

OCENA VPLIVA ODNOSOV Z VELESILAMI NA NACIONALNO VARNOST: PRIMER NIGERIJE

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF RELATIONS WITH MAJOR POWERS ON NATIONAL SECURITY: NIGERIA IN PERSPECTIVE

Povzetek Za odnose med državami v okviru vestfalskega sistema je bil značilen boj za oblast ali pa vzajemne koristi na vseh področjih, vključno s politiko in vojsko. Zunanjepolitični cilji velesil naj bi navadno vplivali na nacionalno varnost drugih držav. Nigerija, država v Zahodni Afriki, je primer take države, na katere nacionalno varnost naj bi vplivali njeni odnosi z velesilami. V prispevku poskušamo oceniti stopnjo tovrstnega vpliva na nacionalno varnost Nigerije. Poudarjamo, da tak vpliv v resnici obstaja na področjih, kot so trgovinska bilanca, vojaški potencial, družbene vrednote in poseganje v regionalno prevlado Nigerije.

Ključne besede *Velesile, Nigerija, nacionalna varnost, odnosi, zunanja politika.*

Abstract Relations between states under the Westphalia system have been characterized either by power struggles or mutual benefits in all spheres, including politics and the military. It has been conjectured that the foreign policy objectives of major powers normally influence the national security of other states. Nigeria, a country in West Africa, is an example of such a state whose national security is believed to be influenced by its relations with the major powers. An assessment of the degree of such influence on Nigeria's national security is the focus of this contribution. We point out that there is indeed such influence in areas such as balance of trade, military capacity, societal values and interference with Nigeria's regional dominance.

Key words *Major powers, Nigeria, national security, relations, foreign policy.*

Introduction

Relations between states have evolved significantly since the introduction of the Westphalia state system in 1648. Throughout history, these relations have either been based on power struggles or mutual benefits, ranging from political to military spheres. Although the Peace Treaty of Westphalia serves as the basis for the modern state system, the evolution of territorial states to powerful political units was unfamiliar during the period of Westphalia (Fischer, 2012). Today, as in previous centuries, nations still compete among themselves for power, influence, and economic resources. However, the difference in the 21st century is that competition between nation-states is largely governed and dictated by technological prowess, and facilitated by globalization through Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Globalization has provided a platform for a strong, continuing process of integration of all the states around the globe. Consequently, evolving challenges such as terrorism, drugs and human trafficking, in addition to other organized crimes, have assumed a global dimension, causing a significant shift in the nature, dynamics and perception of national security. This has therefore resulted in a rethink of nations' foreign policies and their impact on national security.

It is pertinent to note that the imbalances of power between nations, as well as ambitions between and among states, are usually enshrined in their foreign policies (Kissinger, 1995). It is these imbalances and ambitions of state actors that make some states more prominent than others in the global arena. Some of these more prominent states are referred to as 'the major powers', particularly those that have been at the forefront of initiating strategic influence in ensuring peace and security in the international arena. Also, these major powers are those states that are influential on the international scene with regard to wealth, might and reach. The five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), namely the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), France, Russia and China, are therefore considered major world powers. These major powers have the capacity to affect the behaviour of and developments in less powerful states, such as most African states.

Africa remains an area of particular interest to the world, and indeed the major powers, for a variety of reasons. Its population of over one billion people attracts trade and commerce. Its natural resources further make the continent a battleground for resource competition among the superpowers. Despite foreign interest in Africa, the continent is faced with numerous internal challenges. While economic interests continue to be a pull factor, there are issues of the crisis of legitimacy of leadership, widespread corruption, and severe insecurity within the African geopolitical space (Democratization in Africa: African Views, African Voices, 1992). These crises have placed an enormous burden not just on the African Union (AU), but also on other regional organizations in Africa. These factors seem to be the reason why the influence of major powers can easily undermine African interests and national security. However, some nations, such as South Africa, Egypt, and Nigeria, appear to have assumed leadership positions in the continent, given the roles they play in their different sub-regional organizations, as well as in the AU. For instance, Nigeria played a leadership role through the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to

restore peace in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s (Musah, 2011). Nigeria also spearheaded the deployment of enormous diplomatic resources to settle disputes in Guinea-Bissau in 2012 and The Gambia in 2017. Nigeria contributed both financially and politically to ending the apartheid regime and in support of the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa in the 1960s and 70s. It additionally played the lead role in the establishment of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in 2015 in the Lake Chad Basin region against the Boko Haram insurgency (Iroegbu, 2015).

