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Afrocentrism and the Illusion of National Development in Nigeria

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Abstract: Given the attainment of flag independence in 1960 till date, Africa has undeniably remained the centre-piece of Nigeria's foreign policy. In other words, the Nigerian state has consistently pursued her Afrocentric foreign policy principle in Africa both in military and civilian regimes. This, of course, she has always demonstrated in her political leadership role on the continent of Africa through her numerous altruistic human and financial commitments to the wellbeing, welfare, convenience and comfort of other African states at her own expense and detriment. With the use of the national interest theory and grand narratives from extant academic writings as well as content analysis methodology, this paper argues that the adoption of this foreign policy principle in the euphoria of the independence era has been the bane of Nigeria's national development. Owing to the fact that it has not practically and substantially served her domestic and self-interest and it has also not been able to translate into a progressive and qualitative national development trajectory in the country. Conclusively, the paper recommends that Afrocentrism which doubles as a foreign policy principle and conceptual construct for Nigeria, should not be completely jettisoned but strategically rejigged for the purpose of engendering national development (especially economic growth) in Nigeria given her current harsh economic realities and the global political economy implications. This is also with a view to upgrading Nigeria's diplomatic relationship and engagements in Africa to a comprehensive strategic partnership for the achievement of a more realistic and beneficial national interest for the country's national development.

Keywords: Afrocentrism, Development, Illusion, National development, Nigeria

Citation: Ubani, N. E.
Afrocentrism and the Illusion of
National Development in
Nigeria. Central Asian Journal
of Social Sciences and History
2025, 6(2), 67-79.

Received: 10th Jan 2025
Revised: 11th Jan 2025
Accepted: 24th Jan 2025
Published: 27th Feb 2025



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1. Introduction

On October 1, 1960, the Federation of Nigeria became independent due to the granting of political independence by Her Majesty's Government of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Ikejiani-Clark, 2009, p.435). This, by extension, implies that the Westphalian state sovereignty was conferred on Nigeria being a former British territory and thus she became diplomatically recognized by other hitherto existing sovereign states in the present United Nations state system. This is because of the inextricable relationship between the historical development of the contemporary international system and the philosophical foundation of state sovereignty in 1648 necessitated by the peace treaty of Westphalia. Indeed, Westphalianism is both a political and legal concept of state sovereignty for the conduct of inter-state diplomatic relations in the modern international political system, hence, all sovereign states are legally empowered to engage in both international politics and international relations through the instrumentality of their foreign policies, as well as bilateral and multilateral treaties and conventions within the purview of international law and diplomacy (Ubani & Amos, 2022, p.68; Ubani & Amadi, 2023, p.103).

For example, the Nigerian state since 1960 has been saddled with the political cum legal responsibility of formulating and implementing her foreign policy objectives towards other sovereign independent states within the contemporary international system. Prior to 1960, Nigeria has had an existing relationship with the outside world before attaining statehood but obviously had no foreign policy of her own other than that of Britain as her colonial master (Ubani & Kobani, 2022). Accordingly, Ubani and Kobani (2022) also asserted that Nigeria and India in 1959 particularly had a diplomatic relationship in the area of fighting against colonialism as former British colonies. However, with the granting of political independence to Nigeria by the British colonial power, she legitimately expressly became saddled with the exclusive responsibility and sovereign right to henceforth formulate her own foreign policy by further conducting external relations with other sovereign political entities (Ubani & Kobani, 2022).

Consequently, the history of Nigeria's foreign policy is traceable to the immediate post-colonial era with specific mention to the First Republic from 1960 to 1966, before the military took over power in the country. While, the principles of Nigeria's foreign policy have basically remained the brain child of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Belewa, the then Prime Minister of the country (Nwahiri, 2010). According to Gilbert (2001, p.127), the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy has been publicly declared to be guided by some well-established principles such as:

1. Non-alignment, a foreign policy principle which rejects formal military alliance and support for either the West or East in the post-World War II Cold War international system.
2. Legal equality of states.
3. Non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states.
4. Multilateralism; and
5. Africa as the centre-piece of Nigeria's foreign policy.

