The Impact of Geography on the North-South Divide

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between external environment and Nigeria's foreign policy. The external environment of foreign policy is the totality of extraneous factors that influence and shape a country's foreign policy. The international system was remarkably altered by the historic end of the Cold war. The post-Cold War facilitated changes in the international system that have made international relations more complex and challenging. Position in the International System, The International Power Structure, International Organizations, Alliances, the Economy of Oil and Gas, Globalization etc. Were identified as some of the external sources of influence on the country's foreign policy. These developments have challenged and tremendously altered the dynamics of Nigeria's foreign policy. Data were sourced from secondary sources: books, journals, newspapers, magazines and the Internet. Thus, the paper concludes that; Nigerian foreign policy has been influenced by factors external to the Nigerian state. These factors include its position in the international system, the prevalent power structure,

its membership in international organizations and dominant international norms such as that of human rights which underlie peacekeeping missions.

Introduction

Foreign policy is an interactive process between the domestic and external environment (Sesay & Eyinla, 2012; Kissinger, 1969). Any foreign policy is therefore shaped by both domestic and external factors which together constitute the environment of foreign policy (Saliu & Aremu, 2013). The dynamics (both domestic and external), structures and processes, are all constituent parts of the environment of foreign policy (Alli, 2010). External factors that impinge on foreign policy are the sum of extraneous factors outside of a country that shapes and influences a country's foreign policy (Alli, 2010).

Beginning from the last decade of the 20th century, the international system witnessed unprecedented changes that necessitated states to redefine and refocus their foreign policies in response. With economic liberalisation and unfettered market forces assuming dominance in the global economy, globalisation became a significant phenomenon that impacted particularly the foreign policies of states in developing countries. The unbundling of the economies of states together with the emergence of democratic principles and governance as a consequence of the global push for democratisation, are all part of the wild wind of changes in the international system (Akindele, 2012). These developments were fallouts of the pulling down of the Berlin Wall in 1989 which marked the demise of communism and an end to the bitter Cold War that characterised the international system. This new order in the international system characterised by liberalism has facilitated enormous changes in international relations and has continued to shape and mould the nature and character of inter-state relations.

Conceptual Clarification

Foreign Policy

Foreign policy is simply the foreign action of a state or what Holsti called the conscious behaviour of a nation-statetowards her external environment (Holsti, 1977:20-21). In a similar way, Philips observes that foreign policy is a state's

attitudes or official policies towards areas or events outside of the state, Philips (1964). In Northedge's view, the foreign policy of a country is a product of environmental factors- both internal and external to it (Northedge, 1968). From the foregoing, it implies that nation-state such as Nigeria has certain goals, which could be termed asnational interests that it wants to achieve. And so also so like any other nation-state, Nigeria is confronted by both the internal and external environment s in her foreign policy formulation. The achievements of its goals depend onthese environmental factors. These factors therefore, can either impede or enhance the country from achieving its national interest. Thus, foreign policy is the act of pursuing national interest guided by certain principles and influenced by the external conditions.

Foreign policy is therefore understood to have both domestic and external linkages. This is why Northedge (1968)asserts that the foreign policy of a country is a product of environmental factors – both internal and external to it. Foreign policy determinants therefore are associated with domestic and external environment of a state. As such, itis important to note that they are subject to change with time and circumstances.

International Relations

International relations, to start with, is much broader than foreign policy and international politics in the sense thatit is the sum total of relationships among actors in the international system (Ofoegbu, 1998:2). The actors in the international system include states of Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, and the United State of America; international organization such as Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), African Union (AU), and the United Nations Organization (UNO); Multinational Corporations such as Coca-cola, Paterson Zochonis, First Bank; liberation movements such as Palestinian Liberation Organization, Hamas and Fatah; and individuals such as Osama Bin Laden and Nelson Mandela. The relationships among these actors may include political, economic, military, religious and socio-cultural. The political interactions may include opening up of embassies and exchangeof diplomats by states as well as their membership in international organizations. The economic interactions may include trade between states. The military interactions may include signing of defence agreements and military exchange program among states. The religious interactions may include

performing pilgrimages and religious preaching and enlightenment across the world. The socio-cultural interactions may include sports. By internationalsystem, one is simply referring to the environment within which the actors interact. For instance, it can be like a state like Nigeria, a sub-region like West Africa, or a continent like Africa, by extension, the entire world.

International politics

International politics is an essential aspect of international relations. Scarcity of values can either lead to conflict orcooperation, peace or war between states. Thus, politics in the international system is who gets what, when and how (Lasswell, 1971). International politics is about national interests. To Morgenthau, the national interest is defined interms of power. Thus, international politics, like all politics, is the struggle for power Morgenthau (1993). International politics, therefore, refers to the processes of interaction between two or more states. It involves all political interactions, whether conflicting or cooperative, defensive or offensive among states in the course of pursuing their competing national interest.

