

President Goodluck Jonathan's Transformation Agenda and Nigeria's Foreign Policy

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Abstract

After the Second World War in 1945, the foreign policy direction of most developing nations was to liberate themselves from the shackles of colonialism and adjusting themselves to the politics of bi-polarism. Fifty years after, most African countries have been liberated. The cold war between the western capitalist bloc and the eastern socialist bloc no longer exists. From the fall of the Berlin wall; there was an emergence of a new international relations and challenges. The world was faced with new realities the challenge of bad governance, poverty, civil war, terrorism, environmental degradation, threat of nuclear war, piracy, oil theft, illegal bunkering, proliferation of small arms and light weapons and transnational crimes among others. Nigerians including President Goodluck Jonathan are clamouring for change of Nigeria's foreign policy direction to meet the emerging trends in the international State system. Nigeria before now has been giving various assistance to African countries without gaining anything. The Transformation Agenda of President Goodluck Jonathan is a holistic attempt to reform and transform the Nigerian State. The transformation agenda is the articulation of government prioritized policies, programmes and projects that will guide Jonathan's administration from 2011 to 2015. The Nigerian foreign policy will definitely seek for greater responsibilities. How can her national interest be maximized utilizing the on-going transformation programme? This paper is an attempt to explore the foreign policy of Goodluck Jonathan within the context of the Transformation Agenda; and suggest ways of strengthening Nigeria's foreign policy. The ultimate goal of the paper is to reposition Nigeria's foreign policy for a greater role and influence in the international state system.

Keywords: Foreign policy, President Goodluck Jonathan

Introduction

The Transformation Agenda of President Goodluck Jonathan's administration is an attempt at a holistic transformation of the Nigerian state. The programme is intended to transform the Nigerian Economy to meet the future needs of the Nigerian people and, meet her expectation of being among the top twenty economies in 2020.

Transformation programmes do have very visible impact on societal activities. The reforms of Gorbachev in the then Soviet Union popularly known as ‘Perestroika’ and ‘Glasnost’ were government reform programmes that changed world history. The transformation programme did not only have an economic impact. It also impacted on geographical, political, production process, and the foreign policy of the then USSR.

It is the intention of the Transformation Agenda to improve Nigeria’s foreign Policy and Economic diplomacy by focusing and funding her foreign mission properly. The transformation agenda is an opportunity of strengthening Nigeria’s foreign policy to enhance her prestige in the International State System and give her a befitting seat in the United Nation’s Security Council. Over the years, Nigeria has centered her foreign policy on Africa and giving various assistance to African countries through her “good neighbourly foreign policy”. She has not concerned herself with getting these countries to patronize her products. We are giving and we are not getting. Nigeria’s national interest must be re-adjusted to make sure that our national interest is not only made up of intangible measures of power, but rather based on ‘quid pro quo’ i.e. give and take. Nigeria must strive to offer tangible items and commodities to African Countries that have benefited from her political and diplomatic patronage.

In other words, Nigeria’s national interest must be re-assessed. It should not be based on political activities alone but on economic interest. Her policy must not be based on good neighbourly gestures alone, but also on how African countries can patronize her products. Put differently, Nigeria must strengthen her economy to be a manufacturing economy with a full developed agricultural sector in order for her to pursue a vibrant foreign policy. Foreign policy is said to be a policy that is internally formulated and externally projected. Therefore, Nigeria’s foreign policy should seek to improve the welfare and living conditions of Nigerians. It should also aid our developmental aspirations.

The concern of this paper is to strengthen Nigeria’s foreign policy using the Transformation Agenda as a platform for policy reform. It is intended to actualize Nigeria as a world power, and make her to be the African representative at the Security Council in the event of a reformation of United Nations.

Clarification of Concepts

Transformation: According to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (7th edition), transformation means complete change in appearance or character of something. The Transformation Agenda refers to strengthening government institutions to facilitate effective coordination of fiscal monetary policies and for effective and optimal performance.

In this paper, transformation refers to complete change and re-orientation of the corrupt value system and the strengthening of the three arms of government, government institutions and Nigeria's economy for national development.