However, it must be admitted that since Nigeria's flag independence in 1960 till date, Africa has undeniably remained the centre-piece of Nigeria's foreign policy. In other words, the Nigerian state has consistently pursued her Afrocentric foreign policy principle both in military and civilian regimes. This, of course, she has always done through her commitment of both human and financial resources to the wellbeing, welfare, convenience and comfort of other African states at her own expense and detriment. This paper therefore, examines the principle of Afrocentrism and the illusion of national development in Nigeria. With the use of the national interest theory, it further argues clearly that this principle has been the bane of Nigeria's national development, since it has not tangibly and qualitatively served her domestic self-interest and economic development in the country long after independence. Hence, the issue of national development in Nigeria has become a serious mirage.

Clarification of Concepts

Foreign Policy: The literature on the concept of foreign policy contains various scholastic and analytical perspectives. However, as a concept, Agwunobi (1992, p.51) defines foreign policy as an extension of domestic policy that protects a nation's national interests abroad. For Gilbert (2023), foreign policy is usually domestically formulated and externally projected and implemented. He further contended that it is basically the instrumentality by which state actors influence or rather seek to influence the external world, and to attain objectives that are in consonance with their perceived national interest. Essentially, foreign policy serves the dual purpose of defining and guiding the external relations of states or national governments in promoting and realizing their national interests in the international system and this is a clear justification of the interaction that consistently goes on between state actors and non-state actors (Ubani & Kobani, 2022). The modes of interaction in pursuit of a state's foreign policy objectives have occasionally remained cooperative, conflictual and competitive (Ubani & Kobani, 2022; Gilbert, 2023). It is about the realization of the national interests of sovereign states

in the international political system. Thus, every nation's foreign policy is apparently always geared towards the advancement of its national interest (Palmer & Perkins, 2002). National interest, according to Okeke (2017, p.342), guides the formulation of foreign policy, but it is not an end in itself; rather, it is a means to an end. Again, it adds flavour to the execution and implementation of any state's foreign policy, and a state without a pre-designed national interest has been doomed to succumb to the complexities of global politics (Okeke, 2017). Historically, since the development of the contemporary international system in 1648, states have remained the primary actors in conducting international relations. On the other hand, foreign policy has also remained the exclusive preserve of state actors in their diplomatic engagements and interactions. As Gilbert and Ekpudu (2020) clearly noted:

From the peace Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, to the end of World Wars 1 & 11, the international political system has witnessed a progressive increase in the number of sovereign entities; from a few states in Europe to 195 countries in the entire world. The end result of this advancement is consequently, the establishment of multifaceted interactions among states, which have emerged as the principal actors in the contemporary international system. However, states do not interact without foreign policies, which are well-defined principles and coordinated strategies with which institutionally designated decision makers seek to manipulate the international environment, in order to achieve certain national objectives (p.191).

Therefore, the importance of the foreign policies of states cannot be ignored in any global political discourse since it is the fulcrum in understanding the rationalizations of states in the advancement of their national interests. This is simply because a state's foreign policy is a consequential result of its sovereignty as well as its corporate political cum legal existence. This also gives credence to the state-centric considerations of foreign policy due to the obvious fact that states cannot exist and interact without its formulation and implementation. As Gilbert (2023) would say, foreign policy is largely state-centric because it is usually domestically formulated and externally projected and implemented by the government of a country which acts as the instrumentality of the state. For example, foreign policy is a dynamic process which involves the systematic interaction between the domestic and external environments (Gilbert & Thom-Otuya, 2005). It is basically centred on the motives behind the behavioural tendencies of states within the international political system, the various factors which shape and limit their policy options and the consequences of their actions (Nwahiri, 2010; Gilbert & Ekpudu, 2020). In a nutshell, foreign policy, as it were, arguably remains the melting point of any state's national interest hence they are highly inseparable and inextricable in their meanings and functionality. Therefore, a country's national interest is the fundamental basis of a country's foreign policy (Gilbert & Ekpudu, 2020).

National Development: Like many other concepts in academic writings, the term national development has been given several definitions by various authors. National development is a term used to describe a wide condition of increase in a nation's life which includes all aspects of development of a nation politically, socially, economically and otherwise, as well as a dynamic and revolutionary development of the society (Mmah, 2024). Asuru (2017, p. 25) defined it as "how nations strive to deploy available human and material resources towards continued improvement and realization of the needs and aspirations of their citizenry". Similarly, Nyewusira (2015, p.91) had earlier defined it as "a process of profound transformation in a country, whereby the human and material resources are optimally deployed in providing education, health care services, security, infrastructure, food, shelter and guaranteeing democratic rights to the citizens". However, the issue of national development is fundamental in understanding the trajectory of development strategies and growth models as it focuses on an individual country's history (Gilbert & Ubani, 2015). It is on this premise that development scholars have argued that the concept of development in itself must be conceived in the context of a

particular social system for the overall wellbeing of its inhabitants. Thus, the individual and his quality of life must be the centre of the conception of national development (Amucheazi, 1980). This in view of the fact that development is all about the people, and so, should be man-oriented and not institution-oriented (Gilbert & Ubani, 2015).

