

Salient Foreign Policy implications of Nigeria's Role in Regional Integration and Peacekeeping in Africa

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Abstract

Nigeria has made more contributions than any other nation on the African continent to the decolonization and complete independence of Africa, in addition to supporting the preservation of political stability, security, and peace in several African nations. Among those nations are Congo, Chad, Ivory Coast, Mali, Liberia, Somalia, and Sierra Leone. Because of this, the global community praised Nigeria's efforts to keep the peace in some of the region's most volatile areas. Some of these nations that benefited from Nigeria's kind gestures returned them with ingratitude. In light of this, this study looks at Nigeria's regional integration and peacekeeping and their consequences for the nation's foreign policy. The study utilized secondary data obtained from books, newspaper articles, bulletins, textbooks, journal articles, internet resources, and e-books, which were consulted for the purpose of this study. The Hegemonic Stability Theory by Kindleberger (1973) was used to interrogate the concept for understanding Nigeria's regional integration and peacekeeping efforts. Findings from the study show that Liberia, Sierra Leone, and other West African nations do not recognize Nigeria's contributions to the peace process in the region, which is why they voted against the country's application for and pursuit of a non-permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council. Consequently, the study recommends that Nigeria should exercise greater diplomacy and reason when determining whether to participate in peacekeeping efforts both within and outside the African continent.

Keywords: Decolonization; Foreign policy; Global community; Peacekeeping; Regional integration; Nigeria

1. Introduction

Realizing sustainable unity, peace, security, political stability, socioeconomic growth, and development depends critically on regional integration and cooperation. Among other things, they specifically offer appropriate venues and institutional frameworks that enable states to efficiently mobilize and combine their resources to expand markets and foster trade; they also guarantee smooth social mobility and capital transfers for the mutual gain of all the states (Kalagbor, 2024). As a result of this, the world has witnessed a notable increase in interest in

regional cooperation to accomplish a variety of political, economic, social, cultural, or security goals since the end of World War II. For example, nations formed the Association of South Eastern Nations (ASEAN) in 1967 in South East Asia; those in Central and Eastern Europe established 1957 saw the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC), which in 1993 became the European Union (EU); the organization of American States (OAS) was established in 1948 by nations in the Americas, while the organization of African Unity (OAU) was founded in 1963 by nations in Africa and renamed in 2002 by the African Union (AU).

Regional hegemon or powers are crucial to realising the objectives of regional integration, as evidenced by research on the subject by Damtie (2024), Kindleberger (1973), cited in Washaya (2024), Farah & Akinlola (2024), Brosig & Nivet (2024), Mahmud (2022), and others. Common examples include the hegemony of the British Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Roman Empire in the seventeenth century, and the United States' Global and North American hegemony since the conclusion of the Cold War (Farah & Akinlola, 2024).

A number of regional powers have received recognition recently for demonstrating exceptional leadership in advancing regional harmony and unity. South America's Brazil, West Africa's Nigeria, Eastern Europe's Russia, Southern Asia's India, Eastern Asia's China, and Southern Africa's South Africa are among these powers (Washaya, 2024; Damtie, 2024). However, some of these objectives are achieved through the foreign policies of states in the international system. Hence, Holsti (2016, cited in Kalagbor, 2024) noted that foreign policy is the conscious behavior of a nation-state towards its external environment. It refers to those goals, objectives, and aspirations a country seeks to achieve in another country while expecting that the promotion of its national interest would be the resultant effect of the achievement of those goals and also the strategies put in place to achieve those goals (Garba, 2020). Nigeria has had an Afrocentric foreign policy since gaining independence in 1960 because it places a greater emphasis on Africa.