Foreign Policy: There are so many definitions of foreign policy, Okere (2002) defined foreign policy as a set of goals and course of actions, a nation wishes to pursue or pursues in respect to the demands or interactions of the internal and external setting as perceived by the decision makers. Hartman (1977) defines foreign policy as selected national interests presumably formulated into a logically consistent whole that is then implemented. Holsti in Gilbert (2004) defines foreign policy as the actions of a State toward external environment and the conditions usually domestic under which these actions are formulated. In this paper, foreign policy will be defined as policy that guides the relationship of nation states that is internally formulated and externally projected.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this paper lies on the theory of National Interest and Power.

National Interest: Is the central theme for the conduct of national policies. The concept, according to Hartman (1984), may be defined as those things that States could or do seek to protect or achieve vis-à-vis other States. National Interest is divided into vital/primary and secondary interests. Vital interests are interests a State is willing to fight immediately or ultimately in order for her to defend. While secondary interests are negotiable.

Power Theory: Power is the central concept in the study of interstate relations because it greatly determines international behaviour by dictating the level, direction, goals and achievement of a state's foreign policy (Gilbert, 2004). Morgenthau (1978) noted that, International Politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power. He defined power as man's control over the minds and actions of other men. He observed that, whenever a nation strives to realize their goal by means of international politics, they do so by striving for power. The power theory, according to (Ogonor 2000), posits that nation-states depend for their existence upon power and achieve their objectives by the use of power. The transformation agenda of President Jonathan on Nigeria Foreign policy is aimed at promoting the national interest and increasing the power of Nigeria in the International State system. If Nigeria's foreign policy is strengthened, it will place Nigeria in a position where she can control the minds and actions of other countries to do what Nigeria wants them to do and not to do what Nigeria does not want them to do. Strengthening Nigeria's foreign policy will grant more power and influence to Nigeria in the comity of nations and, strengthen her in the pursuit of her national interests.

Essentials of the Transformation Agenda

The transformation agenda is the articulation of government prioritized policies, programmes and projects that will guide President Goodluck Jonathan's administration from 2011 to 2015. It articulates Nigeria's development efforts characterized by continuity, consistency and commitment popularly referred to as the "3cs". The transformation agenda is challenged by the rising insecurity, unemployment, inequality and poverty. The agenda is poised to strengthen and facilitate effective coordination of fiscal and monetary policies, job creation, public expenditure management, maximize the benefit the citizenry derives from good governance through more effective and efficient use of public resources, proper financial management and fiscal prudence. Others are to improve the justice and judiciary pace of investigations and potent enforcement of judicial decision, **improve our foreign Policy and Economic diplomacy by focusing and funding our foreign mission properly** and improve the legislature for optimal and proactive performance.

Priority policies on Human Capital Development programmes and projects. The programme articulated that:

Human Capital Development is strategic to the socio-economic development of a nation and includes education, health, labour and employment and women affairs. Investing in human capital development is therefore critical as it is targeted at ensuring that the nation's human resource endowment is knowledgeable, skilled, productive and healthy to enable the optimal exploitation and utilization of other resources to engender growth and development. (The Transformation Agenda 2011-2015 summary of Federal Government's key priority policies programmes and projects).

Here attention is given to priority policies for the development of Education, Health sector, labour and productivity.

The following seven sectors have been identified as the main growth drivers during the transformation period. They are agriculture and food security, water resources, solid minerals, manufacturing, oil and gas, trade and commerce as well as culture and tourism (The Transformations Agenda). The challenges of these sectors are: low productivity, low level of private sector investment, non-competitiveness, inadequate funding, shortage of skilled manpower, low investment in research and development, poor development of value chain and low value addition, poor regulatory environment, poor quality of goods and services and poor state of physical infrastructure, policy instability and discontinuity, low level of technology, paucity and poor flow of information and high cost of doing business (Ibid: 14).