National development, according to Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011, p.238), is the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation. These scholars, further argued that it is best achieved through development planning which can be described as the country's collection of strategies mapped out by the government. It is also the ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare on the people by providing basic infrastructures such as roads, schools, hospitals, recreational facilities etc. Consequently, a country could be considered to be developed to the extent at which every sector of its economy or national life reflects steady, yet progressive growth. The development process, of course, must be seen in its broadest context if it is to meet the expectation for a more elevated standard of living (Gilbert & Ubani, 2015).

Theoretical Explications

The illusive nature of Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy principle can be arguably and understandably explained in the context of national interest theoretical perspective. The national interest of a state is the fulcrum of its foreign policy formulation and implementation. Every nation's foreign policy is apparently always geared towards the advancement of its national interest (Palmer & Perkins, 2002). According to Hartmann (1978, p.7), national interest refers to "those things that states could or do seek to protect or achieve vis-à-vis other states". This obvious achievement or protection of such interests could impact positively on the socio-economic cum political well-being of the citizenry and state (Gilbert, 2024). While Berridge and James (2003, p.181) defined national interest as "that which is deemed by a particular state (actor) to be a vital or desirable goal in its international relations". It is divided into vital/primary and secondary interests. Vital interests are interests a state is willing to fight immediately or ultimately in order for her to defend, while secondary interests are negotiable (Thom-Otuya, 2015). Several international relations scholars have argued that the concept of national interest is very often abused and misinterpreted by political leaders, politicians, decision makers and statesmen all over the world, which in itself has been subjected to rigorous academic analysis and interrogation, though, remains the generally accepted justification for the actions and decisions of states in both international politics and international relations (Morgenthau, 1978; Nwahir, 2010; Umeh, 2013; Obi, 2006; Thom-Otuya, 2015; Nte, 2016; Okeke, 2017; Ubani, 2024; Gilbert, 2024). Furthermore, Gilbert (2001, p.127) stated that the term national interest has raised much controversy, yet, there is a consensus in Nigeria that it consists of the following:

1. The defence of the country's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.
2. The restoration of human dignity to black men and women all over the world particularly the eradication of colonialism and white minority rule from Africa.
3. The creation of the relevant political and economic conditions in Africa and the rest of the world, which will not only facilitate the preservation of the territorial integrity and security of all African countries but foster national self-reliance in Africa.
4. The promotion and improvement of the economic wellbeing of the Nigerian citizens; and
5. The promotion of world peace with justice.

The central theme of national interest has, of course, remained the condiment that adds taste to the execution and implementation of any state's foreign policy, and a state without a pre-designed national interest is doomed to fall to the intricacies of global politicking (Okeke, 2017). Cognizant of the link between these two concepts, it is obvious that national interests can be explained as authentic, fundamental, genuine and nationalistic purposes, which a state seeks to achieve through the instrumentality of her

foreign policy articulation and execution processes (Gilbert, 2024). It is therefore in this regard that Gilbert (2024,p,27) rightly asserted that national interests are interests sought through the formulation and implementation of foreign policy decisions that if achieved, would be beneficial to the state. This obviously explains why the foreign policy objectives of a state must truly be strategic in its entirety rather than altruistic as the case may be. This is so because, the national interest of a state falls within the realist tradition and it is associated with the display of power. It is a truism that realism is an approach to international politics that is predicated on power politics (realpolitik) and holds the view that international behaviour of states is determined by the search for power therefore; each state must act in its best self-interest at the expense of others (Gilbert, 2023; Gilbert, 2024). However, it is pertinent to note that since independence in 1960, successive administrations in Nigeria have consistently pursued her Afrocentric foreign policy principle in Africa. For instance, Bakare (2019, p.2) observed that the return to a democratically elected government in 1999, however, opened a new page in Nigerian diplomatic engagements and a renewed approach to its Afrocentric foreign policy thrust in world politics.