Nigeria is a nation whose relations with the major powers can be traced back to its independence in October 1960. This relationship, over the years, has been central to Nigeria's foreign policy activities. The dominance of these countries on the global stage affects Nigeria and influences its national security to a large extent. Examples of such influences include support for the rebel Biafran Government (1967); suspension from and heavy sanctions by the Commonwealth, European Union and United Nations (1994); addition of Nigeria to the Terror Watch List (2010); and restriction on the sale of weapons to Nigeria (2014), among others. Thus, a painstaking look at the foreign policy of Nigeria, in line with the way it is influenced by world powers in relation to its national security, is not just necessary, but apt. To this end, this article examines the nexus between Nigeria's relations with the superpowers and the effects of this relationship on its national security. Therefore, a brief description of Nigeria's geopolitics is key to understanding the central issues of the study.

Nigeria is a country strategically located in Africa, precisely West Africa, along the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) (Metz, 1992). The country's landmass is 923,768 km², which makes it the 38th largest country in the world (World Factbook, 2022). Nigeria is bordered to the north by the Republic of Niger, to the south by the Atlantic Ocean, to the west by the Republic of Benin, and to the east by Chad and Cameroon. The country is a land of great contrast, both in terms of physical attributes and cultural configurations. Nigeria is Africa's largest democracy and one of the most densely populated countries in Africa, with a population of about 200 million (World Factbook, 2022). Nigeria possesses one of the largest militaries in Africa. The 2022 Global Firepower ranked Nigeria 35th of 142 countries considered worldwide. However, its defence spending is just about 0.76% of GDP, which is below the 2.2% global average. Nonetheless, according to the World Bank, Statista, BRIU of April 2022, Nigeria's military spending has increased from \$1.72 billion in 2016 to \$5.4 billion in 2022 (Babatunde-Lawal, 2022). The strength of Nigeria's military is 223,000, which is 0.4% of the total labour force of the country (World Bank Data, 2019). Additionally, Nigeria has large deposits of human and material resources and is considered Africa's biggest economy, and the seventh-largest exporter of crude oil in the world.

Unfortunately, like most developing nations, Nigeria has been grappling with a myriad of security challenges since 1960, when independence was gained from its British colonial masters; the latest being Boko Haram in the North-East and the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) in the South-West. Also, farmers-herdsmen

clashes across the country and banditry are causes for concern. The country is also faced with widespread poverty and massive youth unemployment. The challenges have combined to place Nigeria in the global spotlight, and impacted negatively on its capacity to enhance national security. Notwithstanding these security challenges, Nigeria still tries to manage its issues and at the same time assert itself as a major actor on the African continent. The question that begs answers is whether its neighbouring countries, as well as the major powers, recognize Nigeria as a major actor on the African continent. While it is true that Nigeria has always sought recognition and respect from the major powers, it is uncertain if it has received due acknowledgement from them. Thus, this article seeks to bridge the gap between the perceived and the real relationship between Nigeria and the major powers, and how this affects the security architecture of Nigeria.

1 NIGERIA'S RELATIONS WITH MAJOR POWERS

Nigeria's relations with the major powers have been as varied as the major powers are diverse in their foreign policy objectives. These will be discussed under Nigeria-China relations, Nigeria-France relations, Nigeria-Russia-relations, Nigeria-UK relations and Nigeria-US relations.

1.1 Nigeria-China Relations

China's foreign policy model transcends individual states or regions; it emphasizes equal diplomatic relations with all important states globally. China is perceived by many developing countries as a friendly alternative for trade, financial aid, and military aid. In Africa, Nigeria is China's biggest market and the biggest Chinese investment destination (All Africa online newspaper, 2016). Nigeria-China diplomatic relations began in 1971; shortly afterwards, the Nigerian Civil War caused a strain between the two nations due to China's tacit support for Biafra, a move intended to upset the US, the UK and Russia. However, the Sani Abacha-led junta stigmatization by the West from 1993-1998 forced the regime to adopt a »Look East« foreign policy. This strengthened the seed of trust between the two countries.

Nigeria received some military support from China over the fight against militancy in the Delta region and the ongoing Islamic insurgency in the north-east. During the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan, China announced a new strategic relationship with Nigeria with shared benefits. Subsequently, the two countries signed some agreements/Memoranda of Understanding on bilateral trade, investment cooperation, economic cooperation, investment in the automobile industry, and the construction of industrial towns and agricultural towns (All Africa online newspaper, 2016). China's foreign policy towards Nigeria is therefore quite vibrant, as it cuts across trade, agriculture, transportation infrastructure, especially railway lines, investment and cultural exchanges. For instance, China committed USD 200 million to the development of the Free Trade Zone in Lagos, Nigeria (Mohammed, 2019).