Stages in Foreign Policy Decision Making

According to Mark (2014), the stages are as follows:

Assessment of the international and domestic political environment

Foreign policy is made and implemented within an international and domestic political context, which must be understood by a state in order to determine the best foreign policy option. For example, a state may need to respond to an international crisis.

Goal setting

A state has multiple foreign policy goals. A state must determine which goal is affected by the international and domestic political environment at any given time.

Determination of policy options

A state must then determine what policy options are available to meet the goal or goals set in light of the political environment. This will involve an assessment of the state's capacity to implement policy options and an assessment of the consequences of each policy option.

Formal decision making action

A formal foreign policy decision will be taken at some level within a government. Foreign policy decisions are usually made by the executive branch of government. Common governmental actors or institutions which make foreign policy decisions include: the head of state (such as a president) or head of government (such as a prime minister), cabinet, or minister.

Implementation of chosen policy option

Once a foreign policy option has been chosen, and a formal decision has been made, then the policy must be implemented. Foreign policy is most commonly implemented by specialist foreign policy arms of the state bureaucracy, such as a Ministry of Foreign Affairs or State Department. Other departments may also have a role inimplementing foreign policy, such as departments for: trade, defence, and aid.

Foreign Policy has to operate in the international environment which is subject to many frequent and important situational changes. Consequently, it always has to adapt according to these changes. These situational changes actas foreign policy inputs. For example, socialist revolution in a neighbouring state or a military coup, or the emergence of dispute between two friendly nations or the rise of a controversy in the United Nations or the nationalization of industry by a major nation or the devaluation of a popular currency, or the aggression or intervention by a nation against another nation etc., are some of the situational changes that keep on taking place inthe international environment. Such external changes always affect the formulation and behaviour of the foreign policies of all the nations.

External Environment and Nigeria's Foreign Policy

External Influence on Foreign Policy

Factors that influence the foreign policy of a state but are outside of the state itself are known as external factors. Rather than being a function of the particular characteristics of the state in question, these factors are beyond the state in that they are a function of the attributes and characteristics of the international system itself within which state and non-state actor operate.

According to Neack (2008), the study of foreign policy at the systemic level involves state-to-state relations that occur bilaterally/multilaterally and regionally/globally. Such scholarship is guided by the assumption that foreign policy is driven by a state's position in the system, which is defined by each states relationship to other states in the system (p. 131). It is the nature of the system therefore, and certain factors engendered by it, that determine foreign policy in that they encourage certain behaviours e.g. power-based interactions in the realist world.

Relationship between Position in the International System and Foreign Policy

Arguably, the most glaring examples of an external influence on the conduct of a given state's foreign policy relates to its position in the international system and relations with other states because, as is argued by neoclassical realists, no state's foreign policy can go beyond the limits set by the international environment (system) itself in the long-run (Rose 1998, p. 151). However, understanding how the two are related requires an understanding of the concept of power as states in the international system are often classified based on power considerations. Moreover, states having varying levels of power (and thus positioned differently in the international hierarchy) are expected to act differently i.e. exhibit different foreign policy behaviours.

Historically, the concept of power has proven elusive to definition. Any attempt at a comprehensive definition of the concept would involve that a near infinite number of variables, such as military capabilities, economic size, population, citizenryeducation amongst others, be taken into account. Generally, power can be understoodto encompass all these tangible state resources (Neack 2008, p. 134). States are often classified into one of three categories (great, middle, and small powers) based on their power capabilities lending them to similar positions in the international hierarchy. Some of the variables inherent in determining a state's power such as geography, economic development, and military capabilities – delineate the foreign policy options available to the state in question.

Great powers for instance, sit at the top of this hierarchy and can be recognized by their willingness to use force in advancing their interests as they often do. Conversely, small powers are severely limited in their range of action and as a

result are unable to significantly impact the system. Middle powers occupy a unique position in that while they are stronger than small powers and can exert much more influence, they are less forceful than great powers and tend to act primarily in multilateral settings although the particular dynamics of behaviour vary between traditional and emerging middle powers (Jordaan, 2003).

Furthermore, the societal characteristics of the region such as the presence of overlapping ethnic communities can also affect state foreign policy.

The International Power Structure and State Foreign Policy

Related to the influence of a state's geopolitical and power position on its foreign policy is the influence of the prevalent international power structure and its consequent dynamics on foreign policy preference formations (van der Kamp-Alons, 2005). The prevalent power structure may be understood in terms of polarity – the concentration of power in the international system.