Nigeria has made more contributions than any other nation on the continent to the decolonization and complete independence of Africa, as well as to a number of African nations such as Sierra Leone, the Congo, Ivory Coast, Mali, Somalia, Chad, Liberia, and so forth, maintaining peace, security, and political stability

(Garba, 2021). Various, regarded as a "regional power" (Adebayo, 2022), "The Giant of Africa" (Dauda, Ahmad & Keling, 2019; Mustapha, 2020), and "Big Brother" to many African nations, Nigeria has gained recognition for these and many other reasons. These include its leadership position, generosity, and dedication to resolving the numerous issues and problems impacting the continent as a whole. According to Hoslsti (2016, cited in Kalagbor, 2024), nations get involved in foreign policy due to what they aspire to achieve from other nations. But in the case of Nigeria in Africa and West Africa this is not so. It is on this note that this study examines Nigeria's salient foreign policy implications regarding peacekeeping and regional integration in Africa.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Clarifications

The Concept of Regional Integration

According to Denisova and Kostelyanets (2023a) geographic area is "a small group of states connected by a shared geography and level of mutual dependence." Stated differently, a region is a grouping of nations connected by geography. Scholars like Piccolino (2020) and Shumba (2024), however, contend that a region's physical proximity may not be its defining feature. Consequently, regions are deliberate interactions—whether or not they are related to the same geographic area—between states on social, cultural, political, and economic levels. A new political community is superimposed as a result of a political integration process, over the previous ones. According to Dal (2023), the process of persuading political actors in various national contexts to reorient their political actions, allegiances, and expectations towards a new centre whose institutions either have jurisdiction over or aspire to jurisdiction over previously existing national states is known as regional integration.

Based on the previously mentioned justifications, the study defines it an alliance of independent states with similar social, cultural, or historical values is known as regional integration. These states cooperate to achieve shared political, social, economic, or security goals; in return, the states cede a portion of their national sovereignty to the regional organization (Khudaykulova, 2020). The states may or may not be geographically close to one another. Therefore, collaboration for harmony, peace, and advancement between the 55 independent countries of the continent is referred to as regional integration in Africa.

Peacekeeping

The current events in Africa, especially in West Africa, have an impact on security, peacekeeping, and peace enforcement, so it is vital to focus on the contextual nature of these activities. Global and regional peacekeeping operations have been crucial in addressing and ending international conflicts (Erameh, 2021). The term "peacekeeping" primarily refers to operations authorized by the UN Charter that have as their main goal the preservation of world peace and security. According to Kalagbor (2024), the main components of peacekeeping are observation missions and lightly armed forces keeping an eye on the ceasefire, functioning with the parties' permission in an essentially static mode.

Peacekeeping, in its classic sense, refers to the containment of conflicts through the use of impartial third-party assistance in mediating disputes and persuading disputing parties to back down (Verhoeven & Gebregziabher, 2024). Therefore, for a peacekeeping operation to be effective, it must be able to win over not only the parties to the conflict but also international organizations that are regional and sub-regional, comparable to the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, and the United Nations. "Peacekeeping" is a tactic intended to restore harmony to societies that were previously at odds (Adebayo, 2022: 217). Supervising ceasefires between warring parties is the primary goal of deploying military, police, and civilian personnel. Peacekeepers are responsible for creating an environment that prevents hostilities between and among the parties involved in the conflict. Maintaining reciprocal respect for people's rights and freedoms while actively attempting to foster enduring, peaceful relationships in war-torn countries is essential to peacekeeping (Ramontja & Akinola, 2024).

As a means to an end in the conflict resolution continuum, peacekeeping depends on additional political attempts to resolve disputes, such as arbitration, good offices, and negotiation, among others. Effective political processes need to be supported by peacekeeping (Khudaykulova, 2024). Since the development of this conflict management and resolution approach, peacekeeping operations have been carried out in several places, including Sierra Leone, Lebanon, Somalia, Cyprus, and the Central African Republic (CAR), to mention a few. It is commonly known that these tenets, which form the cornerstones of traditional peacekeeping, have proven problematic in numerous instances of intra-state conflict. The idea of peacekeeping is based on a few fundamental ideas, including the parties' agreement to the conflict, the restriction of force to self-defense, and—above all—the assertion of impartiality (Khudaykulova, 2024).