In recent times, Nigeria-China relations have attracted debate on China's motives and Nigeria's benefits. There are those who consider China's inroads into Nigeria as being parasitic, while others think Nigeria stands to benefit by closing the infrastructural deficiency gap through such relations (Umejei, 2015). Notwithstanding the debate, China presents Nigeria with opportunities that do not necessarily impinge on its national security. China is committed to assisting Nigeria in both technical and security matters. It is willing to enhance cooperation in satellite technology. On the other hand, some of the security implications in dealing with China include outright flouting of Nigeria's laws such as the use of underage labour, noncompliance with environmental regulations, and the spread of sub-standard products, in addition to saddling the country with too much debt. Thus, Nigeria's relations with China can be generally described as »win-some, lose-some.«

1.2 Nigeria-France Relations

Nigeria's relations with France could be better understood from its relations with its Francophone neighbours. From independence in 1960 until the Civil War in 1967, Nigeria was keen to safeguard the Francophone influence in West Africa. The conflict with Ivory Coast over the recognition of Biafra was the beginning of a change in Nigeria's perception of the preservation of Francophone influence in the sub-region. Subsequently, this affected Nigeria's relations with France. In fact, in the literature, opinions abound that in the past France worked tirelessly towards the dismemberment of Nigeria. Therefore, it could be said that the immediate post-colonial relationship between Nigeria and France was a very difficult one. The primary explanation for the dissatisfied partnership between Nigeria and France is the competition for the control of the Francophone countries in West Africa. France has always remained determined to take control of the affairs of the West African Francophone countries and considers Nigeria as an apparent obstacle, largely because of Nigeria's Pan-Africanism policy. Consequently, France was always instrumental in ensuring that Nigeria was unable to assume its leadership roles in the West African continent.

The last three French presidents, however, have pursued a foreign policy that is based on economic interest rather than historical ties. The current administration in France reportedly wants to partner with Africa and not dominate it. Currently, France seems to be partnering with Nigeria, leading to a two-day state visit by President Macron in July 2018. He addressed a joint press conference with President Buhari and stated his commitment to helping the fight against Islamist militants (France Diplomacy, 2021). Politically, France-Nigeria diplomatic relations assumed a deeper dimension following the escalation of violence by the Islamic insurgency in the Lake Chad area. The catalyst was the 2014 kidnapping of more than 200 schoolgirls from Chibok, which generated international condemnation. France was moved to initiate an international summit held in Paris on 17 May 2014, where the Heads of State of Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, Niger and Chad, and representatives of the US, the UK and the EU met to deliberate on the effective methods of winning the counterinsurgency war against Boko Haram. This Summit was followed by a

number of accords signed between France and Nigeria in areas such as security, trade and education, among others.

Generally, relations between Nigeria and France since the 1960s were difficult until about a decade ago, when they began to improve. This new relationship is hoped to be sustained if France desists from its tendency towards controlling its former colonies. Therefore, Nigeria's recent relations with France can be described as 'delicately symbiotic', especially based on the renewed commitment in the area of security.

1.3 Nigeria-Russia Relations

Diplomatic ties between Nigeria and Russia were officially established on 25 November 1960, less than two months after the former's independence. In 1961, the Soviet Union set up its Embassy at Lagos, and in 1962, Nigeria set up its Embassy in Moscow. The most landmark relations between Nigeria and Russia (then the Soviet Union) can be traced to the Nigerian civil war era. Faced with British and American refusal to meet Nigeria's need for bombers, General Gowon turned to Moscow for a supply of arms in early July 1967. Over the years, Nigeria-Russia Bilateral Relations (NRBR) engaged in positive development, culminating in the first major state visit of either of the two countries' leaders when President Olusegun Obasanjo visited Russia in 2001, and the President of Russia at the time, President Dmitri Medvedev, reciprocated with a trip to Nigeria in 2009.

Economic and trade relations between Russia and Nigeria can be traced through more than 50 years of active interaction. A Nigerian-Russian Chamber of Commerce, comprising over 160 companies, was established in 1998 to boost economic relations between the two countries. Prominent Russian companies doing business in Nigeria include Kamaz (trucks); Gazprom (gas production) and Megaviation (aircraft). Nigeria has been Russia's most significant trading partner in Africa, and the trade value rose from \$300 million in 2008 to nearly \$1.5 billion for Russia by 2010 (Agubamah, 2014). Diplomatically, Russia and Nigeria regularly assist each other in the multilateral sphere.