Quite unfortunately, this particular foreign policy principle, as it were, has not been in the strategic national interest of the Nigerian state due to the fact that her numerous altruistic human cum financial contributions at various times to African states that were in crisis (like South Africa, Angola, Namibia, Liberia, Zimbabwe, Congo, Sierre Leone etc), have obviously not been commensurate with the attendant benefits for her avowed political leadership role in the continent through the multilateral organizations of the African Union (AU) at the continental level and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) at the sub-regional level. Infact, Gilbert (2024,p.22) is of the view that afrocentrism as Nigeria's foreign policy objective ought to be well planned and implemented for the realization of her national (economic) interests in Africa. He further argued that an economically developed country can translate its economic strength into military and other manifestations of power that will strengthen and reinforce her security and hegemony in her chosen sphere of influence (Gilbert, 2024). This is the critique of Nigeria's Afrocentric policy hence national development is seriously lacking in the country due to the absence of a more consciously strategic and beneficially economic designed national interest. Nevertheless, in order not to completely jettison this policy by the Nigerian state, her national interest must be rejigged to become self-interest oriented for the achievement of her long anticipated economic development particularly and national development in general. Here, lies the aptness of the theory of national interest in the analysis of this paper.

Nigeria's Altruistic Afrocentric Foreign Policy Contributions in Africa

The history of foreign policy making and implementation in Nigeria has come a long way and this resonates with the foundational enunciation of its various foreign policy principles in 1960. For example, since independence, Nigeria's foreign policy has been guided by the principles of afrocentrism, multilateralism, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, non-alignment and the legal equality of all states (Olusanya & Akindele, 1986; Gilbert & Ekpudu, 2020). Interestingly, successive Nigerian governments (both military and civilian regimes) have been guided by these foreign policy principles but their implementations have not been strategically beneficial to the Nigerian state and Nigerians in virtually all ramifications (Gilbert & Ekpudu, 2020). Quite unfortunately, the afrocentric principle appears to be the most notorious of these principles given the realistic peculiarities of the country's national development.

According to Gilbert (2024,p.4), it was Balewa's administration that crafted, enunciated and set the philosophical foundation for afrocentrism as one of the cardinal objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy. This means that this foreign policy principle is in itself as old as the sovereign state of Nigeria having been philosophically enunciated shortly after she became independent in 1960, hence, Balewa has remained the first and

only Prime Minister in the history of Nigeria's political development. Ever since, with the adoption of the policy as the name suggests, Africa as a continent has benefited immensely from it as well as other African countries that gained independence from European powers after Nigeria got hers. This is because Nigeria has been so interested, dedicated and committed to the welfare of African people and descendants all over the world due to the philosophy of Pan-Africanism. This eventually became a philosophic systemization and characterization of a strong desire cum nationalist struggle for the liberation of the black race not only from enslavement, racial segregation and humiliation but from colonial domination and exploitation as well, given that it is also geared towards the promotion of African socialism, unity and solidarity (Okadigbo, 1985; Jaja, 2007; Okeke, 2009). This underscores the political unification of Africa since it is generally regarded as the ancestral origin of the blacks who themselves are Africans given credence to the notion of Africanness. According to Jaja (2007, p.9), the argument for Africanness appears to suggest the existence of a common interest, or stake, in Africa which propels African social thought; an interest that must be advocated and protected.

Therefore, with the ceding of political sovereignty by the British colonial masters in the early sixties, Nigeria has always believed that it is her manifest destiny to provide political leadership in Africa thereby ensuring that the entirety of the African continent is altruistically and comfortably led by her. The notion is that by virtue of the historical, geographical, human and natural resource endowments of Nigeria, she has manifested (became a reality, as her divine purpose) to take the leadership position in Africa, as a natural leader (Gilbert, 2024, p.47). In other words, Nigeria sees itself and is seen widely as a leader of Africa and this has profoundly influenced her role perception, both in the continent and globally (Ibeanu, 2013, p.154). This has seemingly justified her "Big Brother" role in Africa over the years. Corroborating this, Gilbert (2024) rightly reported that:

Since the attainment of independence on 1st October 1960, Nigeria being the largest black country in the world chose afrocentrism as one of the objectives of her foreign policy. Literally speaking, afrocentrism is a foreign policy construct that is predicated on the notion that Nigeria's foreign policy is centred on Africa. In other words, the formulation and implementation of Nigeria's foreign policy has been fixated on ensuring the realization of African interests, because she believes that the wellbeing of Africa is synonymous with her wellbeing. This unprecedented and sacrificial absorption with African cause by Nigeria is the symbolism of afrocentrism (p.3).