Erameh (2021) likened peacekeeping to nursing care in his writing: "KEEPING THE PEACE, which he said is like getting daily nursing care. It's similar to hospital staff tending to a patient's temperature and maintaining a reasonable level of health. And once you reach a certain stage, a skilled surgeon might be able to show up and handle the issue. The goal must be to keep the patient as comfortable as possible, as there may not be a great surgeon or the case may not be operable. It is important to acknowledge the challenges in resolving the fundamental disagreements that lead to peacekeeping (Erameh, 2021).

According to Saliu (2006), a peacekeeping mission is viewed as a useful way to pursue collective security and a defense of international peace. Simply expressed, collective security implies that all parties to the international system have an obligation to work together to stop unexpected developments from occurring in the global system. In other words, it implies that member states have a duty to support any member that is in need. Some have argued that there is no constitutional authorization for the term "peacekeeping mission" (Kohnert, 2023; Farah & Akinola, 2024). However, given how frequently it is used to handle crises, this does not imply that the peacekeeping mission is ultra vires; rather, it has the status of a legal instrument in principle (Saliu, 2006). Nevertheless, the acceptability problem was present from the start of the peacekeeping mission and has not been resolved by a sound theoretical framework put forth by global specialists. In spite of this, when conflicts are handled irregularly, the UN Secretary-General usually produces supporting documents for the Security Council that serve as a point of reference.

2.2 Africa's Historical Context for Regional Peacekeeping Integration

In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the Organisation of Africa Unity (OAU) was established, in 1963 with the goals of promoting cooperation among member states, safeguarding the independence and territorial integrity of African nations against external aggression, and assisting in their liberation from colonialism and apartheid. Even though the 1950s saw the beginning of the quest for regional integration by a few prominent leaders of the early independent African states, OAU formalized it in that same year (Kalagbor, 2024).

The OAU (1963–2002) made a substantial contribution to the successful elimination of interstate conflicts on the continent, the fight against apartheid in South Africa, and the advancement of African unity in addition to helping many current African countries achieve independence. Nigeria has also played a leading

role in the OAU's conversion to the AU, which was required following the end of colonialism for the African countries to confront their common security, social, political, and economic issues on the continent and to establish a collective voice in the world economy (Kohnert, 2023). African leaders convened in Libya in September 1999 for the 4th Extra-Ordinary Summit. The result was the Sirte Declaration, which promoted the African Union's establishment among other things. 53 African nations ratified at the 36th Extra-Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Lomé, Togo, in July 2000, the AU Constitutive Act was passed.

After that, at the 2002 Durban Summit in South Africa, the OAU changed its name to the AU. At the 2005 conference in Uganda, under the topic "Desirability of a Union Government of Africa," the African Union (AU) recommended creating a continental government to speed up the continent's regional integration (Biswaro, 2012). Inaugurated on May 16, 2013, during the 50th anniversary celebration of the African Union's Ordinary Assembly in Addis Ababa, the "Agenda 2063" was finally adopted on January 31, 2015, during the Head of State and Government of AU's Ordinary Session. This agenda is a long-term strategy framework that spans 50 years and aims to support the African Union's (AU) efforts to build a unified regional governance by 2063 and to accelerate socioeconomic development—which will be known as the "United States of Africa" (USA) (Ramontja & Akinola, 2024).

2.3 Nigeria's Afro-Centric Foreign Policy Nature

No country is an island on its own. Although some countries have vast resources, they still require a form of relationship with others to aid the fulfilment of their national interests. Therefore, Osakwe (2017), highlights that "without accepting national interest as a guide, no nation can have a true guide as to what it needs to do in foreign policy" (Iyiola, 2016). Nigeria therefore wishes to use her resources, population, military capability, size, etc.... as an advantage to support and facilitate Africa's collective interest; Nigeria's historic mission fulfilled this mandate (Iganga, 2013). Thus, respective Nigerian constitutions, since independence in 1960 till date, clearly enacted and prioritized these basic strands under the core goal and guiding principles of state policy of Nigeria's foreign policy based on Africa-centred policy.

