

In Search of International Law and Diplomacy in Nigeria's Governance¹

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Introduction

There are two areas to connect to in order to understand the influence of international law and diplomacy on Nigeria's affairs. They are development and governance. There is an organic link between development and governance or governance and development. This link can be established if we adopt Dudley Seers³ conception of development and the World Bank's⁴ conception of governance.

The World Bank defined governance as the effective and efficient utilisation of human and material resources for the benefit of people. Dudley Seers defined development as the reduction and/or elimination of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

For a country in Nigeria's condition of governance and development which require the combination and coordination of its internal and external affairs to attain the optimum benefits for most of its people, it is not difficult to appreciate its relationships with international law and diplomacy.

Nigeria is certainly not a country where there is organic connection of the internal and the external in governance in order to engender developments of the types that would require keen interest in international law and diplomacy. Both are the stuff of governance with internal affairs influencing external affairs which deals with the quantum of a country's bilateral and multilateral relations. Since a country's external affairs is the product of its internal workings, there is and there has always been plenty that do not cohere internally to trigger the external affairs positive impact on the lives of most Nigerians.

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³ Read Dudley Seers timeless treatise entitled *The idea of Development*, 1968

⁴ Read World Bank, *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth*, Washington DC: The World Bank, 1989; World Bank, *Governance and Development*, Washington DC: World Bank, 1992; Thomas G. Weiss, "Governance, Good Governance and Global Governance: Conceptual and Actual Challenges", *Third World Quarterly*, Volume 12, Number 5, 2000: 795-814

This is not surprising for a country without a founding philosophy at independence that would have asked and answered the questions what is Nigeria, whose Nigeria, what is a Nigeria issue constituting policy and, how can Nigeria be achieved constituting strategy. The latter or strategy and not the former or policy would have been the perennial concerns of government after government. Consequently, Nigeria's governance has always been ad-hoc. To this extent, the place and relevance of the dictates of international law and diplomacy in governance, is ephemeral and largely inconsequential, to the affairs of Nigeria.

Nigeria's awareness of and engagement with international law and diplomacy should be the products of its robust engagement with the rest of the world as it attempts to drive its interests in the search for security defined as wellbeing in all of its forms for its people. Nigeria is an orphan and always will be unless these fundamental questions of policy and strategy which provide compass and confluence to all sphere of human endeavours are addressed and treated as inviolable canon of governance.

It is in the context of this understanding that we will appreciate the place and role of intelligence in national development in Nigeria. This is because in the manner we chose to construct and administer Nigeria's affairs, very few of those affairs are governed by indigenous ideas, persons and institutions. Most of Nigeria's affairs bear resemblance to the copycat that we have become as a country. This is in spite of nature's accidental and arguably unmerited gift to Nigeria of grotesque resources of the human and material type and what has become the burden Nigeria has been unable to carry as the biggest and largest black country in the world.

It is worth pointing out that when the contest for power in the world is reduced to race, Nigeria carries the banner of the black race. Arguably, there are only two races in the world. They are brown/black and pink/white. To think that we have all it takes to command the presence and drive the recognition that the black race deserved in the world and that we have so far bungled this, is the consequence of the lack of direction which only a philosophy – nature, meaning and purpose – of Nigeria can offer and confer. Therein lies the type of insight that only intelligence – strategic intelligence – can provide in order to drive development for most Nigerians and for most of the black race.

In the context of this paper's focus on international law and diplomacy and arising from the role of intelligence in development including governing the realm of international law and diplomacy, within Nigeria's geopolitics and defence clusters, the structure and condition of governance dictates the awareness and application of the international law and diplomacy, to drive Nigeria's interests, beneficial to most Nigerians.

