

## Foreign Policy of African States, Challenges and Prospects

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### Abstract

This paper is design to investigate Africa foreign policy objectives under the auspices of ECOWAS. Over the years West Africa countries through ECOWAS spelt out her objectives, with the view to achieve African collective identity. The paper interrogates how has ECOWAS through her foreign policy objectives were able to maintain peace among the members States; with the view to reveal her underlying diplomatic activities in resolving social crime in Africa. The paper discusses how ECOWAS decision making structure, constituted challenges to Africa foreign policy. The paper also identifies measures to end these challenges. The study adopts historical-descriptive exposition, which benefited from the available textbooks, journal, annual report and newspapers. The study utilized Instrumentalist theory. The theory indicates how States in capitalist societies were regard as servant of ruling class. The theory denies the fact that the state enjoyed autonomy, simply because Africa States lacks autonomy to protect public interest due to strong allegiances to wealthy countries for economic and military aid; while dictating what to do to merit the aid. The study finds that Africa foreign policy makers often interpret her national interest purely on political strategic interest, African unity, independence and regional economic cooperation. The study recommends that Africa foreign policy should build effective political leadership, strong economic base and military capacity to securing her expectation and goals.

**Key words:** Policy; Foreign policy; Economic developmen and Military capability

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### INTRODUCTION

The pursuit of national interest through multilateralism has become a fundamental touchstone in contemporary diplomatic practice and world politics. Given its stature as the predominant multilateral public institution in contemporary global system, Africa states have always provided the framework and the template among states to articulate and spread her national interest among actors in the international system. The Establishment of ECOWAS and Organisation of Africa Union (OAU), which later today called African Union in 1963, were organisational structure of sovereignties state, establishes to integrate Africa political unity. The foreign policies objectives of each Africa country are within the framework of delineated Organization. The Africa foreign policy states under the auspices of ECOWAS it is about collective economic relationship, military and political ties respectively (Umeh,2015), this is to never allow her socio-cultural differences of members state blind their collective identity as African despite the diversity.

Africa is most populous continent after Asia. At about 30.2 million km, including adjacent islands, its covers 6% of the earth's total surface area and 20.4% of the total land area. With about 922 million people in 61 territories, it accounts for 14.2% of the world human population (Mbachu, 2010). In contrast to other continents, Africa has a multitude of State; fifty-four, compared to thirty-six in Europe, twenty-three in Asia, and twenty-eight in the Americas. The Africa country's years of political maturity is determined by years of independent. This influence her economic conditions, which were run on the scale of

poorest of the poor, in terms of gross national product, per capita income, and its level of industrialization. Africa continent is culturally diverse, almost bewilderingly. The major divisions of Arab/ Berber, Negroid, and white further subdivided Africa into Nilotes, Bantu, and others (Gilbert and Terrence, 2001).

ECOWAS, as sub-regional structures, neither from capitalist nor socialist camp both put all Africa safely in its column, because their show salient independent mind, while choosing their ideological system. Among ECOWAS countries, Nigeria, Ghana, and Sierra Leone, have opted for mixed economies, and this stance had reflected in their foreign policy objectives, which favour neither East nor West in the struggle for world domination. While the rest Africa states were committed to capitalism for their domestic development, except for Angola, Mozambique, and Ethiopia countries, have chosen socialism and actively seek its success through their foreign policy objective.

From the above empirical studies, it is inferred that foreign policy is the expression of country's national objectives and how such objectives are interrelated (Mbachu, 2008). The ECOWAS foreign policy deals with issues relating to external diplomatic affairs of member States. So, foreign policy is the product of interaction between internal and external forces. It is about decision making process that involves actions of the State that involve appreciable relations between States (Risse & Beth, 2002). It deals with all policies that have effect upon a national government's relationship with others (Umeh, 2015). The operative of Africa Organizational structure misled the region in their wrong policies that are not people oriented. Thus, Gilbert and Terrence, (2001) revealed that African foreign policy under the auspice of ECOWAS had witnessed successes and failures. This was further buttressed by Ashiriru, where it gives an interesting overview of African's foreign policy. He points that ECOWAS has been extremely naive for restricting its foreign policy to Africa states (Ashiriru, 2011), but in Ashiriru submission, he failed to reconsider the current trends of international relations and diplomacy such as globalization, human rights and democracy as focal points (Axelrod, 2009). The purpose of Africa foreign policy was to sustain the existing peace among Africa states, to create environment of nonviolent civil societies and nations.