It is no exaggeration from the above statement that virtually all independent African states today have benefited from Nigeria's benevolent disposition to the African continent as several instances abound to buttress her unrelenting leadership commitment in the continent. For example, Nwahiri (2010, p.142) noted that "Nigeria was one of the founding fathers of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), a Nigerian Jurist, specifically the Nigerian Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Dr. Taslim Elias is said to have drafted the Charter almost single handedly". This scenario made the OAU charter to reflect more or less Nigeria's views on foreign policy issues (Aluko, 1981, p.23). Whereas, it should also be noted that the Nigerian state at the continental level of international politicking visibly played a very important role in the bargaining and negotiation that preceded the formation of the OAU (Nwahiri, 2010; Ubani & Kobani, 2022).

Similarly, in May 1975, another multilateral intergovernmental organization known as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established at a sub-regional level of international diplomatic relations on the continent of Africa. Indeed, Nigeria played a leading role in the formation of ECOWAS and has continued to play the role of generous benefactor in the life of the organization (Nwahiri, 2010). Again, General Babangida was also at the forefront of the formation of ECOWAS Monitoring Group, popularly called ECOMOG, to intervene in the Liberian crisis and Nigeria contributed

1,375 troops, while Gambia, Ghana, Guinea and Sierra Leone gave 1,625 soldiers (Gilbert, 2024). On the other hand, Gilbert (2024, p.23-25) while historicizing Nigeria's afrocentric policy since independence, observed that the Balewa's administration recorded some reasonable achievements due to this foreign policy choice that the interest of Africa must come first in her external affairs and they included the following:

1. Mobilization and sending of 1,796 troops to Congo by the end of November 1960 for UN peacekeeping operations that lasted from 1960 to 1964, and before the end of the mission, a Nigerian military officer, Major Aguiyi Ironsi was appointed the Commander of UN force in Congo.
2. After the brutal massacre of 69 black people by the white apartheid regime in Sharpsville, South Africa on 21st March 1960, Balewa's regime set up the National Committee Against Apartheid (NACAP) to educate Nigerians on the evils of Apartheid and conscientise them against the obnoxious regime. Nigeria was the only country in the world to a committee of this nature.
3. Specifically, on 5th January, 1961, in defence of the territorial integrity of Africa, Nigeria severed diplomatic relations with France (expelled its ambassador and staff) on account of her third nuclear test in the Sahara Desert on 27th December, 1960.
4. In March 1961, at the 11th Commonwealth Conference of Prime Ministers in London, Nigeria mobilized other black countries and spearheaded the expulsion of Apartheid South Africa from Commonwealth of Nations. She also mobilized them to isolate South Africa-pariah state.
5. Actively supported the formation of the first continental intergovernmental organization (IGO), the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 and assisted in its funding.
6. Hid Nelson Mandela from the apartheid government in Nigeria in 1963 through Chief Mbazulike Ameachi, Minister of Aviation during the First Republic.
7. Hon, Jaj Wachukwu, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs was mandated to use his position at the UN to champion opposition to death sentence that was almost imposed on Nelson Mandela and 10 others during the Rivonia trial that was held from 9th October, 1963 to 12th June, 1964.
8. By the invitation of Julius Nyerere, Nigeria sent soldiers to Tanganyika (Tanzania) for another peacekeeping operation under the auspices OAU in 1964.
9. Spearheaded the formation of the Lake Chad Basin Authority in 1964.

The foregoing, however, explains to a great extent, that Nigeria has remained altruistically committed to the overall wellbeing and development of Africa as the ancestral continent for the black people. Furthermore, Nigeria's contributions to African nations can be clearly appreciated through the instrumentalities of the OAU and ECOWAS which have been well documented in the critical areas of political stability and liberation movements, peacekeeping, security and conflict resolutions, economic recovery as well as the entrenchment and promotion of democratic governance in Africa. For example, it may be recalled that Nigeria recognized the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) led by Augusto Neto through the provision of \$20 million/N13.5 million, including military assistance to the MPLA and mobilization of other African countries to support the movement (Olusanya & Akindele, 1986; Gilbert, 2024). In addition, Namibia and other liberation movements were encouraged to establish diplomatic missions in Nigeria as platforms for the mobilization of resources from the international community for the fight against colonialism (Gilbert, 2024).

