

Nigeria's Foreign Policy and the Security and Development Challenges in Central Africa

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Abstract

The paper examined security and development issues facing most states in Central Africa. It also explored feasible and practical steps through which Nigeria could maximize the economic potentials of the region and at the same time institutionalize political stability in Central Africa. We noted that the region is basically characterized by multifarious and deepening incidence of *inter* and *intra* state conflicts which cripple sustainable development and christen the area the **dark** sub-region of Africa. We anchored our analysis on the intractable conflict theory and equally collated our data through the qualitative method. The paper decried the orgy and declining economic fortunes of the region and hence noted, among others, that the basic catalysts for the crises stem from the deadly combination of ethnic divisions, power hungry regimes, inequitable distributed oil wealth, unsolved social problems, and rigged democracy. The paper recommended that Nigeria should re-tool her foreign policy content, instruments and orientation so as to explore and exploit the resources of the region and equally channel same toward institutionalize peaceful coexistence in Central Africa.

Key Words: Security, Conflict, Development, and Foreign Policy

Introduction

Central Africa is a core region of the African continent. It comprises Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Rwanda, Angola, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and São Tomé and Príncipe. The region is primarily inhabited by Bantu peoples. Thus, Bantu languages predominate, with Chadic and Nilo-Saharan languages also spoken in some areas. Christianity, mixed with traditional beliefs in some places, is the predominant religion in Central Africa. (For details on the above see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Africa).

Although the countries are contiguous, deep forests make it difficult to travel within this area. These countries are not effectively served by natural trade routes except for the Congo river on its southern flank, nor have the governments made great efforts in developing regional roads until recently. Thus, the countries remained isolated from one another despite having been grouped together under the French colonial rule. Some of

these countries have potentially more important economic links with Nigeria and Democratic Republic of Congo, neither of which is included in the sub-regional Community, than with each other.

Meanwhile, an in-depth understanding of the political economy of Central Africa is predicated largely on appreciating the ideological/development roots and compartmentalization of the African continent along external cleavages. Indeed a periscopic analysis of the political economy of Central African states must take into cognizance the following factors:

- Colonial proclivities especially the pervasion of ‘lines in the sand syndrome’;
- Attractions of internal/external predatory agents;
- Economic endowment/utilization of natural resources;
- Idiosyncratic dispositions of their respective leaders;
- Affiliation of the leadership to Western development ideals;
- Level of permeation and/or assimilation of Western civilization;
- Level of development of productive forces; intensity of production and pattern of distribution of socially produced common wealth;
- Intensity of affinity among the social forces during production and distribution;
- Nature of natural resources endowment;
- Ecological and strategic factors; and
- External interests/interventions and machinations.

These factors, as enumerated above, combine to influence the pattern of inter- and intra-state relations; intensity and pattern of social engineering and development within the region; as well as the level of permeation of industry, social relations of production and peaceful coalescence within the region. Meanwhile, post-independence states in Central Africa have been grappling with the onerous task of enhancing sustainable human development. However, an inspection of the World Bank Governance Rating (Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi, 2008) and the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2008) reveal that despite some improvements, the region is facing a serious crisis with regard to all aspects of human security.

In this paper, effort shall be made to x-ray development and security challenges facing the region. We shall also explore the challenges posed by regime changes as well as ravaging economic crises and subsequently Nigeria’s foreign policy response arising thereto. Specifically, the study shall pursue the following objectives:

- to explore the fundamental factors that undermine sustainable development in Central Africa;
- to outline and interrogate the recurring security crises in the region with a view to preferring practical and potent remedies to these; and
- to examine feasible ways through which Nigeria can deploy her foreign policy instruments toward exploring, exploiting and maximizing the economic potentials in Central Africa and at the same time contributing in the onerous task of stabilizing the region.

Theoretical Perspective

We shall anchor our investigations on the intractable conflict explanatory matrix. According to Burgess (2003:1), the term refers to “conflicts that stubbornly seem to elude resolution, even when the best available techniques are applied”. Similarly, the term is defined as “those conflicts that go on and on, are frequently very destructive, and seem to resist any attempts at resolution” (Bercovitch, 2003:1). Fundamentally, intractable conflict appears to resist any attempt at management, and go on and on toward higher levels of hostility, intensity and usually violent in nature. Basically it is dynamic, a process of competitive relationships that extend over a period of time, and involves hostile perceptions and occasional military actions (Bercovitch, 2003:2).