Russia and Nigeria's interests in the domain of security and defence converge in the sale of arms and peace support operations. Russia has consistently supported Nigeria in its fight against the Boko Haram insurgency through the sale of heavy arms and equipment, such as the Su-30 fighter aircraft as well as Mi-35 and Mi-17 helicopters with attendant training packages. There are other series of military-technical assistance and military cooperation, such as the training of AFN personnel in Russian institutions, among other things. Russia thus exhibits firm support for Nigeria in its counter terrorism and extremism efforts.

Overall, Russia's foreign policy initiatives are beginning to cast the country as a dependable partner to Nigeria, especially in the light of the sanctions and disappointments from the Western powers with regard to the supply of arms, until

recent times. Following its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Nigeria has been careful in its dealings with both countries. Thus, Nigeria considers Russia as a major ally, with huge potential for more mutually beneficial ties in future. Accordingly, Nigeria would do well to strengthen her relations with Russia.

1.4 Nigeria-United Kingdom Relations

The UK, like most major powers, accords certain parts of the world far greater priority than others, especially in terms of resource allocation (both human and financial), which affects their policy-making process. The UK's foreign policy towards Nigeria is focused on improving the bilateral strategic partnership between the two countries, with a view to seizing common opportunities and addressing mutual threats (GOV. UK, 2020).

With regard to defence and security cooperation, Nigeria's tie to the UK as a former colony has gone through many decades of close collaboration. The UK cooperates with Nigeria to combat elements of discontent, terrorism, and jihadist ideology, so as to preclude widespread extremism in the region. This also includes other threats such as human and drug trafficking, piracy, and cybercrimes, among others. The two countries have developed a comprehensive security accord covering a number of security deficits of yesteryear. August 2018 became a milestone in the security relations between Nigeria and the UK, because an agreement was made to respond to shared threats in terms of military hardware and software. In 2022, the first Nigeria-UK Security and Defence Partnership meeting between the strategic leaders in the sector was held.

Concerning trade, the UK has a robust relationship with Nigeria. The trade relationship was worth £4 billion in 2015, with an inherent capacity to grow. With regard to climate change, the UK has been readily on hand to provide assistance to Nigeria, and in May 2019 announced nearly £153 million in funding to rural farmers as aid to combating the effects of climate change on livelihoods in Nigeria, Ethiopia and the rest of the Sahel region (GOV.UK, 2020). The UK's current foreign policy focus towards Nigeria is on improving the bilateral strategic partnership between the two countries with a view to seizing common opportunities and addressing mutual threats. Nigeria remains a key and traditional partner of the UK in Africa in economic, social, cultural, educational, defence and security terms; nevertheless, there is still room for further deepening of the relations between the two nations.

1.5 Nigeria-United States Relations

US foreign policy operates through a network of alliances such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and the South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), among others. In Africa, the US established diplomatic relations with Nigeria in 1960 after its independence from the UK. Since then, Nigeria-US relations, although they have had their moments of tension, have generally been 'warm, dynamic, respectful and cooperative' (Ukongu,

Private Communication, June 10, 2019). The present scope of engagement between the US and Nigeria revolves around key areas of mutual interest, such as security and counter-terrorism efforts, global health, and expanding energy access, as well as trade and investment. The last major visits between the leadership of the two nations was that of the US Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, on 18 November 2021 to Abuja, while President Buhari was the first African leader to meet with President Trump in April 2018. Later, the omission of President Buhari from the first set of calls made to African leaders by President Biden after his inauguration did not go unnoticed (Ekott, 2021).

With regard to regional security, it is generally believed that the US supports Nigeria in its security and counter-terrorism (CT) efforts. However, the refusal to sell \$600 million worth of arms to Nigeria during the Barack Obama administration came as a big blow to Nigeria and a repetition of history (BBC News, 2017). It may be recalled that in 1967 the US refused to sell arms to Nigeria, which made the Gowon regime turn to Moscow (Laidi, 1990). The repetition of this action in 2014 on the grounds that Nigeria had not been respecting human rights demonstrates the US exercise of power and influence even when the vital interest of Nigeria was under threat. Even though the Trump administration reversed the decision by agreeing to the sale of about a dozen A-29 Super Tucano aircraft to Nigeria, this does not dispel the fact that self-assertive democratic values of the US remain a critical concern in Nigeria-US relations (BBC News, 2017). With reference to trade and investment, economic ties between the US and Nigeria are anchored on the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA); African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA); and the Bi-National Commission (BNC).

Overall, it may be observed that the core message of Nigeria-US relations has been that of dependency. Rodney once argued that dependent nations will always respond to the will of the developed nations (Giovanni, 2019). Often the US does not cajole Nigeria into any action using force; rather the US depends on its power and influence. This assertion would thus necessitate examining the influence of Nigeria's relations with the major powers on its national security.