Africa foreign policy is determined by domestic activities of her member states (Akokpari, 1999), these domestic activities include her political system, pressure groups, the civil service, public opinion, and the media operating within the democratic process provided by the constitution. The Internal political event of ECOWAS has impacts on its foreign policy. Nigeria for instance, Babangida regime gave a fatal blow on Nigeria's image abroad through his foreign policy. Under his watch the country witness financial wastage, human rights abuses

and the cancellation of the June 12 election at a time global world are yearning for civil rule, good governance and human rights championed by G7 countries. These essential elements earlier mention dictate their relations with countries, within the spare of international politics.

Recently, few African countries continue to opt for military rule under the watch of ECOWAS and AU, which resulted to mix-up between Africans leaders and international community-notably the Commonwealth countries, and the European Union. The recent restiveness and coup d'état witnessed in Togo, Ivory-Coast, Equatorial Guinea, Niger, and Gabon were product of electoral fraud, bad governance and cration of dynasty by african leader worsened the image of Africa States in international communities (The Punch Newspaper, 30<sup>th</sup> August, 2023). Umeh, (2015) justified the thrust of african foreign policy as the defences of the african sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity; the resotation of human dignity to black man all over the world, particualy the eradication of imperialism and the creation of political and improvement of economic condition in africa and the rest of the world which will facilitate the preservation of the territorial integrity,promotion of world peace, justice and security of all african countries. It was on this note the study set out to examine how decision making structure and political institution constitute challenges to African foreign policies.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

The Africa foreign policy focus on Africa Regional power, African unity and independence; potential to exercise hegemonic influence in the region, peaceful settlement of disputes, no intentional interference of internal affairs of members state and regional economic cooperation and development (free Encyclopaedia, 2011). All Africa States, for instance participated in the diplomatic activities of African Union to achieve these common goals earlier outlined. Over the years, there have been quite a number of controversial foreign policy issues in Africa States, particularly from ECOWAS. We have had controversies surrounding the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact, the International Monetary Fund Loan, the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC), and Nigerian-Israel relations. These were big-time controversies (The Guardian, August 12, 2003).

Africa undeniably achieved a substantial success in institutionalizing its perception of unity. Yet, how has this affected Africa's international relations? At independence and throughout the ensuing years, crucial foreign policy issues have created diverse views, oftentimes so widely conflicting as to the division of Africa. Yet on each occasion, ECOWAS, after full debate, reached a consensus. This came to be known as "the African position," and its adoption not only influenced events on the continent, but usually had international consequences as well.

On this note, the activities of Africa states did not showcase Africa unity as incorporate in the articles (Mbachu, 2011). This is because Africa union failed to fussed others by getting Africans to understanding themselves before taking practical steps in economic, educational, scientific and cultural cooperation. And anything less, it becomes difficult for Africa states to achieved its political fusion and unity. Against this background the paper set out to discuss how ECOWAS decision making structure, constituted challenges to Africa foreign policy

### Research Questions

- The study sets out to consider the following research questions to conduct this study:
  - What are the ways and manners foreign policies are formulated among ECOWAS members?
  - What are main goals of African foreign policy?
  - What constitute challenges to Africa foreign policy, under the auspices of ECOWAS?

### Objective of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- Examine way and manner foreign policies are formulated among the ECOWAS members.
- Identify the main goal of African foreign policy.
- Identify what constitute challenges to Africa foreign policy, under the auspices of ECOWAS.

### Research Methodology

The methodology this study adopted is historical-descriptive exposition. This method benefited from the collection, analysis, and evaluation of information gathered from the available textbooks, journals, annual reports, official records and newspapers. However, the historical method chosen deals with the determination and explanation of the past events for the purpose of clearer understanding of the present.

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## INSTRUMENTALIST THEORY OF THE STATE

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The theoretical framework of this study is founded on the academic expression of these notable scholars, Ralph Miliband and Hamza Alavi. Instrumentalist theory is the account of the capitalist state, which argues that African State is the servant of ruling class. This theory denies the fact that the state enjoyed autonomy, simple because State in Africa lacks autonomy. This is because the state is structure to protect the interest of the ruling class.