In this paper, we will conceptualise and operationalise international law and diplomacy and within this Nigeria's place in international law and diplomacy; situate this in the governance of Nigeria since independence; examine the absence of philosophy which should embed a conception of interest that should serve as confluence for all and sundry in pursuing Nigeria's short, medium and long term goals; consider the condition of what is "national security" and "security" and; the disconnect these (governance, philosophy, national security/security) engendered on the one hand and on the other hand its implication on the drivers of Nigeria's external affairs – the terrain and domain of international law and diplomacy. The paper's conclusion arose from the analysis.

Conceptualising International Law and Diplomacy

There are two aspects to the discourse on international law and diplomacy. They are international law and diplomacy. There is a third aspect – the relationship between international law and diplomacy. Operationalising international law will include considering the definition, differences, sources, principles, central institutions, types and challenges.

International law is a set of rules and principles that govern the relations and conducts of sovereign states, international organisation and, to some extent, individuals. The law regulates issues such as war, peace, human rights, diplomacy, trade, environmental protection and territorial disputes. These laws differ from domestic law to the extent that there is no global legislature, no police force, enforcement relies on country consent, diplomatic pressure, international courts and collective actions.

International law⁵ is derives from: one, treaties or conventions which are formal agreements between countries that is binding only on parties that ratify them. The example of treaties includes United Nations Charter, Geneva Conventions; two, customary international law or long-standing country practices followed out of a sense of legal obligation with example to include diplomatic immunity, prohibition of genocide; three, general principles of law recognised by "civilised countries" which are used when no treaty or customs exists. The examples of these are good faith, equity, due process etc. and; four, judicial decisions and scholarly writings or subsidiary means. These are used for interpreting law and not creating them.

There are key principles recognised in international law to include sovereign equality of countries, non-intervention in internal affairs, prohibition of the use of force, self-determination of peoples, respect for human rights, and, the keeping of agreement or *Pacta Sunt Servanda*.

⁵ For sources of international law, read Article 38(1) of the Statute of the International Court of Justice (ICJ)

There are central institutions supposedly safeguarding international law to include the United Nations as the principal international organisation, International Court of Justice (ICJ) which is the judicial arm of the United Nations, International Criminal Court (ICC) which prosecutes individuals for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, World Trade Organisation (WTO) which handles trade disputes and the International Law Commission (ILC) which develops and codifies international law.

There are three types of international law to include public international law which governs relationship between countries and international organisations on issues of war, diplomacy, human rights etc.; private international law which governs cross-border disputes in realms such as family law, contracts etc. and; supranational law which is binding legal systems above the country level such as European Union Law.

In all of these, there are challenges of international law and they include lack of enforcement mechanisms, power imbalances between countries as demonstrated in the United Nations Security Council, non-compliance by countries and conflicts between country sovereignty and global norms.

What is diplomacy will include diplomacy, function of diplomacy and type of diplomacy. Diplomacy is the art and practice of managing international relations through negotiation, dialogue and representation. Diplomacy is how countries and other international actors communicate, build alliances, resolve disputes and promote their interests peacefully. Diplomacy is the core of foreign policy, used to avoid conflict, secure cooperation and advance national and global goals.

The functions⁶ of diplomacy include representation of a state to foreign governments or international organisations, negotiation of treaties, agreements or political solutions, information gathering through assessment of political, economic and social developments in host countries, promotion of friendly relations by building mutual understanding and cooperation and protections of national abroad through helping citizens and safeguarding their rights.

There are types of diplomacy to include bilateral between two countries example Nigeria and Cameroun; multilateral diplomacy involving several countries often within international organisations example the African Union, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), United Nations (UN), World Trade Organisation (WTO) etc.; Track I diplomacy or official diplomacy conducted by government representatives; Track II diplomacy or informal effort by academics, private citizens, non-state actors etc.; public diplomacy or reaching out to foreign publics to influence opinion such as cultural exchange, media, sports etc.; digital

⁶ For functions of diplomacy, read the 1961 Vienna Convention of Diplomatic Relations

diplomacy which uses digital tools and platforms such as social media, virtual summits; economic diplomacy which uses trade, investment etc. to enhance and influence relations and; preventive diplomacy which imply early action to prevent disputes from escalating into conflict.