2 THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

The influence of Nigeria's relations with the major powers on the country's national security has gone through several phases since its independence in 1960. As it were, Nigeria's diplomatic history vis-à-vis its national security may be divided into six distinct periods, namely:

- a) The Age of Innocence: The first period, 1960-1974
- b) The Era of Awakening: The second period, 1975-1984
- c) The Epoch of Realism: The third period, 1985-1992
- d) The Dark Age: The fourth period, 1993-1998
- e) The Renaissance: The fifth period, 1999-2010

f) The Reality Check Age: The sixth period, 2010-present (Asobie, 2010)

2.1 The Age of Innocence (1960-1974)

The regime of Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa as the first Prime Minister of Nigeria was the beginning of the Age of Innocence. Excerpts from his first address to the nation in his Independence Speech on October 1, 1960 revealed his vision for Nigeria. The perception of the international system was encapsulated in his 'Five Fundamental Principles of Nigeria's Foreign Policy'. These were:

- a) Acknowledgement of human equality and the advancement of the integrity, sovereignty and hence the independence of all countries;
- b) Non-interference with other nations' affairs;
- c) Non-alignment with any of the existing ideological and military blocs;
- d) Nigeria to be part of international organizations that are functionally relevant to its needs;
- e) Africa to be the focal point of Nigeria's foreign policy (Asobie, 2010).

These five principles have cut across the range of civilian and military regimes to date, making them perhaps the most enduring legacy of the late Prime Minister's vision. During this period, the foreign policy of Nigeria, particularly in Balewa's administration, has often been described as conservative and timid due to inexperience and a divided political terrain (Asobie, 2010). This era also witnessed the first military coup in the country, as well as a civil war from 1967-70. In the early stages of Gowon's administration in 1967, Nigeria's foreign policy thrust focused on obtaining support for the nation's civil war efforts. One of the major gains from the war was closer ties with Russia (then the Soviet Union), China and other Eastern European countries which came to Nigeria's rescue when Britain and some other countries in the West refused to sell heavy field artillery guns, bombs, and aircraft to the Federal side. This was the first sign of the influence of the major powers on the outcome of Nigeria's internal crises. It is necessary to observe that national security was not specifically highlighted in the fundamental principles enunciated for foreign policy guidance during Nigeria's 'Age of Innocence'.

2.2 The Era of Awakening (1975-1984)

The Era of Awakening was brought about by General Murtala Mohammed. This period witnessed the articulation and implementation of Nigeria's Afrocentric policy. General Murtala noted, in his address to the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now African Union (AU), in Addis Ababa, that there was a new direction for the continent in which Nigeria would play a leadership role. He spoke thus:

“Africa has come of age; it is no longer in the orbit of any continental power. It should no longer take orders from any country, however powerful. The fortunes of Africa are in our hands to make or mar...» (Ota & Ecoma, 2016)

The confidence he thus displayed could have played a role in his assassination. There is a theory about a scheme by the West to remove him because of his revolutionary position and firm belief in Africa. This is especially so since the West continued to control the destiny of Africa even after many years of independence (Ota & Ecoma, 2016). This brings to the fore the influence the major powers have on the African continent, so that they could even influence a change in government, as allegedly in the case of Murtala. Evidently General Murtala did not help the situation with his powerful confrontation with the US on the crisis in Angola between the National Union for the Liberation of Angola (UNITA) and the Peoples' Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) in 1975. Nigeria gave support to the MPLA Government, while the US recognized and supported UNITA. This was critical in turning the tide against the US and other Western nations, as well as mobilizing international support for the MPLA.

The subsequent administration, that of General Olusegun Obasanjo (1975-1979), continued in the same vein after General Murtala's assassination. This era also witnessed the term of Nigeria's first executive president, Alhaji Usman Shehu Shagari in the Second Republic (1979-1983) and the Buhari/Idiagbon military regime (1983-1985). Foreign policy during the Shagari years was allegedly like the Balewa years, 'conservative, routine, cautious and sometimes, unpopular.' The foreign policy of the Buhari regime remained focused on Africa; however, the regime dealt decisively with border threats from Chad and Cameroon using firm military deployments. It is essential to highlight that foreign policy matters need to be tackled expediently as they affect national security negatively if treated otherwise.