The basic characteristics of the framework are hereby outlined below:

- In terms of actors, intractable conflicts involve states or other actors with a long sense of historical grievance, and a strong desire to redress or avenge these.
- In terms of duration, intractable conflicts take place over a long period of time.
- In terms of issues, intractable conflicts involve intangible issues such as **identity, sovereignty, or values and beliefs.**
- In terms of **relationships**, intractable conflicts involve polarized perceptions of hostility and enmity, and behavior that are violent and destructive.
- In terms of geopolitics, intractable conflicts usually take place where buffer states exist between major power blocks or civilizations.
- In terms of management, intractable conflicts resist many conflict management efforts and have a history of **failed peacemaking** efforts (Bercovitch, 2003:2).
- In addition to the above, intractable conflict exists on a continuum, with very stubborn, apparently intractable conflicts at one end; very simple, readily resolvable conflicts at the other end and yet several others are located somewhere in between the two extremes (Burgess, 2003:1). Of critical importance is the fact that seemingly tractable conflicts that last for a long time and subsequently involve irreducible, high-stakes win-lose issues that have no "zone of possible agreement" (ZOPA) often become intractable. Such has been the situation in Central Africa.

Given the characteristics of intractable conflicts, the lack of contact between the parties, the hostility and repeated violence, it seems plausible to suggest that one path out of this dilemma would be to accept some form of third-party **mediation** (Okolie, 2013:5). **Third parties** can play a very useful role in the context of intractable conflicts. It is therefore within the context that the intervention of Nigeria, via her foreign policy action is rationalised.

Indeed, the existence of mutual distrust among the leaderships in Central Africa; the underground alliance by the affected States with militants and armed groups; the prevalence of conflict exportation; and deep-seated ethnic rivalry; as well as super-fluidity of State boundaries make it difficult for the sub-regional Leadership to provide common platform for dialogue and peaceful resolution of the conflicts. Hence the rationale for Nigeria to articulate and extend to Central Africa her foreign policy rooted in the expansion of her robust national interest. This should be **masked** under her **re-defined economic diplomacy platform, revised good neighbourliness as well as retooled transformation agenda.**

Data for the study were generated through qualitative method. Thus we relied on content analysis of secondary sources such as: text books, journal articles, periodicals and mimeographs related to the development and security challenges in central Africa. We also accessed internet materials that documented foreign policy pronouncements and actions of successive leaderships in Nigeria; especially as they concern her relations with Central Africa. In addition, we explored documentary evidence emanating from the International Crises Group, international donor and development agencies and other international human rights groups on the crises situation and development challenges in Central Africa. These data were analysed by the application of content analysis and careful observation of developments in the volatile region.

Central Africa: Analysis of the Political Economy

Central Africa is not only home to considerable amounts of natural resources; its sheer size means that the political violence and instability that continues to plague the region is also widespread. For appreciation of demographic factors in selected Central Africa states, see table 1 below:

Table 1: Central Africa: Demographic Factors

Name	Capital	Currency	Official Languages	Area (km ²)	Population
Angola	Luanda	Kwanza	Portuguese	1,246,700	20,609,294
Burundi	Bujumbura	Burundi Franc	Kirundi French	27,834	8,691,005
Cameroon	Yaoundé	Central African CFA franc	French, English	475,442	20,129,878
Central African Republic	Bangui	Central African CFA franc	Sango, French	622,984	4,576,600
Chad	N'Djamena	Central African CFA franc	French, Arabic	1,284,000	11,274,106
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Kinshasa	Congolese franc	French	2,344,858	69,575,000
Republic of the Congo	Brazzaville	Central African CFA franc	French	342,000	4,366,266
Equatorial Guinea	Malabo	Central African CFA franc	Spanish, French	28,051	740,000
Gabon	Libreville	Central African CFA franc	French	267,668	1,576,665
Sao Tome and Principe	Sao Tome	Sao Tome and Principe Dobra	Portuguese	964	179, 506

Source: The World Fact book for respective Countries

Meanwhile, Central Africa hosts great economic development potentials, owing especially to oil from the Gulf of Guinea, vast metal and mineral deposits, enormous water resources in the Congo-Oubangui-Sangha basin and the Great Lakes and the second largest tropical forest area considered the second lung of the planet. Indeed, Angola, Cameroon, Gabon, the DRC, the RoC, Chad, Equatorial Guinea and São Tomé and Príncipe are all oil producers, some with sizable deposits in the strategic Gulf of Guinea. The CAR is rich in timber, uranium and diamonds. The regional GDP sectorial structure is dominated by oil (45% in 2008) and the six oil-producing countries generated more than 70% of regional GDP in 2008. Table 11 below captures African countries by Human Development Index, for 2011.