So, what is the relationship between international law and diplomacy? Above all else, where is Nigeria in the practice of international law and diplomacy occasioned by the pursuit of its interests?

They – International law and diplomacy – differ, complement and interact in global affairs. They are the two foundational pillars of the international system. While diplomacy is the process by which countries interact, negotiate and resolve disputes, international law provides the legal framework and norms that guide these interactions. They work together to promote peaceful coexistence, cooperation and global order. They complement each other where one is a means of negotiation and interaction, the other is a set of rules guiding country behaviour, one is flexible and informal and the other is structured and formal, one is based on dialogue and mutual interests, the other is based on treaties, customs and legal obligations, one precedes the formation of treaties and the other when treaties become binding legal instruments, one focuses on practical resolution and the other focuses on legal rights and responsibilities. Diplomacy enables international law and international law regulates diplomacy.

Both international law and diplomacy interact with each other in several ways. In treaty-making, diplomacy is used to negotiate and draft treaties and international law gives treaties binding force; in conflict resolution, diplomats often resolve disputes peacefully within a legal framework and international courts or arbitration may be used if diplomacy fails; diplomatic immunities and relations where legal protections such as diplomatic immunity are established under international law. Diplomacy relies on these laws to function safely in foreign countries; in crisis management and peacebuilding, diplomacy handles sensitive negotiations such as ceasefires, peace agreements. International law ensures accountability and rights protection example., Geneva Conventions during conflict; diplomatic process shape legal terms and legal breach lead to diplomatic fallout.

Of the difference between the two, diplomacy is political in nature and international law is legal in nature; one is secretive or informal and the other is transparent and codified; one will involve compromise and flexibility and the other is based on legal norms and enforcement mechanisms and; one is non-binding unless it resulted in a treaty, the other is binding once established by law.

The interaction of the two are bedevilled by challenges including political will and legal obligation; power dynamics where strong countries may ignore legal rules relying on

diplomacy to justify actions and; the prevalence of enforcement gaps where diplomacy is sometimes used to avoid legal accountability.

In order to get to the place of Nigeria in international law and diplomacy, it is necessary to put this in contexts. The first of this context is to examine governance in Nigeria since independence in the absence or lack of philosophy. The second context is the condition of what in Nigeria is called national security and security and the disconnect with governance. The third of the context is the relationship between governance, philosophy and the actions of the drivers of Nigeria's external affairs. These contexts are instrumental in the search for international law and diplomacy in Nigeria's governance.

Governance, Philosophy and the Birth of Strategic Intuition for the Unknown

I want this audience to ponder on these questions. What is Nigeria? Where is Nigeria heading to? Who, is the audience, has any idea of Nigeria's destination in the short, medium and long term? This is where philosophy, governance and the birth of strategic intuition, arguably in preparation for the unknown, becomes the operational mantra, for every Nigerian, in all spheres.

In spite of Nigeria's shoddy preparation at independence, the independence governments that lasted for six years, began with plans of action. These plans of action can describe as the philosophy or nature, meaning and purpose for Nigeria, as the governments saw it then. There was a development plan which comprised short-, medium- and long-term goals of the administration at the central and regional levels. This was even where there was no confluence on the direction for Nigeria. At least, the regions had plan for themselves. They knew where they were headed for.

The absence or lack of a philosophy for Nigeria which should have asked and answered the four fundamental questions of policy and strategy for Nigeria – what is Nigeria, whose Nigeria, what is a Nigeria issue and how is Nigeria to be achieved – became evident with the death of the First Republic. Nigeria's military rulers changed the trajectory of the patchwork of experiments at the regions and at the centre when they moved into the saddle.