2.3 The Epoch of Realism (1985-1992)

The Epoch of Realism best describes the period under General Ibrahim Babangida, popularly referred to as 'IBB'. He remains one of Nigeria's most charismatic leaders. He conceived foreign policy to be an »issue-based pursuit reflecting a package of objectives and goals tied to the nation's security and the well-being of Nigerians generally" (Global Security, 2020). He achieved this by having the best people on board and allowing them the necessary latitude to execute their plans to accomplish the said objectives. Thus, the many issues of foreign policy, for example, the Concert of Medium Powers initiative and the Technical Aid Corps (TAC) programme, became the foreign policy thrusts of Nigeria, which were generally accepted and had the input of many intellectuals the President had made part of his cabinet. These initiatives projected Nigeria and other like-minded nations who were pursuing neutralist foreign policy onto the global scene, while using the influence of soft diplomacy to engage some other nations (Aina, 2020).

It was also when General Babangida was the Chairman of ECOWAS (1986-88), that the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Citizens took effect. The formation of ECOMOG was one of the high points of the Babangida administration, and it was lauded as a pioneering and commendable foreign policy initiative. He also established relations with Israel, which had been broken over the Arab-Israeli crisis

since October 1973. However, despite the warm relationship that Nigeria enjoyed on the international scene, it was not difficult for the international community, especially the major powers, to isolate Nigeria after the cancellation of the Presidential election of June 12, 1993, which was declared arguably the most transparent and accountable election to have taken place in Nigeria (Global Security, 2020). This action led to mass protest and riots in Nigeria and uproar on the global scene, which later led to the handover of government to Ernest Shonekan as an interim administration. Accordingly, a country may not make much progress in its foreign affairs if it does not pay adequate attention to domestic affairs, particularly national security issues; national security issues impact significantly on foreign affairs, and vice-versa.

2.4 The Dark Age (1993-1998)

The Dark Age is used to describe the period under General Sani Abacha. The General took over in an ‘unnecessary’ coup d’état at a time when the world was progressively leaning in the direction of liberal democracy. This led to deep international resentment and opposition to Nigeria. The unwarranted execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa, an Ogoni activist, and eight others despite appeals from the comity of nations worsened the situation. This led to the cutting of diplomatic ties by countries such as Britain, the US, France, Germany, Canada and South Africa, among others.

In response, the Abacha-led administration fell back on Asia, in a Look East policy, and increasingly engaged in relations with countries like China and North Korea. This was seen in the initial award of a contract for the reconstruction of Nigerian railway lines to the Chinese Civil Engineering Construction Company (CCECC) in 1995 (Osondu-Oti & Ifedayo, 2016). The military and other security agencies also began to receive new equipment/weapons and training of their personnel in eastern nations such as North Korea, China and Russia, among others. It similarly introduced new dynamics into the security architecture of the country. For the military, it brought about the induction of new weapons, platforms and technology. This equally attracted less cooperation from traditional allies in terms of military assistance, training and sharing of intelligence, among other things, which led to military sanctions from the Western nations. Many Nigerian Armed Forces personnel on courses in many of the Western countries were arbitrarily withdrawn by the host authorities and forced to return to Nigeria.

Overall, the foreign policy shift during the Abacha years brought bitter resentment from overseas, as well as greater unease and disaffection at home (Folarin, 2017). The country came under severe economic, political, and military sanctions, influenced by the major powers. Nigeria was in this condition until the sudden death of General Abacha on 8 June 1998. What is evident from this period is that missteps in foreign policy have a marked tendency to lead to developments which can significantly impact national security.

2.5 The Renaissance (1999-2010)

A Renaissance or period of rebirth best describes the era of President Olusegun Obasanjo. In his inaugural address on 29 May 1999, the President said:

»We shall pursue a dynamic foreign policy to promote friendly relations with all nations, and will continue to play a constructive role in the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity and other international bodies. We shall continue to honour existing agreements between Nigeria and other countries. It is our resolve to restore Nigeria fully to her previous prestigious position in the community of nations.« (Folarin, 2017)

The foreign policy of Nigeria at this time was entrenched in democratic values, and the result was that it strengthened the institutions of the state, thereby leading to a culture of good governance. Again Nigeria maintained her previous stance in Africa, which was to uphold her Afro-centric interests and aspirations. The diplomacy of the Obasanjo era yielded some economic benefits. The bulk of the nation's foreign debts were cancelled or rescheduled. Additionally, Nigeria began to attract foreign investments, which invariably led to job creation and opened a window for social interactions in the international arena. President Obasanjo was succeeded by President Umaru Yar'Adua (2007-2009), who apparently inaugurated the idea of »Citizen Diplomacy« as the focus of the nation's foreign policy (Okuchukwu, 2015). This policy portrays the aspiration of the government to get ordinary citizens actively involved in diplomacy by acting as representatives of the state in other countries.