Nigeria's foreign policy is centered on Africa, which played out more clearly in 1973, in bilateral trade agreements when Nigeria had over 16 African States while

technical, cultural, and social links with other African countries increased tremendously. It was also involved in building damaged buildings for the Movement in Morocco (Assibong, 2017: 58). The OAU was founded in 1963 and later changed its name to the African Union in 2002, was founded in 1963 with Nigeria as a major contributor. Nigeria also prompted the UN General Assembly to hold an additional session to discuss the African Economic Crisis. Nigeria was instrumental in the OAU's 1987 adoption of a common position on African debt, which called for the cancellation of all bilateral debts and a significant infusion of cash into the continent to support the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), given the debilitating effects of indebtedness in the continent (Saliu, 2006: 120–121). Nigeria has promoted its Afrocentric policies by actively participating in peacekeeping missions in Sierra Leone, the Gambia, and Liberia.

2.4 Theoretical Concept for Understanding Nigerians' Aspirations for African Integration

Based on the Regional Hegemonic Stability Theory, Nigeria's contribution to gaining its independence in 1960, Africa has integrated into the region like a regional hegemon. Scholars like Keohane (1984), Gilpin (1988), Yarbrough & Yarbrough (1992), Kindleberger (1973), Prys (2008, 2010), and others have written about the theory. To explain how American and British hegemony, which he called Pax-Americana and Pax-Britannica, helped to keep the international order stable. Kindleberger (1973) developed the HST. According to the theory, a hegemon is any state that has greater economic and military might than others either globally or regionally, is able and willing to exercise leadership, and sets the rules necessary to preserve the stability of the world or region.

According to the HST, when a hegemon assumes the role of the leader or stabiliser, a stable international system is more likely to be developed and maintained; otherwise, the system would become unstable. According to Kindleberger (1973, p. 305), "there has to be a stabiliser, one stabiliser, for the world economy to be stabilised." The stabiliser in this context is a hegemon. According to Kindleberger (1973, p. 28), "a liberal economic order needs leadership, a country which is prepared consciously, under some systems of rules it has internationalised, to set standards of conduct for other countries; and to seek to get others to follow them." According to Kindleberger (1973), the lack of a hegemon to assume the necessary leadership role led to the global depressions of 1929 and 1939.

Hegemony requires, however, that a power shows ability, willingness, and commitment to maintaining regional stability. Ability is defined as the capacity to defend the region against outside intrusions or aggression. Willingness is the readiness of a hegemon to assume the responsibility (bear the expense) of leading the system, particularly when it comes to delivering public goods like aid to weaker states, international peace, and stable internal political economies.

Furthermore, Keohane (1984, p. 30) states that “a hegemon can be supported because it provides specific products and services that help weaker states.” As stated by Kindleberger (1973), Keohane (1984), and Myers (1991), a hegemon needs to be able to maintain its position, which includes supplying public goods, upholding the law, defending the area from outside aggression, etc. (Schimm, 2006, Bach, 2007, Prys, 2008; Nolte, 2010).

Nigeria has outperformed most of its peers in terms of ability, willingness, and commitment to the cause of Africa. As a result of its unparalleled dedication to the continent, Nigeria has gained international recognition as a regional power in Africa and as the undisputed hegemon of the West African sub-region, even though there is very little agreement in the literature that the country is Africa's regional hegemon. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and the largest country of Black people worldwide. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development claims that one in four Africans and one in five people of African descent are Nigerians. Of every ten people in West Africa, six are Nigerians (Olanrewaju & Olunkanmi, 2020). According to the World Bank (2023a), Nigeria's population is estimated to be over 218 million, surpassing that of Ethiopia (123 million), Egypt (110 million), and its closest regional power rival, South Africa (59 million). For many years, Nigeria's economy has been the biggest in the world in terms of GDP volume. It is the top producer of crude oil in Africa (World Bank, (2023b) and ranks seventh globally as of 2022 (Punch, 2023). For many, it is a source of imported crude oil nations worldwide, including those in Africa.