Table 2: List of Central African Countries by Human Development Index, 2011

Rank		Country	HDI	
New 2011 estimated for 2011	Change compared to new 2011 data for 2010		New estimates for 2011	Change compared to new 2011 data for 2010
106	-	Gabon	0.674	0.002 \triangle
137	-	Congo	0.533	0.005 \triangle
144	(1) \triangle	Sao Tome & Príncipe	0.509	0.003 \triangle
150	1 \triangle	Cameroon	0.482	0.003 \triangle
166	-	Rwanda	0.429	0.004 \triangle
178	-	Equatorial Guinea	0.344	0.002 \triangle
179	-	Central African Republic	0.343	0.004 \triangle
183	1	Chad	0.328	0.002 \triangle
185		Burundi	0.316	0.003 \triangle
187	-	Democratic Republic of Congo	0.286	0.004 \triangle

Source: UNDP: Human Development Report. 2011.

In addition to the above, the financial sector in Central Africa is still insufficiently diversified and largely dominated by the banking sector with an underdeveloped regional payment system. Moreover, dense inland waterways with huge potential are underutilized and largely unexplored. Furthermore, the region's share in

world exports remains low compared to other regions of the continent. On average, its exports accounted for 0.2% of world exports in 1999-2008 compared to 0.6% for West Africa, 1.2% for Southern and East Africa and 1.3% for North Africa. Central African global exports remain dominated by a limited number of products (oil and other commodities). Central African intra-community trade is only a small proportion of the region's total trade (see Central Africa Regional Integration Strategy Paper (Risp) 2011-2015 for details).

In addition, the macroeconomic trends in Central Africa paint a picture of poor diversification of national economies and their vulnerability to external shocks. The Central Africa Regional Integration Strategy Paper (Risp) 2011-2015(2011:5) for instance remarks that in *public finance*, the non-oil primary balance within ECCAS stood at -22.3% of GDP in 2008, owing to the overdependence of regional states on oil sector revenue. More efforts are needed to streamline the public finance situation, especially the transparent management of oil revenue under the EITI. On average, the *current account balance* for 2000-2009 was contained at +1.3% of GDP within ECCAS and -3% in the CEMAC area. This performance is partly ascribable to the efforts made in reform programmes (public expenditure control), and especially to high commodity prices (especially oil) right up to mid-2008. There has been a considerable reduction in external debt owing to rising oil revenue which helped to pay off some of the debt, particularly in Angola and Equatorial Guinea, and attainment of the completion point by some countries. Indeed, for the region, the *debt stock* amounted to 24% of GDP in 2009.

Again, on the social front, nearly 45% of Central Africa's population lives on less than one dollar a day. The poverty level in the region is slightly higher than the African average. About 1.5 million people enter the labour market each year in a context of high unemployment (more than 20% in 2008, and probably 30% in urban areas). In 2008, more than 80% of the labour force was employed in the agricultural and informal sectors where labour productivity is very low. With regard to the Human Development Index (HDI), the region recorded a score of 0.417 (the 1999-2008 average), which is low compared to that of Sub-Saharan Africa (0.48). Considering the above, it is projected that despite encouraging efforts, most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will not be attained in the region by 2015.

Security Situation in Central Africa

The sub region is sadly renowned for the worst and dramatic conflicts which took place in African continent:

- The Angolan civil war lasted almost four decades from 1963 to 2002.
- Burundi has known three decades of ethnic conflict originated by 17 political parties and armed movements, with a high toll of 300,000 deaths.
- Since its independence in 1960, the Central African Republic (CAR) has experienced dictatorial rule, corruption, and severe political instability cadenced by military coups, army mutinies, and a constant state of rebellion.
- Chad is a country where peace is a strange and unknown concept.