Closely related to this is the case of the Apartheid regime in South Africa. The Nigerian state was all out in the liberation of South Africa and the blacks from the oppressive and repressive government of the white minority in the country. In this context, General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida pledged to support the UN Conference on Sanctions against Apartheid hosted in Paris in 1986 with the sum of \$50 million and his

regime was also involved in the negotiations that led to the termination of apartheid in South Africa. In 1990, Nelson Mandela was hosted by the IBB's regime after he was released from 27 years' incarceration and thus initiated the final process of ending the obnoxious white minority rule. Notwithstanding that Nigeria is not located in the Southern African region, she transported herself to the region and opted to be a member of the Frontline States for the liberation of South Africa. This is a group of independent Southern African countries bordering apartheid South Africa which was established in 1970, for the purpose of a harmonized response from them in providing support towards the struggle for the liberation of apartheid Africa South (Ibeanu, 2013, p.166). Similarly, for record purposes, the South West African Peoples Organization (SWAPO) was the first liberation movement to be allowed to have offices in Nigeria; thereafter the African National Congress (ANC) as well as the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) of South Africa joined (Bukarambe, 2000). The presence of their various leaders made for easier co-ordination of direct assistance which usually involved scholarships; relief materials for those displaced living in refugee camps in the neighbouring countries, support items for the guerilla cadre, and generally financial support for their worldwide operations (Bukarambe, 2000).

In addition, scholars like Attah and Sule (2021) and Gilbert (2024) have also argued that by the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa, Nigeria had spent not less than \$61 billion in her afrocentric foreign policy maneuvering towards the dismantling of the obnoxious system more than any other country in Africa. It is also on record that Nigeria refused to sell oil to South Africa hence she lost about \$45 billion in 15 years (Osuntokun, 2009; Gilbert, 2024). This, of course, depicted an act of protest and solidarity from Nigeria in the advancement of her African policy as it were. Against all odds, Africa's interest from all appearances has continued to be the greatest preoccupation in the administration of Nigeria's foreign policy since all successive governments have shown much enthusiasm in pursuing her altruistic African policy. For instance, Chief Obasanjo in collaboration with Thabo Mbeki of South Africa reorganized the OAU to African Union (AU) in 2002 and also spearheaded the establishment of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), a policy programme for the eradication of poverty and promotion of sustainable development in Africa (Gilbert, 2024, p.40).

Consequently, Gilbert (2024) further noted that due to Nigeria's altruistic afrocentricism, on 5th April 2004, she established the largest single co-operation fund known as the Nigerian Technical Cooperation Fund (NTCF) worth \$25 million and domiciled in the African Development Bank (AFDB). This fund is jointly managed by AFDB and the Directorate of Technical Cooperation in Africa (DTCA), a component of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nigeria, as a grant facility for the socio-economic and technological development of African countries (Gilbert, 2024). Worthy of note is that 54 African nations are said to have benefitted from this technical initiative for the execution of several projects in their respective countries (Gilbert, 2024).

However, it should be noted that since the return of democratic government on 29th May 1999, Nigeria has remained visibly committed to the promotion and consolidation of globally acceptable democratic ideals and values in Africa. For example, the President of Sao Tome and Principe, Fradique de Menezes visited Nigeria on 16th July 2003, when he was overthrown through a military coup led by Major Fernando Pereira. As a result, President Olusegun Obasanjo and some AU members collaboratively had a successful negotiation with the military junta and 7 days after, Menezes was reinstated in office. President Obasanjo personally escorted him back to his country. Nigeria, was again, at the forefront of the intervention in ensuring a smooth transition of political power in Togo after the demise of Gnassingbe Eyadema (Ashaver, 2013). The President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's administration was also instrumental in handling the case of Laurent Gbagbo, the former President of Cote D'Ivoire when he refused to relinquish power to Alassane Ouattara after the presidential election in 2010.