Governance which not only included the management of resources for the benefit of most Nigerians but also the making and utilisation of ideas, institutions and processes and procedures were completely altered by the military. They were altered to suit the narrow and limited knowledge, confine and worldview of an inexperienced military not only in managing their traditional turf of defence and law enforcement but also the political governance of a Nigeria in the making. Nigeria's fault lines multiplied as the reminder of the 1960s unleashed crises and generated conflicts which deepened the philosophical lacuna in the country.

A Nigerian philosophy, agreed to by most Nigerians, would have set the bearing of Nigeria by defining and providing a compass that would serve as the confluence to drive the Nigerian project by most Nigerians in every sphere. It is difficult for anyone of us to answer the question what is Nigeria, whose Nigeria, what is a Nigeria issue and how can Nigeria be achieved. These questions would have served as the policy framework and thus the state – the Nigerian State – collectively agreed upon by Nigeria's nationalities and this would have become the building blocks for the manufacturing of a nation called Nigeria. The first three questions would have set out and constituted the policy framework of Nigeria. This would leave the last question of how can Nigeria be achieved to the strategy, to be put in place by successive government, to drive the first three questions of policy.

In the last sixty-four years, government after government have addressed the strategy part of the question without the benefit of a unified policy that should comprised the Nigerian philosophy. They were either unconcerned and/or oblivious of the need for a policy for all-time. Each administration constructed its policy which was only binding for the period it was in office. This approach goes for the elected and unelected type governments that straddle the Nigeria landscape from 1960 to date. There was no confluence in the policy that should have driven the strategy each administration used. As a result of the total dissonance in their policies, their strategies did not spell security is wellbeing, in all of its forms, for most Nigerians.

The lack or absence of a founding philosophy for Nigeria affected governance or the effective and efficient management of resources for the benefit of most Nigerians across the sixty-four years of Nigeria's statehood. This impact covered Nigeria's internal and external affairs. Each administration came with its philosophy including the Renewed Hope Agenda that replaced the three-point agenda of the administration it succeeded.

Without internal cohesion, the fate of Nigeria's external affairs and thus the interactions with international law and diplomacy, to unleash benefits that will be complementary and thus wholistic, did not materialise. Most Nigerians and Nigeria have been reduced to focusing on now and now only while igniting their strategic intuition in preparation for the future that remain unknown.

"National Security", "Security", Absence of Philosophy and Governance

The lack or absence of philosophy impact governance to the extent that it denies the cohesion of policy inside Nigeria as to affect the domain of external affairs. This burrow deep into what constitute ideas, institutions and persons. A significant impact of this is the condition of what is refer to as "national security" and "security" in the Nigerian parlance. These – national security and/or security – conventionally should governs everything about Nigeria including Nigeria's geopolitics and defence, leveraging on what exist in international law and diplomacy.

Unknown to most Nigeria and beyond the security and national security types that Nigeria's military rule socialisation bequeathed to most Nigerians which confined security to solely the name and work of the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE),⁷ security and national security have distinct etymologies, histories and philosophies that are peculiar to cultures, territories, histories and thus are not universal.

The two dominant genres in the world are security and national security. The first to make its appearance in the 15th century is security.⁸ Security has distinct etymologies, history and philosophy.⁹ The second to make its appearance in 1947 is national security.¹⁰ National Security comes with its history and philosophy.¹¹ Thus, their etymologies, histories and philosophies are embedded in their constructs, contexts and contents.

Europeans in Europe spearheaded the construct of security as the first of its kind in the world. It was from this security that the United States constructed its version called national security in 1947. National Security and other genres of security all over the world derived their *raison d'être* to the philosophy embedded in the etymologies of security i.e., the one that came out of Europe. The etymologies are *securus*, *securitas* and *secure*. They mean *free from care*, *something which secure/condition of being secure* and *feeling no apprehension*. Both the European Security and the American National Security set out to free their peoples from care, provide something which secure their people/create conditions of being secure for their people and reduce or eliminate feeling of apprehension amongst their people.