- After a successful democratic transition, the Republic of Congo once again plunged into a civil war, leading to instability in the nation until rebel groups signed a Peace Agreement in 2003.
- Two wars ravaged the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 1996 and in 1998. Ethnic divisions, neighboring states and a variety of militias and national rebel groups fostered instability.
- The Rwandan genocide began in April 1994, in the presence of United Nations peacekeeping operation, the United Nations Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR), which failed to stop it. More than 800,000 Tutsis were killed by Hutu militia.
- Following a ruling by the International Court of Justice, Cameroon gained full control of the oil-rich Bakassi Peninsula but faces unrest from the 300,000 Nigerians living in the area who do not want to become Cameroonians.
- Equatorial Guinea with a huge community of Nigerians, lives in continuous fear of its much bigger and stronger neighbor, one plausible explanation being the fear of domination, if not complete annexation by Nigeria.
- The conflict with Gabon over off shore oil field was promptly resolved when the President of Gabon and Equatorial Guinea signed an agreement “on joint oil exploration and exploitation in the off shore area that was affected by the dispute”.

In general the countries of central Africa have plethora of pernicious ingredients for turmoil: a deadly combination of ethnic divisions, power hungry regimes, inequitably distributed oil wealth, unsolved social problems, and rigged democracy. “Against the odds, São Tomé and Príncipe may prove to be an African exception: a stable democratic state ... managing its wealth transparently and responsibly for the benefit of its citizens” (see Mbemba, 2010:2-4).

Following the conflagration noted, Comrad (1999) aptly described the region as the “heart of darkness”. He also underscored the fact that Presidents Paul Biya of Cameroon, Omar Bongo of Gabon and Obiang Ngueme of Equatorial Guinea have been in power for decades. Again, for several decades after independence Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR) did not experience any constitutional transfer of power; and Sao Tome and Principe survived a bloodless coup in July 2003, orchestrated by appetite for oil and led by former Sao Tomean mercenaries. Worse still, Republic of Congo remains a glaring example of how a truncated democratization process against a backdrop of abundant oil rents and competing global interests unleashed a violent wave of elite struggle from which the country has apparently not fully recovered yet. In addition, Angola, Burundi, and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) still have to cope with the probability of a relapse into conflict.

Indeed, Ayangafac (2008:5-6) captures the dimension and intensity of conflict situations in Central Africa, as follows:

An important trait of conflicts and human security threats in the region is their trans-national character. Conflicts within a country are seen by other states in the region as being relevant to the regional situation and as a

‘significant externality’ that demands the attention of all regional states. The conflict in the CAR and Chad are closely interwoven, with Cameroon experiencing some of the fallout of the conflict. The conflict in the DRC and RoC also had a regional character. However, it should be pointed out that not all local externalities pose a threat to the physical security of members of the region, but when it does, it serves as the glue that binds the states that constitute that particular security complex together.

Meanwhile, the complex conflict situation in Central Africa can in many respects be blamed on a technique developed by some actors dubbed **voluntary conflict exportation**. This is a technique which does not favour neutrality in regional conflicts, but rather encourages collective chaos and widespread regional disorder (Chouala, 2008:70). Conflict exportation has become a well-developed strategy implemented by governments which feel threatened and seek to hang on to power and ensure their political survival by any means. Conflict exportation is quite common in Central Africa. As aptly remarked by Pourtier (1996:15–38), in 1996, Rwanda exported its civil war to the eastern DRC. After seizing the capital city of Kigali and pushing back the loyal forces to the borders with former Zaire, the new Rwandan leaders had to guard against the military and political reconstitution of the defeated forces by launching a major offensive on the Kivu region. Officially, this move was intended to ensure the country’s security, but another reason given by Rwanda for voluntarily exporting its civil war to the eastern DRC was to track down the perpetrators of the genocide who had sought refuge in the Kivu Mountains. The outcome was the transformation of the Great Lakes Region into a major conflict zone involving Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, DRC and Congo Brazzaville (Republic of Congo).

Chad also exported its civil war to the CAR with the intention of destabilizing President Ange-Felix Patassé, considered to be the main financier and ally of political and military groups hostile to President Idriss DébyItno of Chad. Chad and Sudan too have been trading civil wars on their respective territories, with the result that the wars in both countries have become inextricably and structurally linked. In similar vein, Angola for long time extended its civil war front to the two Congos because its rebel movement, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola, UNITA) had established strategic strongholds and military bases in both countries with the blessing of their two governments. For this reason the government forces of the People’s Liberation Movement extended their military operations to the two countries in order to destroy the base and military support of UNITA. Quite often, most of these interventions were with overt support of external actors.