Another remarkable role played the Jonathan's regime in the maintenance of and sustenance of continental peace and security, was her support for the Libyan's National Transitional Council as well as her leading role in the ECOWAS Framework Agreement on the situation in the Republic of Mali, since Nigeria took all of these foreign policy decisions in finding lasting solutions to the political crises in these African countries in the spirit of her Afrocentric foreign policy principle on the continent of Africa (Ubani & Kobani, 2022). Again, Bakare (2019, p.5), argued that President Yahya Jammeh's reluctance to accept defeat in the presidential elections of December 2016 led to ECOWAS intervention to restore the legitimate mandate of the people of Gambia. By implication, the Nigerian state in her characteristic manner under Buhari's administration through the instrumentalities of AU and ECOWAS ensured that the acclaimed winner of the election as announced by The Gambian Electoral Commission was eventually inaugurated. Recently, President Buhari donated N1.14 billion to Niger Republic for the purchase of security vehicles to improve its security and also commenced the construction of a railway line from Nigeria to Niger Republic at the tune of \$1.92 billion (Gilbert, 2024, p.43). The list of Nigeria's contributions in the African continent is inexhaustible and can no longer be ignored in Nigerian- African relations as well as African international political discourse.

Afrocentricism and the Illusion of National Development in Nigeria

The debate on justifying or disproving afrocentrism as a fundamental principle in the administration of Nigeria's foreign policy since her independence in 1960 has been ongoing and controversial among scholars of political science and international relations (Azikiwe, 1960; Adeniran, 1998; Saliu, 2010; Ibeanu, 2013; Gilbert, 2001; Gilbert & Ekpudu, 2020; Gilbert, 2024). However, it should be noted that Nigeria's altruism as typified in her African policy has been a great disservice to her especially in the area of economic development. This is because it has not really been economically beneficial to Nigeria as it were. Ironically, Nigeria has continued to deploy her human and financial resources in projecting, protecting and defending African interests. Several African states have over the years benefitted from Nigeria due to this foreign policy objective and still stand to benefit more from her, despite the fact that she is seriously at the receiving end and as such could be obviously described as a "Living Corpse" or better still a "Giant with Clay Feet". Even though, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe publicly stated that Nigeria as a sovereign political entity or state in the contemporary international system has "the historic mission and manifest destiny on the African continent" (Gilbert, 2024, p.47).

Hitherto, this may have been linked to its justification in the national interest of Nigeria. Since realism is a belief that states and leaders think and act in terms of interests defined as power, it is arguably safe to conclude that afrocentric policy does not serve the interest of Nigeria and Nigerians (Gilbert, 2024). In this regard, Nwanolue and Iwuoha (2012, p.18) observed that Nigeria's Africa-centeredness "has not served the national interest in a commensurate measure" compared to the resources deployed. Suffice it to say that her investments in afrocentric policy have not yielded much measured in terms of respect, influence and prosperity (Gilbert, 2024). Today, Nigeria has all the indices of a "failing state" regionally, continentally and globally. She is therefore an epicenter of corruption, infrastructural decay and deficit, poverty and unemployment, as well as a theatre of political and religious conflicts and terrorism (boko haram, banditry, unknown gunmen, farmers/herders conflict). Yet, her resources are increasingly being channeled in solving the problems of other African states while leaving hers not adequately and intentionally attended to at home, hence, the illusion of the country's strategic national interest that would engender the much anticipated national development.

Cognizant of all these crises of public governance in Nigeria, it is imperative that the country converts her altruistic afrocentrism to a more strategically development-oriented "Afro-ecocentrism"- a conscious and deliberate strategic diplomatic policy geared towards the legitimate accessing of varied economic resources in Africa for the

development of Nigeria (Gilbert & Ekpudu, 2020, p.195). This is also in tandem with the recommendation that the Tinubu's government should recalibrate her foreign policy conceptual construct of 4D to focus more on the strategic exploitation of economic opportunities in Africa for Nigeria's development (Gilbert, 2024, p.58). By economically exploiting continental Africa and also adopting the Chinese policy of Going Global for the promotion of economic diplomacy by the Nigerian state. After all, South Africa, regardless of Nigeria's benevolence to her in the years of Apartheid regime, now has several strategic economic ventures, business interests and South African companies in Nigeria, such as the MTN Group, MultiChoice Group (operators of DStv and GOtv) and Shoprite Holdings Ltd, for the exploitation of the available economic resources in the country geared towards the development of the South African economy. While Nigeria has remained altruistic rather than being strategic in relating with other African states and as it were this has seriously eluded her of the much desired national development.