Even though South Africa is posing a threat to Nigeria's dominance in the region, the latter has held that title since 2013 following an economic rebasing (Olanrewaju & Olunkanmi, 2020). Nigeria's GDP as of 2022 was \$477 billion, greater than Egypt's \$476 billion and South Africa's \$405 billion (World Bank, 2023b). Furthermore, despite Nigeria's ranking as the fourth most capable country in Africa in 2022 (Elijah, 2023), it has been recognized as a significant

contributor to AU, ECOWAS, and UN peacekeeping efforts (Dauda et al. 2019; Mustapha, 2020). Nigeria's goal has always been to foster brotherhood among its fellow African states through its benevolence, not to dominate or conquer their territory. This was made evident in its prime minister Abubakar Bafawa Balewa's first speech to the UN in October 1960, when he unequivocally declared that, "We sincerely believe that peace on our continent can only be sustained on that basis, therefore, we will consider all African territories, whatever of size, as equals and will never force our will on any other country."

Nigeria had a significant influence on Africa and South Africa, dating back to the latter was an apartheid state from 1960 until its independence in 1994. The military government of General Sani Abacha was followed by pressure from South Africa for Nigeria to return to democratic rule. According to Olanrewaju and Olorunkanmi (2020), it even took the lead in demanding that Nigeria be subject to sanctions by the Commonwealth of Nations for allegedly violating human rights, in particular Ken Saro Wiwa and the nine other unjustly killed human rights activists.

In contrast to the circumstances on the continent, Nigeria is unquestionably acknowledged as the dominant 14 sovereign states that comprise the West African sub region—Benin, Ghana, Mali, Cote d'voire, Senegal, Liberia, Gambia, Sierra Leon, Togo, Guenea Bissau, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, and Niger—are the dominant force in the sub region. An important contributor to the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was Nigeria, which is headquartered in the nation's capital, Abuja.

3. Methodology

To gather information for this study, several published and unpublished sources were consulted, including past publications, e-journals, books, newspaper articles, bulletins, journal articles, internet resources, and e-books.

4. Results and Discussions

Foreign Policy Implications of Nigeria's Role in Regional Integration and Peacekeeping in Africa.

Nigeria has a leading position in Africa thanks to its endowment and geostrategic advantages. Nigeria has an abundance of gas, oil, and solid minerals. It is the most populous country in the region and its land can be used to grow a wide range of cash and food crops. The export of oil brings in enormous sums of money to the

country, and there is still room for the export of gas, solid minerals, and agricultural goods (Ramontja & Akinola, 2024). Nigeria boasts one of the biggest, most well-trained, and equipped armed forces in the area. Nigeria's intention to lead Africa and Africans worldwide is best demonstrated by the fact that West Africa is the focal point of her foreign policy (Adebayo, 2022).

Similar to the situation in Liberia, the Sierra Leonean war started in 1991 as an insurgency led by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and supported by the National Patriotic Front Liberia (NPFL) against the corrupt and inept government. However, Nigeria unilaterally decided to intervene in Sierra Leone by sending troops from the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) into the nation (Ramontja & Akinola, 2024). Due to this, several civilians perished, women were brutally and savagely raped, and children as young as nine years old were forced to join rebel groups (Adebayo, 2022). President Tejjan Kabbah of Sierra Leone requested Abacha of Nigeria to intervene. The framework of ECOMOG intervention was the peacekeeping agreement between Nigeria and Sierra Leone (Damtie, 2024).

During the military incursions in Liberia and Sierra Leone, Nigeria supplied 90% of ECOMOG's finance and at least 80% of its troops (12,000 out of 16,000 in Liberia and 12,000 out of 13,000 in Sierra Leone), according to Osakwe (2017: 4). Additionally, Nigeria intervened on behalf of the government of Sierra Leone when a string of coups threatened the country's security by providing military intelligence, presidential guards, and security specialists. These supplemented the training exercises conducted by the Nigerian Army Training Assistant Group (NATAG) (Osakwe, 2017). Nigeria played a major role in enabling the creation of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), a backup force for sub-regional security. Nigeria under General Yakubu Gowon played a key role in the formation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975, along with Eyadema of Togo. The Community aims to promote cooperation and integration that will result in the establishment of an economic union in West Africa in order to enhance living conditions for its citizens, maintain and strengthen economic stability, fortify ties between member states, and advance the advancement and development of the African continent (Erameh, 2021).