Instrumentalist theory is further structured into economic determinist theory and economic reductionist theory. It is structured economic determinist theory because post colonial states in Africa protect the economic interest of the ruling class. It is capitalist society that determines what the state does. It is structured economic

reductionist theory because post colonial states in Africa were reduced to a point that the ruling classes in the acquired wealth via State apparatus.

The concept of instrumentalism is closely associated with Ralph Miliband's theory of the state. In fact, this theory was also popularizing by Ralph Milliband, where he advance this argument in his book 'The State in Capitalist Society,' publish in 1969 by new left. Milliband takes his point of departure from the comment of Marx and Hengel in the communist manifesto, where they said state is the instrument of oppression of the capitalist to manage their common affair. Milliband shows that, the State promote the interest of the ruling class which propagate capitalist value and which is hostile to the working people and the poor. Milliband makes a big distinction between ruling class and governing class. He says those who control the State apparatus on daily bases constitute the governing class e.g. president, minister, governor and etc. while the ruling class are those that control economic power and use the power to control the governing class in order to advances their own interest.

Hamza Alavi further buttresses on nature of Africa leaders, parties, and governments, which gained access to power after independence to serve the interest of former colonial dictatorship in these new order of leadership; whether socialist or capitalist. He wrote that Africa state inherits a powerful bureaucratic military apparatus that was overdeveloped in relation to the colonized society because of the necessity to reduce the latter to colonial interests. Secondly, the state forceful creates new relatively autonomous economic role by which it's appropriate a large part of the economic surplus and uses it to manage state affairs in the name of development, later end in private hands (Alavi, 1972).

As it is always the case, this postulation justify that the state is an instrument in the hands of the ruling class for enforcing and guaranteeing the stability of the class structure itself. To achieve this the African state relied on wealthy and powerful countries for economic and military assistance while the strong nations dictate what they want the weak nations to do to merit their assistance. This affected foreign policy decision making that project the interest of the ruled. In conclusion, African foreign and domestic policies are intimately linked and they can only be separated for the purpose of analysis and at the expenses of some distortion of reality because no country foreign policy is made without regard to their domestic consequences.

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## CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

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Lasswell first articulated policy as knowledge or the decision process of the public and civic order (Lasswell, 1951:3-4). This implies systematic empirical studies of how policies are made into effects; the emphasis on

decision process underlines the difference between policy and forms of intellectual activities. Perhaps, policies focus on the relevance of knowledge and decision process.

The fact that reality of decision depend on the access to available knowledge of the problems and this understanding is fundamental; as it tries to resolve the problems pressing society and its governments. For example, it is rare for China Company that develops a nuclear capability without drawing on the knowledge and skill nuclear physicist and engineer; or the central bank of Nigeria to tackle the problem of monetary stability without the input of economist; or the world health organization policies to eliminate smallpox, cholera or any infectious sickness without the knowledge of medical scientist. So, it is necessary top plan program to keep both public and civic order (Lasswell, 1956: 2).

The definitive works of foreign policy, considered foreign policy as a pursuit of a country national interest in its interction with other countries(Akinyemi, 1974; Adeniji 1997). Countries use of its capacities in issuance of its national goals and other aspirations within an institutionalised framework of decision making (Beloff, 1975) since foerign policy are formulator for political expediency, often intepret the national interest along strategic line for high diplomacy essentially political and economic relations with other states.

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## FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES

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It is possible for country to remain weak in the field of International relations in spite of its abundant natural endowments, if that nation is not fully mobilised to make effective use of all the human and natural resources.

Mbachu,(2008) posited that for decades Nigeria's political independent for instance, it is a blue- print on foreign policy link changes. While the characters of our leader remained unchanged, even when it is ties to western capitalist culture, though at the composition and organization of the ruling class only recorded economic growth without development. This class worried with the use amass power to sustain and promote their social project in the regime.

Africa economic is distorted with mono-culture and trapped in her relationship with the International capitalist system. However, the main indicators of africa citizens are not only poverty, worsening crime waves, political instability, debt crisis, and inability of africa states to feed itself. The scope of african's foreign policy should not be limited to continental affairs, spread across the globe (Millar, 1969).