2. Materials and Methods

This study bases its methodology on a qualitative research structure that uses content analysis to study the Afrocentric foreign policy of Nigeria along with its effects on national development. The research analyzes Nigeria's foreign policy development using secondary information from academic writing together with official documents, governmental publications and historical documents. The research examines Nigeria's foreign policy position relative to national development goals through national interest theory analysis. Content analysis allows for structured evaluation of diplomatic relationships and economic partnerships and security commitments in Africa to study their effects on Nigeria's national growth. The research analysis includes comparative studies between nations that achieved national development growth while maintaining strong presence in their respective regions where the study provides essential observations about alternative policy options. Realism's fundamental principles guide the assessment of Nigerian foreign policy decisions through emphasized lens of power together with national self-interest and economic practical considerations. The specialized nature of international diplomacy requires this study to apply a source-triangulation method in order to establish robust research findings. The proposed methodology connects theoretical analysis with evidence-based data to build comprehensive understanding about Nigeria's diplomatic strategies particularly through their unmet developmental objectives. The study adds to academic discussions linking foreign policy to national interest and provides insights for future studies about revising policies to achieve better economic and political advantages.

3. Results

This examination explores how Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy influences domestic development through a critical analysis. Nigeria upholds its leadership and charitable position on the continent yet fails to achieve financial progress or improved infrastructure along with sustainable social order. Nigeria has faced national development setbacks because the country invests too many resources into African diplomatic and peacekeeping operations without defining economic return on investment. Nigeria functions as an African benefactor while simultaneously enduring serious domestic social and economic obstacles. Theoretical exchange benefits from this study since it displays how unselfish foreign policy approaches encounter problems with domestic development goals. The practical element demonstrates that Nigeria should transform its Afrocentric diplomatic practices into an Afro-economic model whereby national interests including economic prosperity and security prevail.

The effects which Nigerian foreign policy choices have on domestic socio-economic development continue to remain ill-defined. Academic research needs to perform quantitative evaluations of Nigeria's African aid strategy and diplomatic spending to

evaluate their multiple economic advantages. Additional research should perform comparative studies between emerging economies to gain better insight into the linking of local growth with regional authority. Research dedicated to policy development must develop practical methods to integrate national economic interests with diplomatic partnerships thereby establishing beneficial foreign policies which unite continental engagement with long-term national development.

4. Discussion

This investigation uncovers Nigeria's conflicting position as an Afrocentric country that displays conflicting principles toward countrywide development. The policy both strengthens Nigeria's African leadership status but its devoted nature produced minimal improvements to both economy and infrastructure throughout the nation. The large investments of finance and military resources in African states by Nigeria without economic reciprocity protocols have generated foreign policy-undevelopment alignment problems. The viability of Afrocentric foreign policy stands questioned because it chooses region-stabilization instead of home-growth enhancement. National interest theory received theoretical advancements through this study which confirms how states should maintain economic and military stability rather than regional idealism for their foreign policy goals. Realistic policies applied to Nigerian foreign diplomacy would enable the country to profit from its diplomatic connections. New perspectives on Afrocentrism require strategic diplomatic analysis to merge national interests with economic possibilities.

Scientists have yet to establish methods for analyzing the true economic effects which result from spending on Nigeria's foreign policy decisions. Research must use experimental methods to measure both short-term and long-term economic gains and expenditures from Nigeria's international activities. Research seeking policy recommendations should compare Nigeria's foreign policy approach to other countries which unify diplomatic power with economic self-interest. Research should investigate methods through which Nigeria can transition its foreign policy approach from an altruistic model into strategic Afro-economic diplomacy that advances both economic development and regional authority.

5. Conclusion

This investigation uncovers Nigeria's conflicting position as an Afrocentric country that displays conflicting principles toward countrywide development. The policy both strengthens Nigeria's African leadership status but its devoted nature produced minimal improvements to both economy and infrastructure throughout the nation. The large investments of finance and military resources in African states by Nigeria without economic reciprocity protocols have generated foreign policy-undevelopment alignment problems. The viability of Afrocentric foreign policy stands questioned because it chooses region-stabilization instead of home-growth enhancement. National interest theory received theoretical advancements through this study which confirms how states should maintain economic and military stability rather than regional idealism for their foreign policy goals. Realistic policies applied to Nigerian foreign diplomacy would enable the country to profit from its diplomatic connections. New perspectives on Afrocentrism require strategic diplomatic analysis to merge national interests with economic possibilities.

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