During the programme period, the following key priority policies will be pursued to develop infrastructure and consequently engender sustained growth and development in the country. They are: priority policies for infrastructure development – power, information and Communication Technology, Niger Delta and Transportation. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is an assented component of programme implementation. It is a veritable tool for tracking development in policy and programme performance. The Nigerian vision 20:2020 and the 1st National Implementation Plan 2011-2013 provided a comprehensive framework for M and E. The next challenge is capacity to implement the design.

Nigeria's Foreign Policy Objectives

Nigeria's foreign policy objectives are spelt out succinctly in Section 19 of the 1999 constitution as thus: the promotion and protection of her national interest; promotion of African integration and support for African unity; the promotion of international co-operation for the consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect among all nations and elimination of discrimination in all its manifestations; 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 the promotion of a just world order.

These objectives have been religiously pursued by various Nigerian leaders. Nigeria is a signatory to the United Nations Charter. She has participated in various international and regional peace keeping missions. She has adhered to the rulings of the international court of justice, and served the United Nations in various capacities. In line with her objectives, Africa has been the corner stone of her foreign policy. She has asserted her anti-imperialist position which has contributed immensely to the liberation of many African countries from their colonial masters and in dismantling the minority rule and apartheid policy in South Africa.

In view of these achievements and the changing times in the international state system, there is great need for Nigeria to re-adjust her foreign policy objectives and strategies in order for her to cope with international trends and assert her influence in the international realm. This will require pursuing an aggressive foreign policy in order for her to maximize her national interest and political power. According to a Guardian newspaper editorial, "really, it is high time we refocused Nigeria's foreign policy in ways that the country's national interests are embedded in it." The Editorial of This Day Newspaper collaborated by commenting that, "Without doubt, the nation's foreign policy after 50 years, deserves a new focus, new thinking as it has become mundane".

Nigeria's Foreign Policy Direction before the Transformation Agenda

Nigeria's foreign policy objectives have not changed since her independence in 1960. However, her foreign policy direction, priorities and activities have varied from one administrator to the other. Nigeria has adhered strictly to her foreign policy cardinal principles of promoting international cooperation, not having any expansionist tendencies, respect for international law treaty obligations and support for African unity.

After the independence of Nigeria, she pursued a conservative, or an introverted foreign policy. Nigerian leaders were not interested on what happens within her neighbouring countries. This was because, she had a lot of internal matters to settle after her independence, the quest for national integration and protection of her nationhood/sovereignty was so cumbersome that she decided to focus her attention on domestic issues. It was only after the Nigerian civil war that she introduced "good neighbourly" foreign policy that spurred her to extend economic, political and financial assistance to her neighbouring countries. It was this "good neighbourly" foreign policy that endeared those African countries like: Ivory Coast, Gabon, Togo, Benin Republic, etc. that supported Biafra to sustain fighting the federal government for three years, to embrace Nigerian government. Thereafter, Africa became the centre piece of Nigeria's foreign policy. Imobighe in Akinbobola and Adebawale (2008: 52-53) wrote that:

It is thus clear that among the first generation of Nigeria's leading politicians; none was prepared to give priority attention to the diversification of Nigeria's external relation in a manner that would have opened up the Eastern European penetration or given the pride of place to her relations with other African states. Certainly at independence and during the first republic, Nigerian leaders tended to under value the diplomatic assets of a dynamic African policy.

Nigeria was at the fore front of the total liberation of African countries from colonial rule. She committed her energy and resources in liberating Zimbabwe, Namibia and Southern Africa. She liquidated apartheid in South Africa. Nigeria stood by the principle of non-alignment during the period of bi-polarism between the western bloc led by the United States of America and the eastern bloc led by then Soviet Union. Her cogent reason was due to her independence, challenge of national integration and nation building.

She decided to give more attention to her internal matters and more so, alignment led to war hence, they have to de-emphasize the principle of alignment in order to promote a just and united world order.

Nigeria is a loyal and committed member of the United Nations and Common Wealth. She pioneered the formation of organization of African Union (OAU) now African Union (A.U), Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) and the group of 77 Countries (Salisu, 2011). Nigeria has been regarded as a foremost peace-keeping nation that has contributed to the rampant peacekeeping operations across the world. She started her peacekeeping operations in the Congo crisis of 1960.