It should be focused world-wide and geared toward the promotion of our cultural heritage, and scientific, economic and technical cooperation with viable partners. Its goal should aim at enhancing our national growth, and military arrangements with NATO countries in order to

give peace a permanent character in our societal needs and our sub-region.

Finally, africans foreign policy should aim at creating benefits that will improve the lives of its citizens, through a clearly defined policy objectives. Such a policy shift would mean a very careful choice of external actors. Although, I am not advocate sinking Africa states, but africans leaders needs to make a careful choice of our closest allies based not on the wealth or technological advancement of the partner but on its vital national interests in the area of culture, economic, political, scientific and technical areas as well as in the military field.

At another level, foreign policy of Africa states should encompass a clear opinion and strategy on major International issues such as the reform of the United Nations, bilateral relations between africa states and members of the European Union outside the EU framework, discussions with the dynamic Asian economies on how best to boost their investment in african, how to make industrialised country committed more foreign capital flows to the vital areas of African economy through a liberal foreign investment policy. Lastly, Africa states, should seek and push for a permanent member of the Security Council. These achievements would make Africa States useful.

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## DETERMINANT OF FOREIGN POLICY OF AFRICAN STATES

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All nations derive their foreign policies from both internal and external enviromental factors. Within the enviroments are varions conflcting interest and the extent to which these interests are statified depends on the a large extent on te power(economic,militaty,finacial,technology etc) at the disposal of the state. (Mbachu, 2008). For instance, african states like most thired world countries are economically, militarily and finacially weak as compared to the major power blocs in the international communities. This weakness place a great problem on african foreign policies ambitions. Thus, they do not have global interests and ambitions, rather they are limited to national unity, stability improving the living standars of their citizens. All these necessary because to ensure the gain support of domestic nationals to pursuit their foreign policy.

At african regional level, they focus themsevles with problem that concerned their geographical location especially those that concern their neighbours, while working towards achieving a peaceful international evenroment. Therefore, african foreign policy derive largely from such demostic enviromental factors as their autonomy, internal political presures, colonial legacy, ideological orientation of the ruling class, etc (Mbachu, 2008).

The foreign policy of africa states engage the task of both internal and external foreign ministry. Although it is



primarily an affairs, of the president, the foreign minister, ambassadors and embassies abroad, the press and the business community are all active players in the foreign policy formulation process. This redefined the role and place of embassy in Africa. With a vibrant oriented foreign policy, the continent will leave no room for amateurism. African ambassadors and embassies sit up to meet her expectations.

African foreign policy focus on cultural policy and value, to reunite hegemony existed among them. This is to bring about cultural cooperation. It simply means cheering foreign artists to organise tours in African states or foreign countries. In the field of defence, African foreign policy is influenced by its geographical location as evidence in the case of small and weak nations located next to the big and powerful countries where such small nation is bound to live the shadow of most powerful nations. It must adopt foreign policy major that would not alienate the big power. It simply means protecting the external and internal territorial integrity of African states against enemies. For African state need to live under the shadows of industrial nations, to provide shield, especially the military pacts G7 countries, which are the world's leading military and industrial powers.

African foreign policy is about dependent economic structure. It is a continent where the economic strength or weakness is the determinant of its foreign policy. A country with weak and fragile economic structure cannot afford to pursue a radical foreign policy for fear of alienating those to whom it depends on for survival. It solely relies on exportation of raw materials and importation of manufactured consumer goods and capital goods from the developed country. Her economic projection are predominantly with the west (Robert, 1991).

Democratically elected regimes have a wider span and more leeway in policy decisions than regimes resulting from military *coups d'états* because they are legitimate. In Africa, leaders have voluntarily or unconsciously restricted most vital foreign policy decisions or diplomatic initiatives. There is no doubt that interest groups are still in their embryonic stage in Africa and are yet as powerful as they are contemporary in the industrialised world. However, they do on some occasions exert some pressure (Ajibola and Akinyemi, 1976). A good example is abrogation of Angola-Nigeria Defence pact in 1962. The absence of any overt pressure from any of the groups, help the foreign policy maker to take serious consideration the potential domestic demand of the public to exert internal political pressures.