Indeed, foreign presence in Central Africa is motivated by the following interests: first, they are economically motivated for access to raw materials including the vast resources still to be tapped or utilized. Second, former colonizers further their interests and assure that they maintain the area under their influence. Third, for new comers like China the rush for economic gains is achieved with little regard for democracy or human rights

The border difficulties of the countries of Central Africa make the situation even worse. The 1885 partitioning of Africa by the European powers disrupted the ethnic and cultural kinship patterns which existed at the time. Borders were arbitrarily drawn without regard to geography, ethnicity, or existing political structures. Indeed, these borders remain a permanent source of conflict. In the last decade all states have had territorial disputes with their neighbors, making border clashes a source of concern.

Invasion by emerging regional military powers is a very serious threat. Rwanda has continuously used the weakness of the DRC to conduct invasions of this country. Uganda and Rwanda have clashed inside the DRC over the exploitation of raw materials. Both countries hide their true intentions behind security reasons: the desire to get rid of respective armed opposition groups operating from the Congolese North eastern provinces. "Kigali's increasing power centralization and intolerance of dissent, the nagging Hutu extremist insurgency across the border, and Rwandan involvement in two wars in recent years in the neighboring DRC continue to hinder Rwanda's efforts to escape its bloody legacy. Also, Angola has intervened in the Republic of Congo in 1997, and contributed to the fall of the democratically elected President.

Equatorial Guinea has a history of recurrent violent attempted invasions by mercenaries acting for dissidents. Sponsored invasions have taken place in the Southeastern part of Chad, the northeastern part of the DRC, and the southeastern part of the CAR. The weak military institutions of these countries could not prevent or confront these threats. Civil wars and social turmoil have created large numbers of refugees in the sub region, adding to the woes of this area. There are two types of refugees symptomatic of security concerns of the sub region: internally displaced persons (IDPs) - approximately 2,600,000 - and war refugees who number 700,000.

As a corollary of the above, the fluidity of borders makes it possible for refugees to pour into neighboring countries, some of which may be more affluent or appear to offer security or economic hope. All the countries in the sub region are concerned by this problem. Overpopulated Rwanda is home to a total of 55,645 refugees, out of whom 52,083 are Congolese, while 2,831 (5.5 percent) are Burundians". Some 100,000 refugees who fled to the Republic of Congo to escape armed clashes in Equateur Province in the Democratic Republic of Congo constitute "a lot of pressure on the local resources, on bio-diversity and there is a big potential for conflict despite the fact that the local population and the government have been very, very welcoming".

Another serious security threat is generated from indigenous conflicts. These internal conflicts are nurtured by the uneven implementation of democracy, by those who strive for power, and by ethnic rivalry. Only Cameroun, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea have enjoyed relative stability, with no known armed rebellion.

Alliance Patterns: States and Private Groups

In Central Africa, like everywhere else, diplomatic relations is no longer the preserve, business or prerogative of sovereign states. Increasingly, non-state actors are involved in the regional politics and have more political and financial leverage than some of the states themselves. In some areas the state is under the yoke of private groups or simply dominated by them. Consequently, some of the groups aspire to greater positions at the helm of the state and consider themselves to be on equal footing with state

governments or to be a state's alter ego. Alliances between states and private groups are generally a tangled web of relations and connections:

■ First, Heads of state display a craving for power and influence (Chouala 2005:288-306) which they satisfy by forging partnerships with private groups. The sole purpose of networking within and across states by these groups in their turn is to influence domestic and foreign policies. Consequently, the region now has a system of mutual interference, influence peddling and domination in the internal affairs of one another. It is against this backdrop that an alliance was forged between the government of Ange-Felix Patassé and the Movement for the Liberation of Congo; a rebellion led by Jean Pierre Bemba, which controlled the border area between the DRC and CAR. Rwanda and Uganda set up, armed and led rebel groups in eastern DRC, which led both countries to have considerable influence in the Congolese crisis (Bourgi 2004:35-43; Calas 2001:125-163). Chad had transported groups of 'freedom fighters' to the CAR to take part in the establishment of a new political order in that country, who also 'imported' Chadian influence into CAR. Today, Chad and the CAR both have rebel group networks in their respective countries.

■ Second, the alliance between states and private groups can be explained by economic motivations, mainly plundering the economy of a state or engaging in criminal economic activity (Banfield, 2003). Forging alliances with private groups in mineral-rich states make illegal transactions possible (Berdal & Malone 2000). Hence, through the rebel groups which enjoy their support, Rwanda, Uganda and other neighbouring countries have illegally tapped the immensely mineral-rich wealth of the Congo.