Nigeria granted various forms of humanitarian, economic, technical and military aid to assist development and liberation struggles of Africa states. She has been recognized as the leading donor of technical assistance to Guinea, Zambia, Angola, Uganda, Tanzania and Southern Rhodesia (Akinbobola and Adebowale 2008). Students from these countries were offered scholarships by the Nigerian Universities.

Nigerians have also committed men and money to provide military and humanitarian assistance to war ravaged African regions and to assist natural disaster victims' states in Africa such as Kenya, Sierra-Leone, Ethiopia, Somalia and Liberia (Ibid :50).

The military regime of General Sani Abacha retrogressed the progress made on the foreign policy frontiers and gave Nigeria a very poor international image. This was complimented by the face lifting foreign policy of President Olusegun Obasanjo in which he was criticized for spending too much time in oversea travelling. The Obasanjo administration (Akinferinwa, 2011) shifted foreign policy thrust from afro-centrism to global- centrism. Wherein he travelled to woo international businessmen to invest in Nigeria. The Late President Yar'adua's foreign policy laid emphasis on citizen diplomacy. He gave attention to the just treatment of Nigerians in the diaspora.

The New Foreign Policy Direction

President Goodluck Jonathan, upon ascending to power, constituted a Presidential Advisory Council on Foreign Affairs headed by Chief Emeka Anyaoku to review Nigeria's foreign policy. At the end of this brain storming session, Nigeria's foreign policy shifted from Africa as the center of her foreign policy to an investment and export driven foreign policy. In the words of the foreign Affairs Minister, Ambassador Olugbenga Ashiru, "Nigeria's foreign policy would now be investment driven, defining a new driving force as different from the previous focus on Africa" (2011, The Sunday Punch Newspaper: 3).

According to Ashiru (2011) “the emphasis of Nigeria’s Foreign Policy is on investments. The Investments will have multiplier effects on the economy in terms of creating jobs and the overall growth of the economy. These are complementary postures of government. While we retain the leadership role in the sub-region and play a leading role in the continent, the foreign policy direction will be used to propel economic development of our country. All our Embassies and High Commission especially in Asia, Europe and the America will now Promote Investment Promotion”. (Onuorah, 2011: 1).

Jonathan’s Foreign Policy is also continuing the Citizenship Diplomacy of Late President Shehu Musa Yaradua’s Foreign Policy highly propagated by his Foreign Affairs Minister Ojo Maduekwe. The Jonathan’s administration noted that Nigeria will not abandon the responsibility of protecting her citizens abroad, charging the Nigerian embassies and High Commissions to care for Nigerians living in other countries. In the very words of Ashiru in (Atoyebi, 2012: 9) “past of policy thrust is fair and decent treatment of Nigerians wherever they may be. We will continue to insist that Nigeria be accorded respect and treated with dignity. Our charge to the Ambassadors and High Commissioners is that the welfare of Nigerians in Diaspora must be taken seriously. However, as we strive to protect and promote the interests of our compatriots abroad. We also reiterate to them the imperative to be law abiding in their places of abode”.

President Jonathan has equally advocated for preventive Diplomacy as a means of conflict prevention. While addressing the United Nations Security Council in 2011, Jonathan said that Nigeria viewed conflict prevention as a subject “indeed, Nigeria has invested resources to support the campaign for Preventive Diplomacy especially within our sub-region. We have adopted the use of Preventive Diplomacy in addressing complex questions arising from armed conflicts (Onuorah and Obiagwu, 2011:1).

Jonathan noted in his transformation Agenda, that in order for Nigeria’s foreign policy goals to be achieved, it is imperative that Nigerian missions are properly focused and well funded. It may also be necessary to rationalize missions and appoint honorary consuls to deal with consular issues in areas where Nigeria’s interest does not loom large as practiced by other countries (The Transformation Agenda, Summary of Federal Government’s Key Priority Policies, Programmes and Projects).