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## ISSUES OF DECISION MAKING AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS IN AFRICA

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The ethnic disintegration and religious heterogeneity of Africa states have posed a great problem on government's

decision leading to ruthless diplomatic ties between African states and Israel, due to mixed feelings between them, which absolutely opposed religious structure. Aluko, (1981: 83-95) argued that the Muslims felt that the move to break ties with Israel was not only timely but also desirable, whereas the Christians saw the move as a wrong foreign policy option. Nigeria, for instance, when the government decided to renew diplomatic ties in 1992, the Muslim group vociferated over this policy decision, whereas the Christians saw it as a welcome idea. Today, many African citizens are not inspired nor impressed with their nation's foreign policy disposition. Some African states are starkly absent from the global political theatre to reflect on issues affecting their domestic affairs. This policy fault lines spell great challenges to African foreign policy. Setting aside the seeming nuisance and harassment on Africans while visiting abroad, affected domestic and foreign expectations about African capabilities, which further compounded the challenges of Africa's foreign policy markers.

The problems and challenges confronting African foreign policy markers are merely administrative and systemic rather than substantive. One point remains clear that African's foreign policy markers continues to rubbish and tremble her image (See The Guardian 27 Jan. 2011). Foreign policy of African states is not just about Nation projects outside but what it is capable of attracting as a reliable partner. This reality is translated on how it manages and sells its own domestic environment

The major challenges that confronts African strategic interest is how to achieve a stable political and constitutional order. After many years of military rule, seemingly Niger, Gabon etc, that aid the conquest of poverty, hunger and ignorance. But African states to respond successfully to the needs of the people and realise they dream for rapid economic development, it will require a careful thought and inquiry of political and administrative institutions for proper governance of African states, using the constitution to regulate and limit the power of government. This is to ensure that the legitimacy of the government is regularly established through periodic elections. (Mbachu, 2008). The African problem is how to establish a strong and vibrant institutions that consolidate political harmony through the participation of all African citizen in the political process. This will bring about good governance that advocate rapid economic development, higher standard of living.

Presently, Africans faces a humongous task in selling its twisted National images. Investors, tourists and capital goods will always take flight when the situation becomes glaring as it is in the case of insecurity, this is prevalent in most of West African countries (Akokpari, 1999). Similarly, the overbearing reaction of law enforcement agencies that border on extra-judicial and extra-official mayhem in the name of keeping law and order, is a threat to African political institutions (Ogusanwo, 1980). For example,

african envoy would in pains to explain and justify why africans states continue to use the military to police civilian, especially in the cases of Niger, senegal, ivory coast, Togo and Gabon.

## CONCLUSION

African has passed through traumatising situation from the era of slave trade to colonialism through imperalism up to present era of globalisation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Several factors conditioned African's foreign policy positions. First, the ethnic and religious mix of the country required cautious positions on some issues, such as policy toward Israel and (Africa) Nigeria found it difficult to restore diplomatic ties with Israel and had not done since 1990 because of Muslim position and sympathy with the rest of the Arab Muslim world (Okpokpo, 1999). The power relation among africa states were base on inequality because there is disparity of political power between them. This power disparity was the source of imperial dominance of one state over another. The wind of globalisation, had provided africa state a single institutional framework to relate and comprise on how to drives the world economy to boost innovation and economic growth worldwide. This informed the foreign policies of africa states, in the area of information and communication technology, Trade and deregulation of national economies that continue to influence the way African States relate with the rest of the world.

Therefore, foreign policy of Africa State is associatrd with the crisis of underdevelopment, the challenges of poverty, leadership, political development, and a host of other maladies. Thus, african open up her States in the twenty first century in order to realize her full potentials and cravings for continental and global leadership. This measure were in places without understanding the benefits of such relationship.

The study reconmmend that a training programmed for african diplomats to aquire the necessary knowledge to practice the art and science of diplomacy because they are at the frontline of our foreign policy with the west.

Africa States through her organisational structure should redefined her national interests to accommodate a common economic ideological system of development and African collective identity in contrast to Africa multitude of states and diverse ethnic groups. In this spirit of collaboration, the economic development of African states will be the mainstay of her foreign policy.

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