a very low altitude. When the then Governor of Cross River State, Clement Isong, paid his first visit to Ikang area after the incident, Lt Col. F. Ehigiator of the 13 Infantry Brigade in Calabar not only confirmed the episode but also told him that Cameroon gave Nigeria a surprise attack. This incident occurred on 16 May 1981 and in spite of several aggressive responses from politically conscious and articulate Nigerians, who perceived the incident as a threat to national security, the core or vital interest of Nigeria, President Shagari blatantly failed to take military action against Cameroon. The failure to take military action against Cameroon was due to idiosyncratic consideration as it was the decision of Shagari and his group of decision makers that Nigeria should respond that way to the crisis in question.

The military option could have been justified on at least two grounds namely, national interest and self-Defence. Since the attack by Cameroon was a direct threat to Nigeria’s vital interest defined in terms of national security, it was justifiable for the Federal Government of Nigeria, in the Language of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Edwin Ume-Ezeoke to return fire for fire. However, on the prevalence of idiosyncratic consideration Nigeria did not return fire for fire.

III. Conclusion

In conclusion, the concept of national interest as a major trend for the analysis of foreign policy is so vague that it can not serve as an adequate analytical model. Thus, this inadequacy led to the emergence of other models such as systemic factors, national attribute factors, and idiosyncratic factors for analysis of foreign policy. However, it is worthy to maintain that the other trends: systemic, national attribute and idiosyncratic factors in spite of themselves can not offer adequate analysis of foreign policy because of the assessment made in this paper. However, it is worthy to conclude that while the four major trends in Nigeria’s foreign policy national interest, systemic national attribute and idiosyncratic factors, can not serve as a perfect analytical paradigm for the analysis of foreign policy, they can at least serve as a suitable and fair premises for analysis.

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