■ Third, the state/private group alliances build on 'affection based politics'. This entails building political allegiances based on ethno-cultural or close relationships in order to conquer or preserve power. These are alliances that take advantage of the ethnic groups that live on both sides of the borders. Rwanda established very close ties with Congolese rebel groups of Rwandan origin, also known as the 'bayamulengues'. This large Rwandan community enables Rwanda to have an active say in Congolese politics. So, too, the Zaghawa people living on both sides of the Chad/Sudan border serve as a corridor through which both states influence one another.

Objective Conditions for Armed Conflicts

• Gangsterism

Regional relations in Central Africa are characterized by two specific trends, namely the militarisation and trans-nationalisation of criminal groups. Indeed, organised crime can be blamed on the widespread privatisation of the administrative machinery intended to combat crime. The reason for organised crime is that the state, which used to have the full responsibility for curtailing crime, has lost its prerogative due to the inability of national security forces to curb crime, the growing economic discrepancies

and the correlated social fragmentation of populations, increasing urban development and unemployment.

• **Drug trafficking**

This is linked to a major underground cartel with market outlets, bulk buyers, retailers, prospectors, intelligence agents and secret services usually more efficient than that of the states (Banbara, 2000). In Cameroon, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville and Equatorial Guinea, drug trafficking remains a flourishing business and serves as toxicants to combatants.

• **Counterfeiting**

All forms of counterfeiting characterize the region. These take the form of counterfeit money and forged documents, such as passports, bank documents and identification papers. Also postage and revenue stamps are forged. Countries of the Central Africa Region are all affected by counterfeiting and piracy, albeit at different levels. Criminal records from the police department in Cameroon testify to the fact that Nigerians are the brains behind the Indian hemp business and fake bank documents in that country. Chadians dominate the armed robbery and carjacking sector while Rwandans dominate the trade in illicit arms and munitions.

• **Trans-border movement of and illicit trade in war arms**

The illicit trade in weapons is critical to the conflict situation in Central Africa. Almost every country in the region is both a source of and market place for arms. Consequently there is an uncontrolled flow of arms which fuels and sustains conflicts. This phenomenon is exacerbated by the porous borders of the countries. Crime in Central Africa is a growing phenomenon and its transnational nature has given it some degree of uniformity throughout the region has become invisible and is scattered around the region.

Nigeria's Strategic Interest in Central Africa: Challenges and Prospects

National Interest is technically conceived as **national security interest**. Indeed national security interests can be used to refer to such concepts as "self-preservation", self-defence", and even "survival". In short national security means that the state should survive; it must exist without serious threat to all values that are regarded as important or vital.

Nigeria derives her foreign policy objectives from two main sources namely: the Nigerian Constitution and the actions of the leaders, which are dynamic and reflective of the policy thrust of any administration in power. Thus Section 19 of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria states five foreign policy objectives. These include:

1. Promotion and protection of the national interest
2. Promotion of African integration and support for African unity
3. Promotion is international cooperation for the consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect among all nations and elimination in all its manifestations
4. Respect for international law and treaty obligations as well as the seeking of settlement of international disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication, and
5. Promotion of a just world order.

Nigeria's pursuit of and involvement in Africa's affairs had cost the nation huge financial and human resources. Nigeria also playing and is still playing an active role in

the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, NEPAD and the African Peer Review Mechanism. Meanwhile, Nigeria's national interest, as consisting six important elements in order of priority includes:

1. Self-preservation of the country;
2. Defense and maintenance of the Country's independence
3. Economic and social wellbeing of the people
4. Defense, preservation and promotion of the ways of his especially democratic values
5. Enhancement of the country's standing and status in the world capitals in Africa, and
6. Promotion of world peace (Aluko, 1981).

The first three are core national interest and they are not compromised irrespective of the administration. One of the most constant national interests of Nigeria's diplomacy is her interest in Africa. This led to the foreign policy orientation of Afro-centrism. Using Africa as the centre-piece of Nigeria's foreign policy is rationalized on the basis that Nigeria is better positioned in Africa to identify with and defend the legitimate interest of Africa than any other nation. The assumption has been that the independence of Nigeria would be meaningless if it does not lead to the total liberation of all African States. Nigeria had wished to use her population, size and resources as advantage to contribute and facilitate the collective interest of Africa and this mandate was consummated as Nigeria's historic mission. In various respects, Nigeria has done much to pursue foreign policy rooted in good neighbourliness and continental coalescence. In 1999 for instance Nigeria intervened in the crises in Sao Tome and Principe, Togo, Guinea Bissau and Madagascar. Nigeria also provided the largest number of troops and police officers in the UN-AU hybrid force in Darfur, which is under Nigerian command.