Nigeria has a perspective for national security without first a perspective for security. Section 5 subsection 5 and Section 14 subsection 2(B) of the 1999 Constitution provide for national security and security. In this undefined, uncharted and ungoverned perspectives, the meaning of national security and security is associational and descriptive of the name and work of the executive agencies of the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE) primarily. The confusion associated with national security and security is heightened by the performance ascribed to the federal/president/external/military/intelligence for Section 5 subsection 5 and the states/governors/internal/law enforcement/intelligence for Section 14 subsection 2(B). The former, arising from constitutional provision, superintending over both.

⁷ Read Adoyi Onoja, *SECURITY: the Known Unknown in Nigeria*, Jos, 2022; _____ *What is Security? Perspectives of Nigerians* (Monograph 1), Jos, 2018; *What is National Security in Nigeria* (Monograph 2), Jos, 2018

⁸ For etymology, history and philosophy of security, read Adoyi Onoja, *SECURITY: Nuhu Ribadu, Adviser on Security or National Security Adviser Saga* (Monograph 12), Lagos, 2025, 16-19

⁹ Security's etymology is *securus*, *securitas* and *secure* and the mean free from care, something which secure, condition of being secure and feeling no apprehension; security's history is embedded the collapse of western civilisation from the 5th to the 15th century; security's philosophy arose from the experience of the years of collapse of civilisation and the need to free European from care, provide European with something which secure and free European from feeling of apprehension. The testament for this is the building European Union alongside the European Commission and their forays individually and collectively around the world to ensure security for their people.

¹⁰ See Onoja, *SECURITY: Nuhu Ribadu...*, 17

¹¹ Read Michael J. Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State 1945-1954*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998 and Douglas T. Stuart, *Creating the National Security State: A History of the Law that Transformed America*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2008

Security comes first yet Nigerians have no idea of what is security in Nigeria. What then is national security without security and in a country that is not a nation? What is national security without any idea of economic security, social security, health security, regime security, psychological security, infrastructure security, and every prefix and all prefixes attached to and accompanying security in Nigeria?

In the military tradition of national security and security, transferred into civil rule democracy and managed by the military, only national security which connotes the name, work and domain of the military (defence of territorial areas which conjures geopolitics) and to some extent intelligence and law enforcement carries the existential weight that sequester most kinds of resources for its resolution.

In the annal of the annual budgetary provision for sectors of the Nigerian society, of the last several decades, the turf called defence which embeds the MILE's perspective of security and, thus most Nigerians understanding of security, with national security in the lead, always come first. The other prefixes to security, when mentioned at all, are for political correctness.

Assuming there is a defined security in the context of security's etymologies and Nigeria's history, experience and reality (HER),¹² national security should aggregate the prefixes of security, in all spheres of human endeavour, especially as implied by the content of Chapter II of the 1999 Constitution. This would have been the equivalent of my forest and tree¹³ metaphors for security particularly under civil rule democracy and governance frameworks. I defined security as wellbeing in all of its forms for most Nigerians. With this, national security would come into being when all prefixes (trees) of security are guaranteed to most Nigerians.

In Nigeria, we have a national security and security framework enshrined in laws, policies and practices based on: one, the tradition of the military and military rule; two, military/military rule-inspired documents; three, a constitution produced by the military for the civil rule system it envisage which guarantee the wellbeing of the military elites, and; four, ahistorical imitative partnership in national security administration anchored on the military/intelligence institutions and the ministry of foreign affairs. The last point is the turf of geopolitics and defence clusters.

In an aspiring democratic country, the above require revision and recasting, beginning at the level of a Nigerian philosophy on which first a security construct would emerge. Consequently, a construct of national security framework that is an aggregate of all the prefixes of security that embody the "national" would be enshrined in policy legislation. Only then can a genuine partnership between the ministry of foreign affairs (acting for government) and the MILE (as

¹² For the concept of history, experience and reality (HER), see Adoyi Onoja, *Methodological Issues in Security and Security Studies in Nigeria* (Monograph 4), Jos, 2020

¹³ See Onoja, *SECURITY: Nuhu Ribadu...* (Monograph 12), 5, 19-20

the teeth of the government) give vent to policies that function in Nigeria's geopolitics and defence clusters within international law and diplomatic milieu.