Using the Transformation Agenda to reform and enhance Nigeria’s foreign Policy, President Jonathan has tied foreign policy to her domestic agenda. In other words, the strength of our foreign policy on local economy and organizational structures. There will be need to transform all the sectors that impact on our economy and service delivery.

Nigeria's Foreign Policy will now be managed as an instrument for investment promotion, requiring all external engagements by diplomatic personnel and other Federal Government functionaries be utilized, to further Nigeria's vital economic interests.

It will be very interesting and rewarding if Nigeria's Foreign Policy is investment driven. The basic assumption here is that for investment to be attractive there must be stable political environment, stable power supply, good road network, reliable railway system, and the availability of portable water.

Using the Transformation Agenda to Strengthen Nigeria's Foreign Policy

Nigeria's Foreign Policy can be strengthened by strengthening the elements of National Power. Nigeria's Foreign Policy is the continuation of her domestic Policy. It is a policy that is formulated internally and projected externally. Therefore, the domestic environment needs to be properly developed in order for it to have a positive impact on its external projection. According to Ebegbulem (2004: 11). "The president's economic reforms that have been adulated as a platform for attracting foreign investors into the country to my understanding may not be achievable because of the absence of basic amenities that would facilitate their actualization".

He further mentioned that the government must understand that there is no economic goal better, and more urgent, than the ability to feed the people reasonably well and meet their other basic necessities of life, like provision of shelter, good and affordable medical care, provision of good education to our children, clean water, etc.

In his writing, Okafor (2004) wrote that "the interest of Nigeria should be the first in what ever area we are intervening or in our interaction with Africa or the outside world". He further mentioned that our foreign policy should be repositioned to accommodate the interest of Nigerians first before any other interest for that matter. He said that our vital national interests have to be redefined towards more profitable ventures like economic, scientific, cultural and technical cooperation with more advanced economies of Western Europe, North America and including some African Countries.

In their opinion, Nwosu and Adeniyi (2011) noted that for Nigeria to be relevant in the new realities in international relations, the focus of her foreign policy should stand on two (2) principles:

1. The principle of reciprocity; and
2. Economic diplomacy

The principle of reciprocity should remain the guiding principle in our international trade and politics. Nations should assist one another without strings. They noted that, it is an unsustainable contradiction to provide financial and material assistance to nations that later show hostility to our interests and citizens. In addition, Nigeria should pursue an aggressive economic diplomacy. They noted that power and influence generated in the economic sphere will translate to political power. More so, a dependent economy cannot pursue an aggressive foreign policy. We also need to improve the state of insecurity and infrastructural deficiencies to attract foreign investors. Our foreign missions must move away from armchair diplomacy to building the nation's economy by attracting foreign direct investment and opening markets for made in Nigeria goods.

Funmilola (2011) prescribed three options that can strengthen Nigeria's Foreign Policy. First, is the focus of government on domestic political and economic emancipation as the bedrock on which the country's national capability are embedded in the minds of political actors in other countries, especially in Africa. Second, the nation's leaders should put square pegs in square holes. The best diplomats should be given the chance to actively lead this latest challenge. In other words, Nigeria needs its best brains in the execution of its new foreign policy principles, with a view to putting it back on the path of international greatness. Third, the well being of Nigerians should be paramount to the government. The citizen diplomacy initiated by late President Umaru Yar'Adua should be enlivened to cater for Nigerians abroad.

Strengthening the element of National Power will strengthen Nigeria's Foreign Policy. According to Onunaiju (2000: 5) "in contemporary times, the power of a nation is not the smiling faces of its officials or in the population it has, but in harnessing of both material and human resources of national power, which it deploys to the international arena as an active player. In his words, "the secret is simply to harness the local national resources, build transparent and stable institution and instigate a dynamic and a productive economic activity at home".

At the Seventh Brainstorming Session on Nigeria's Foreign Policy and global challenges in 2012, organized by the Nigeria Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) in Lagos, stake holders noted that, aside from the issue of terrorism, urged Leaders to match Nigeria's enormous resources with its sphere of influence, tackle issues of lack of service delivery and inadequate basic infrastructures as well as embark on true economic and industrial growth.