During the Murtala-Obasanjo era, recognition was given to the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) led by Agostinho Neto. It should be noted that South Africa and the U.S supported UNITA and FNLA. Nigeria liquidated British economic interest by nationalizing the British Petroleum and the Barclays Bank, over the latter's refusal to support Zimbabwe's independence. When eventually Zimbabwe attained independence in 1980 Nigeria offered N10 million to Zimbabwe to celebrate her independence. The Buhari regime also donated money to SWAPO and the ANC, if the role of Nigeria in Liberia, Sierra Leone and presently Mali is estimated Nigeria's Afro-centric diplomacy still remains a constant. The Buhari government also recognized the Polisario in Western Sahara, and the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). More so, taking advantage of its role as Africa's most populated country, Nigeria has repositioned its military as an African peacekeeping force. Since 1995, the Nigerian military, through ECOMOG mandates, has been deployed as peacekeepers in Liberia (1997), Ivory Coast (1997–1999), Sierra Leone 1997–1999, and presently in Sudan's Darfur region under an African Union mandate. Again, Nigeria not only sent troops to Congo DR in the 60s, but it bore the cost of peace restoration in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia and apartheid in South Africa benefitted a great deal from Nigeria's leadership role on the continent. The nation pumped over N12bn to

restore peace in Liberia and Sierra Leone and lost thousands of soldiers and a few journalists in this struggle.

Recently, Nigeria seems persuaded to adopt citizen-centered diplomacy in which her collective actions will be based on “reciprocal niceness”. The concept of reciprocity is conceived to have a broader meaning as it has assumed an audacious connotation, animated by the postulation that the international community should take responsibility for its actions towards Nigeria.

It is important to observe that in spite of Nigeria’s avowed determination to enhance peace and stability in Africa, a combination of endogenous and exogenous factors continue to undermine the project especially in Central Africa. Consequently, the region remains an epicentre of inter-state rivalry; inter-state intolerance; and indeed a den for insecurity. In sum, Nigerian national security is presently hampered by the following scenario:

- Great power intrigues in Africa and specifically in West and Central Africa;
- Foreign dependence especially the dependence of multinational force of Central Africa on French logistics in defence agreements signed with France to protect and prolong their regimes;
- Diversity of political systems in Central Africa. Some political regimes in Central Africa rely on constabulary forces to secure their power base;
- ECCAS faces stringent financial constraints and are not always able to establish working Headquarters with appropriate levels of staffing;
- Several countries in Central Africa are characterized by the lack of rule of law and weak political institutions. Thus, political, economic and military power is mostly embedded in the ruler. Ethnicity have become a principal determinant in political acquisition and distribution of resources;
- Absence of mutual trust and confidence amongst the members;
- Active and obsequious role of France in her former colonies and the presence of French soldiers on African soil
- Large presence of Syrians and Lebanese in West Africa represents a potential threat. This is because they offer recruits and infrastructure to terrorist groups like al-Qaeda or Hezbollah. The ongoing terrorist bombardment of Nigeria by the dreaded Boko Haram sect further strengthens this position.
- Gang-up by nations against Nigeria with the specific aim of frustrating Nigeria’s ambition and objectives. We see evidence of this gang-up in the recent failure of African countries to support Nigeria’s bid for a permanent seat in the soon to be re-designed United Nations Security Council (UNSC); in the failure of countries on the South Atlantic coast – Angola, Senegal, Sao Tome, etc., to ratify the Gulf of Guinea Cooperation Council.
- Fear and envy of Nigeria by neighbouring states can also instigate them to support ethnic militias in Nigeria or to extend invitation in the form of providing a base for any hostile power intent on punishing Nigeria
- Since the civil war in Liberia, Sierra Leone and most recently, Cote d’Ivoire, insurgencies and guerrilla warfare remain very likely threats in Africa and Nigeria is

presently experiencing this threat. And neither our military nor civil security agencies are geared to fight armed guerrilla warfare nor to protect us from terror strikes.