During this period, perhaps because of the renewed hope and optimism of the international community towards Nigeria, the country was able to secure considerable assistance in security. However, the security situation began to degenerate towards the end of President Obasanjo's second term and heading into the Yar'Adua era, not because of failings of foreign policy essentially, but because of certain dynamics in the domestic arena. There was also the belief in certain quarters, such as the view expressed by Lieutenant-General Victor Malu, the respectable Chief of Army Staff, that the President gave too much consideration to international cooperation, in defiance of national security. However, to an appreciable degree, foreign policy during the Renaissance period can be stated to have enhanced national security.

2.6 The Reality Check Age (2010- Present Day)

The period from 2010 to date has served as a reality check for Nigeria with regard to how it handles its foreign relations. President Goodluck Jonathan (2009-2015) sustained the foreign policy of the late Yar'Adua, his predecessor. Several bilateral agreements were checked and re-negotiated, while new ones were brokered. Nigeria continued its partnership policy with the Asian nations, leading to the signing and activation of bilateral Joint Commissions with Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and India (Kia, Nwigbo & Ojie, 2017). Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that the gross national insecurity during the administration significantly affected Nigeria's

relations with its neighbours. They perceived the country as not doing enough to counter the Boko Haram threat, and thus were hesitant in their relations with Nigeria.

The major foreign policy direction of President Muhammadu Buhari's administration (2015-date) is aimed at boosting the country's image globally and ensuring socio-economic stability. The essence is to lure Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Nigeria and address the threats of insurgency in north-eastern Nigeria. Prior to the emergence of Muhammadu Buhari in 2015, Boko Haram insurgents had captured some Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Borno State. The Muhammadu Buhari administration therefore decided to make the fight against corruption, economic development and ensuring security the focus of its 'Change Agenda'. President Buhari was able to build and secure international awareness and collaboration, both in the world and in the region, against insurgencies. He championed the development of a Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) of about 8,700 troops from the Lake Chad Basin Commission member countries (Olowojolu, 2017). The government has additionally empowered diplomatic ties with the major powers, especially China, the US, France and Germany. The recovery of stolen funds, the ability to secure loans and the deepening trade deals are part of the friendly gestures extended to President Buhari (Olowojolu, 2017).

During the Reality Check Age, it had become clear that foreign policy is a vital mechanism for the promotion of national interest and in addition, national security. Also, little gain may be made if it is not used dispassionately or objectively; thus, the need to build institutions rather than individuals cannot be overemphasized. Similarly, it is important for Nigeria's foreign policy to be dynamic and assertive, because of the country's disposition and the peculiar national security challenges confronting it.

Overall, Nigeria has undergone different foreign policy directions from the Age of Innocence to the Reality Check Age. However, one thing that is obvious from the different eras is that Nigeria can no longer sustain the idea of 'Father Christmas' diplomacy or Afro-centrism at the expense of her national interest and citizens. Also, the influence of the major powers on Nigeria's national security needs to be factored into its foreign policy thrust. An assessment of the influence of these relations on Nigeria's national security will be discussed subsequently.

3 ASSESSMENT OF THE INFLUENCE OF RELATIONS WITH MAJOR POWERS ON NIGERIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY

This article has deduced that the major powers have exerted reasonable influence, although in varying degrees, on Nigeria's national security. They did this using their elements of power with a view to projecting their respective national interests and ultimately their foreign policies. The degrees of influence range from modest to insignificant. Nigeria is, however, not attached to any one of the major powers.

The major powers act independently with regard to Nigeria, and have clearly articulated the national interests which drive their relations with it. Their influence on the country's national security is nonetheless not contradictory, as they would benefit more from a safe and stable Nigeria. There is also a significant relationship between the interests of the major powers and their support of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives for enhanced national security. Pertinently, any time the nation's foreign policy objectives align with the interests of the foreign powers, they initiate activities that enhance Nigeria's security as generally witnessed from 1998 onwards, since the advent of the Fourth Republic (democracy) up to today. The assessment of the degree of influence is highlighted subsequently.