Nigeria needs to strengthen and maximize the following elements of national power. They are: Natural resources, industrial capacity, military preparedness, quality of leadership, control her population, enhance her national morale and improve her quality of diplomacy.

On the area of natural resources, she must be self-sufficient in food production which is a source of great strength to a nation. Conversely, permanent scarcity of food is a source of permanent weakness in International Politics (Morgenthau, 1973). Nigeria should diversify her economy from oil and gas and invest in agriculture to boost internal food production and supply, and in addition earn foreign currency for Nigeria through her agricultural export. This area will assist to equally create employment for our teeming unemployed youth to work in the farms.

Beside food production, proper exploration and exploitation of her raw materials and mineral resources is very important for her Industrial Production more particularly for waging of war. Morgenthau (1973) noted that with the increasing mechanization of warfare, which since the industrial revolution has proceeded at a pace than in all preceding history, national power has become more and more dependent upon the control of raw materials in peace and war. The Transformation Agenda should explore more raw materials and resources which Nigeria will use to increase her national income.

The Transformation Agenda should enhance the industrial capacity of Nigeria. We can not be processing raw materials without having the technology to transform them into finished product. It is quite appalling for Nigeria to procure crude oil without refineries to refine this crude oil into more refined products. This is due to lack of technology. The quality and productive capacity of the industrial plant, the know-how of the working man, the skill of the engineer, the inventive genius of the scientist, the managerial organization, all these are factors upon which the industrial capacity of a nation and, power depends (ibid: 125).

The military preparedness of a nation requires a military establishment capable of supporting the pursued foreign policy. The military technology to produce or invent dependable military equipment that can be used to protect her sovereignty, geography, national resources and her people. Nigeria should depend on her local Engineers for invention of military technologies that will assist her peace building keeping, and enforcement adventures in Africa. Military technology that will cope with the rising crime of kidnapping, legal oil theft and local terrorism.

Nigeria should improve her quality of leadership. Military regime should be outlawed. Candidates for leadership position should be screened through a transparent process. There should be strong internal democratic process in the primary election of every political party. Candidates should not be hoisted nor forced on the people. Credible and experienced men should be used for leadership positions. The credibility and character of leadership could propel or create discontent over leaders. It can create thrust and distrust on leadership. It can equally create problem of legitimacy and governance.

Population could serve as strength or as a weakness to any country. If one has a population that one cannot feed, then there is bound to be conflict in that country. The Transformation Agenda should promote family planning and sensitizing the rural folks on precaution of reckless child bearing.

The Transformation Agenda should be used to enhance the national morale of Nigerians. National morale is the degree of determination with which a nation supports the foreign policies of its government in peace or war. The mood of our youths and public opinion are very important to boost so that, they can support the foreign policy of the country even at the face of war. Scholarships should be awarded to students. Employment opportunities should be created through government deliberative policies. There is need to grant research assistance to lecturers, and reduce violation of human rights.

Lastly, there is great need to improve the quality of our diplomats. Our leaders should nominate competent and efficient personalities to various diplomatic positions. A timid fellow, despite his exposure and political contact, should not be given diplomatic positions. It is good for articulate and social intellectuals who can market the national interest of our foreign policy priorities to the International communities. Diplomacy is the brain of national power, as national morale is its soul. The conduct of a nation's foreign affairs by its diplomats is for national power in peace what military strategy and tactics by its military leaders are for national power in war (Morgenthau: 146).

Conclusion

The Transformation Agenda can be used to strengthen Nigeria's foreign policy. The Nigerian foreign Policy direction has changed from Africa being her center piece of our foreign policy. The new foreign policy direction is directed on investment, economic co-operation, humane treatment of Nigerians both locally and abroad, and the creation of a better statute friendly investment environment for attracting investments and bilateral trade. These foreign policy goals are set to increase the national power of Nigeria among the comity of Nations. If Nigeria will use this ongoing reform of President Jonathan Transformation Agenda to enhance her elements of National Power, Nigeria's Foreign Policy will be strengthened for International greatness and guarantee our claim to a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council in the event of a reformation.

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