Indeed, it is very critical to Nigeria's security that the country must seek to diffuse its influence through the regions of both West and Central Africa. Failure to do so will expose these regions to foreign competition as we currently see with the deployment of more than 10,000 French soldiers in West and Central Africa. The process of building and shoring Nigeria's influence will be slow and will require the extension of economic and where needed military aid to the countries of the regions. The large number of French speaking countries here entails that building such an influence will not be easy and neither will it be cheap. The continuous presence of French soldiers in Gabon, Chad, Ivory Coast and the Central African Republic (CAR), though a carryover from the colonial era, represents a manifestation of the weakened state of Nigeria and a strategic threat to the polity. It will require that Nigeria must first engage in a long-term confidence building measures with these countries and efforts must be intensified to reduce the perception of fear that Nigeria's size creates among the countries.

To achieve this goal Nigeria should consider signing a non-intervention treaty with these countries whose goal will emphasize the disinterestedness of Nigeria in interfering in how these countries are to be governed. In fact effective national security for Central Africa should consider the following measures:

- Nigeria should mobilize the member states towards aligning the cardinal principles of ECOWAS with ECCAS with a view to using the vanguards to institutionalizing peace and security within the regions;
- Nigeria should consider providing financial support and logistics to Central African Early Warning System (MARAC) to enhance their capacity for early detection and prevention of crises;
- Provide support base and logistics for Defence and Security Commission as well as the multinational force of Central Africa (FOMAC) in the task of enhancing peacekeeping missions, peace support and security missions/ humanitarian assistance;
- Align the goals of ECOWAS with the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) with the aim of combating terrorism, criminality and banditry across the regions;
- Nigerian government should equally increase the funding of the Technical Aid Corps to Central African States with a view to enhancing human capacity development in the region;
- Encourage the member states of African Union to deploy the institutions towards enhancing free basic democratic rights for all the citizens; establish the rule of law and ensure due application of the AU Peer Review Mechanism in Central Africa;
- Nigeria should encourage joint military training and operations within the region to enhance professionalism and effective service delivery in Central Africa;
- Replicating the on-going road networking with Cameroon in the whole of Central Africa, particularly where there are vital and substantial mineral deposits and trade and investment opportunities will enhance Afro-centric project of Nigeria. Indeed, The Cameroon-Nigeria-Highway aims at strengthening trade/investment relations between the two countries. It is being funded by the African Development Bank, the World Bank and

Japan's Agency for International Development to the tune of close to \$500 million. The road forms part of the Trans-African Highway, which is intended to link Lagos, Nigeria, to Mombasa, Kenya. The project contractor, the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC), is repairing and entirely reconstructing parts of the highway to go through 203km in Cameroon and 240km on the Nigerian side.

- Nigeria must emphasize economic cooperation with the goal of creating intertwining economic ties that over time becomes critical to the welfare of those countries. Nigeria should also consider providing discounted oil and gas to the countries at a cost that will be at least 40 per cent cheaper than if these countries were to buy their oil and gas in the open market. Nigeria can also target on deepening her relations with France in order to reduce undue external interventions in the Region;
- Nigeria should also establish a strategic oil alliance with interested countries, which will make available to signatory alliance members cheap gas through the construction of pipelines to carry Nigeria's liquefied gas to the industries of these countries at prices that will be 40 percent cheaper than market rate. As time goes, it is possible for this "gas alliance" to extend agreements into other areas to the extent that the economies of these countries become dependent on Nigeria's cheap gas.
- Regular port visits by Nigerian Navy ships to these countries will not only enhance the confidence of alliance members but will assure them of Nigeria's capability and how the capabilities can be deployed to protect these countries coasts, seaborne trade and Nigeria's strategic interests; and investments.

Conclusion/Prognosis

The study explored the recurring security and development challenges that truncate peaceful coalescence and sustainable development in the Central African Region. It identified the basic factors that incubate cross boarder conflicts and the roles being played by the respective political leaderships to foster 'conflict exportation;' and the attendant consequences. In addition, the paper explored the foreign policy behaviour of Nigeria towards the Region and advocated potent strategies that would enhance Nigeria's national interest in her relations with countries in the Region. We noted, *inter alia*, that it is in Nigeria's strategic advantage to seek to solidify its existing relations and to seek new alliances that will enhance Nigeria's goal and ambition of being a regional power in West and Central Africa. These relations must be built and blended with the country's permanent interests in mind and not as has been the case in some instances on the personal preferences or conjectures of whoever happens to be the leader at the time. Nigeria's relations with other countries or organizations must be based on the dynamic principle of deriving significant benefits from the relationship. It should be based on the economic, trade, technological and military advantages that are bound to accrue to Nigeria from having such relations.

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