- a) The balance of trade is dispassionately tilted against Nigeria and in favour of the major powers, which suggests that Nigeria needs them more on issues of trade than they need Nigeria. The country is largely dependent on the major powers for the supply of military hardware, which inadvertently affects its military capacity. It is only recently that Nigeria is beginning to explore other sources, particularly some medium powers like Pakistan, Turkey, and Israel, for its military hardware. This greatly affected the security architecture in the north-east of the country, where the Nigerian Armed Forces was denied the necessary arms for fighting insurgency.
- b) The continued dependence by Nigeria on the major powers in the purchase of arms and ammunition, in addition to other military equipment, especially discourages efforts to improve the military-industrial complex in Nigeria. These nations can therefore hold the country to ransom at any point in time if Nigeria's foreign policy misaligns with their national interests. For example, US President Barack Obama threatened to cut off foreign aid to Nigeria if an anti-gay bill was passed by the National Assembly in 2011 (Nsehe, 2011). The anti-gay bill was later signed into law by President Jonathan in 2014, and President Obama denied Nigeria purchase of crucial arms in the face of massive insurgency in the north-east in 2015 (Onuah, 2014; Ofeibea, 2015). Consequently, the dependence of Nigeria on external sources for most of its defence requirements bears directly on the country's national security. It is an unhealthy trend that needs to be reversed. Furthermore, the major powers unduly interfere in the activities of Nigeria's neighbours in its 'strategic backyard', thereby undermining the country's dominance in the sub-region and making it vulnerable.
- c) Generally, the major powers want to benefit from an improved economy and trade with Nigeria, as well as to avoid threats posed to them by the scale of poverty in the nation and the resulting export of threats. Because of this, they tend to reverse their hard stand once in a while in favour of Nigeria. It is also observed that 'non-traditional power blocs' like China and Russia are now increasing the scope and depth of their activities in the country, thus stoking up increased competition from the other players. This also has implications for Nigeria's national security, as imported doctrines from different power blocs and

their perception of the country tend to negate security and relationship gains made in the past.

The relationship between the support by the major powers for Nigeria's foreign policy objectives towards improved national security, and their interests as world powers, is direct and robust. The major powers have a strong influence on global security issues, with a common desire for peace and security in Nigeria, the powerhouse of West Africa. They also desire a country whose citizens do not constitute a threat to their nations in form of illegal migration and the spread of terrorism, as well as human and drug trafficking, among other things. They equally look forward to a large market for their products and a country that will support their various agendas among the comity of nations.

Conclusion The global economic and political system is defined by relations between state actors competing for resources. States' unequal endowment in terms of material and human resources have placed some states above others, hence there are states referred to as major powers in the comity of nations. The major powers, also recognized as such by the UN, are the main actors in the international scene, and can influence activities within the global space. The influence of these major powers on Nigeria's national security is in varying degrees from modest to insignificant, especially since the advent of the Fourth Republic.

A critical review of foreign policy in Nigeria has shown that many issues must be resolved before Nigeria can optimize the advantages of a global partnership with the major powers. The impact of relations with the major powers on Nigeria's national security can at times be visible in how these countries advance their national interests regardless of how it affects Nigeria. Thus, it can be said that the relationship between the support by the major powers for Nigeria's foreign policy objectives towards improved national security, and their interests as world powers, is direct and robust. Nigeria does not have a choice but to succumb to their whims, because the country is dependent on foreign supplies of arms from the major powers, which influences its military power considerably and by extension, its national security. This article has observed that the major powers would continue to support Nigeria's foreign policy objectives towards improved national security in as much as it guarantees their own interests. Therefore, Nigeria needs to develop its economy as well as its military-industrial complex in order to have a voice globally and to tackle its security issues.

Nigeria could adopt a number of measures to help leverage the influence that flows from relations with the superpowers on its national security. A good take-off point to achieve this would be for the country to review its foreign relations. It needs to begin to engage with the major powers in a pragmatic way where it has something to offer, and where the interest of Nigerians is paramount. In this light also, the density of the influence of the major powers must be diluted with concrete relations with other emerging or medium powers of like interests. Secondly, the country must

develop economic capacity in order to free itself from the whims and caprices of the major powers. This can be done principally through diversifying the economy, investing in infrastructure, and making the investment climate more attractive, among other actions. Thirdly, to moderate the influence of the major powers on Nigeria's national security, the country needs to strengthen its institutions – military, political, social and so on – and ensure they develop capacity. Finally, Nigeria needs to take deliberate steps to develop its military-industrial complex, as this is one area where the influence of the major powers is most significant.

Overall, Nigeria's foreign policy has metamorphosed significantly from independence to current times. It is now most impacted by economic realities and national security challenges. Also, the effect of the country's relations with the major powers is quite significant, particularly in areas such as the economy, defence, politics, and culture, which provide the foundation on which security rests. Consequently, Nigeria's relations with the major powers influence its national security substantially, in varying and complex degrees.

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*Prispevki, objavljeni v Sodobnih vojaških izzivih, niso uradno stališče Slovenske vojske niti organov, iz katerih so avtorji prispevkov.

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