Nigeria's sub-regional integration endeavour in West Africa involved the implementation of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS), which enhances trade within the sub-region by facilitating the processing of duty

concessions for registered companies and trade. Imports into Nigeria and vice versa are duty-free for goods from ECOWAS nations (Garba, 2020). The ETLs sought to create a free trade zone where businesses from member states could transport goods across the ECOWAS region without having to pay taxes or duties. Nigeria has also played a major role in the West Africa Gas Plant (WAGP) and West Africa Power Pool (WAPP). Under this integration programme, Nigeria exchanges power with Ghana, Togo, Benin, and Niger with plans to later extend to Mali, Senegal, Liberia, and Guinea. The project aims to put all ECOWAS member states together through electrical networks (Garba & Akuya, 2020).

Nigeria has been able to offer member states technical assistance through the Technical Aids Corps (TAC) as part of its role to promote regional integration in the sub-region. Through its Technical Aid Corps (TAC), Nigeria continues to sell oil to its neighbours at a discount in addition to offering technical and humanitarian assistance. It has benefited nations like Ghana, Liberia, Niger, and Gambia. Upon request from governments, the programme disperses experts from Nigeria throughout West Africa. In April 2018 Nigeria sent 500 Technical Aid Corps volunteers to Sierra Leone and also sent 6,000 teachers to Liberia (Punch, 2023).

In terms of foreign policy, Nigeria ought to have gained a great deal from her humanitarian and peacekeeping missions in West African countries. However, in 2009, Liberia and Sierra Leone both rejected Nigeria's bid for non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council, going against the conventional wisdom in international politics regarding reciprocity (Kalagbor, 2024). This ought to have been a means of compensating Nigeria for all of the help provided. No Nigerian human resource or construction company was given a contract to rebuild or reconstruct after the wars in Sierra Leone or Liberia as a token of appreciation for Nigeria. Nigerians have been mistreated and expelled from Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. Over taxation is one of the economic policies that Ghana implemented in an effort to reduce the number of Nigerian business people doing business there (Farah & Akinola, 2024). One instance of reciprocity in US-Nigeria foreign policy was when former president Obasanjo asked for Nigeria to be forgiven its debt, and Clinton asked Obasanjo to promise to pressure OPEC to lower the price of crude oil on the global market in exchange (Shumba, 2024). This juxtaposes Holsti's (2016 cited in Kalagbor, 2024) views on the concept of foreign policy to mean the conscious behavior of a nation-state toward its external environment. It refers to those goals, objectives, and aspirations a country seeks to

achieve in another country while expecting the promotion of its national interest would be the resultant effect of the achievement of those goals and also the strategies put in place to achieve those goals.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

It is necessary to investigate the claims that the frequent occurrence of intra- and inter-state conflict throughout African history results from certain states in the region being underdeveloped or in the process of developing. The actions and presence of certain notable actors in each region, such as Nigeria, lessen the possibility that a crisis will cause irreversible harm to the continent. The implications of Nigeria's involvement in African peacekeeping and regional integration were explored in this study. In many nations both within and outside Africa, Nigeria was a key player in the peacekeeping and integration efforts on the continent. The international community has praised Nigeria's efforts to keep the peace in some of the world's most volatile areas. However, the nations that benefited from Nigeria's kind gestures returned them with ingratitude. Going by the findings of this study, the following recommendations are imperative:

- (i) Nigeria should exercise greater diplomacy and reason when determining whether to participate in peacekeeping efforts both inside and outside of the continent. As previously mentioned, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and other West African nations do not recognize Nigeria's contribution to the peace process in either country, which is why they voted against Nigeria at the UN despite Nigeria's efforts to restore democracy and bring about peace in Sierra Leone, which resulted in the deaths of roughly 700 Nigerian soldiers.
- (ii) Nigeria's foreign policy should be reviewed if the country's role isn't protecting its citizens abroad and raising the standard of living for its citizens. This is because the main reasons countries engage in international relations are to further their obscure national interests and advance their national development.

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