The prevalent power structure of the international system at any particular point in time is a function of the distribution of power and state influence in the international context. There are generally understood to be four types of polarity: unipolarity, where international power is concentrated in the hand of one state; bipolarity, where two states enjoy a preponderance of power; tripolarity, where power is near equally distributed between three states; and multipolarity, where there are multiple centres of power.

International Organizations, Alliances, and State Foreign Policy

One final external factor that influences a state's foreign policy is its membership in international organizations and alliances. While international organizations exert an influence on foreign policy at both the formulation and implementation phases, the influence of an alliance on a state's foreign policy is mostly limited to the latter stage.

One way in which international organizations can influence state foreign policy formulation is by "teaching" them norms that increase their propensity towards certain types of actions and policy objectives as found by Finnemore (1993). Membership in an international organization can also restrict states from

embarking on certain kind of foreign policy adventures as the organizations founding treaties often embody certain legally-binding prescriptions.

External Influence on Nigerian Foreign Policy

It has been noted that Nigerian leaders have a tendency to respond to external demands, pressures, and interests at the expense of domestic pressures and influences, particularly within the context of the challenges posed to the nation by globalization (Nuamah, 2003, p. 6).

As has been noted earlier, a state's foreign policy is a function of its position/status in the international system, which in turn is a function of its relative capabilities and Nigeria is no different. Nigeria's foreign policy has been heavily influenced by its middle-power status in the international system. This position was reaffirmed in 1987 when Nigeria's Foreign Minister at the time, Bolaji Akinyemi, initiated the "Concert of Medium Powers"; an informal body comprised of sixteen countries who exercised considerable influence in their respective regions (Aribisala, 2013).

The initiative, which was christened at the Lagos Forum marked one of the few times in the country's history where it took the initiative on such a scale getting fifteen other countries – including Sweden, Switzerland, India, and Mexico, to participate in the concert. Furthermore, in addition to the position-related reasons for the initiative (i.e. Nigeria's position as one such middle/medium power), it was also motivated in part by the bipolar power structure of the time as there was an apparent need for middle powers such as Nigeria to assert themselves in response to the increased use of threats by the superpowers – the US and USSR (Salami 2013, p. 140).

Nigeria's status as a regional leader also contributed to its spearheading the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States, a testament to such powers' tendency to prefer multilateral action. It has tried to cultivate a regional sphere of influence within which its security could be guaranteed in so far as it tries to project itself internationally. ECOWAS creation was also motivated by an attempt to reduce France's influence in the region (Obi 2008, p. 188-189).

Where France's interference in the West African sub-region caused Nigeria to be more active regionally, the Western powers' alienation of Nigeria under the Abacha regime due to the severity of its human rights abuses drove Nigerian foreign policy Eastward with the country developing closer relations with China and North Korea further illustrating how the actions of external actors have served as a foreign policy impetus (Abdulrasheed *et al.* 2016, p. 1459).

The unique place of oil in the Nigerian economy has made it particularly susceptible to external influence. Some other states to whom it supplies oil, such as the US and Japan, and some of the multinational corporations operating in the country, such as Shell and British Petroleum, have been known to meddle in the country's policy- making domestically, where they relate to the oil-rich Niger Delta region, and its foreign policy, particularly as it relates to the oil sector, repatriation of profits, etc.

As Ota and Ecoma (2015) noted, the country's inability to pursue and sustain a dynamic foreign policy is due to its dependency status on the international scene (p. 58) which itself is a result of its domestic dependence on oil revenue which has translated to an international dependence on foreign loans and aid. The bulk of Obasanjo's foreign policy actions were predicated on a need to secure debt relief from such external creditors through the use of economic diplomacy (Lamido 2012, p. 5).

Finally, as a member of both the United Nations and the African Union, Nigeria has evidently been influenced by international human rights norms. It has participated in a number of peacekeeping missions even beyond West African region. Nigeria's humanitarian efforts have tended to be coordinated under the auspices of international organizations where it has remained an active participant. It is currentlyone of the UN's largest peacekeeper contributors and has almost singlehandedly spearheaded ECOWAS peacekeeping missions in the past (Oni, 2002; Adebajo, 2013).

Conclusion

The discussion provided above shows how Nigerian foreign policy has been influenced by factors external to the Nigerian state. These factors include its position in the international system, the prevalent power structure, its membership in international organizations and dominant international norms such as that of human rights which underlie peacekeeping missions.

It is important to note that these external factors, ubiquitous as they may be, do not of themselves determine Nigerian foreign policy. Rather, they only enable and constrain the range of actions available to policy-makers. In order to definitively determine the country's foreign policy, they work in conjunction with other factors inside the Nigerian state itself.

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