For now, what is national security and security caters to the wellbeing of Nigeria's external partners particularly the North and the discerning South with national security or security framework acting out what in Hausa language is refer to as "rike kaho wani na tace nono." To butt, not only does Nigeria's prevailing national security and security facilitate the maximum exploitation of most Nigerians by the "international community" with defined conception of their security and/or national security.

The prevailing national security and security framework inside Nigeria ensure the playing out of what is a "civic and primordial"¹⁴ security with the former disadvantaging most Nigerians and the latter benefitting the ruling/governing classes including elites of the MILE.¹⁵

Governance and Nigeria's Geopolitics and Defence Clusters

In my conception of the FOREST and TREE metaphor of security, geopolitics and defence clusters should form part of the trees inside the forest. Geopolitics and defence clusters are deeply interwoven where defence clusters comprised geographic concentration of defence-related industries, research institutions, military facilities and government agencies. These are shaped by geopolitical dynamics and in turn, influence a country's strategic capabilities and international positioning.

The characteristics of the geopolitics and defence clusters prevalent in the developed North includes geopolitics drives defence clusters, defence clusters enhances geopolitical power, geopolitical competitions between clusters, policy and strategic implications and governments' active involvement in shaping the growth and alignment of defence clusters based on geopolitical needs.

Nigeria defence clusters comprised the formal (government, military, academia), informal (think tanks, research institutions and private sector) and international collaboration clusters supposedly working in response to both internal and external threats as well as regional and continental strategic ambitions.

With an economy insufficiently developed and exploited, to necessitate looking beyond Nigeria to the West African subregion, African region and the global South, in search of fresh

¹⁴ The idea of civic and primordial were borrowed from Peter Ekeh's theoretical construct. Civic denote the public performance of security as boots on the ground for most Nigerians and primordial security denote the heist that characterised the fund voted for security. For civic and primordial, read Peter Ekeh, "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa; A Theoretical Statement", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17 No.1(1975), 91-112 and also see Adoyi Onoja, *In Search of "Security Vote" in Nigeria*, (Monograph 10), Jos, 2023, 10

¹⁵ The quest for security vote prompted the making of a political economy of "security" in the Fourth Republic. For this read Onoja, *In Search of "Security Vote" in Nigeria* (Monograph 10) and Adoyi Onoja, *The Making of a Political Economy of "Security" in Nigeria's Fourth Republic* (Monograph 11), Jos, 2024

opportunities, Nigeria's geopolitics is underdeveloped and under-explored as to influence a robust defence clusters prime to governing threats whether internal or external that would likely develop and hamper the attainment of security.

Unlike the advanced world where geopolitics and defence clusters is developed, centralised, thriving and relevant to everyday policies, in the pursuit of wellbeing for their people all over the world, the Nigerian type is relatively new, developing, decentralised, dispersed, not part of a short-, medium- and long-term plan and thus hardly discernible in everyday policies in the pursuit of the wellbeing of most Nigerians. This is one of the consequences of the lack of philosophy and thus security hued from its etymologies (i.e., free from care, something which secure, conditions of being secure and feeling no apprehension) which chimed with security is wellbeing in all of its forms for most Nigerians. In this instance, the forest and tree metaphor of security would ensure that geopolitics and defence clusters form part of the trees and thus the utilitarian values of international law and diplomacy for everyday interaction.

The question remains: What is Nigeria's defence clusters accomplishing that is growing Nigeria's gross domestic product (GDP) in view of the colossal resources – budgetary, extra budgetary and special awards/interventions¹⁶ – they consume annually in the name of national security? Where is the domestic power base without which Nigeria is a toothless bulldog on the international system? Where is the vision of who Nigeria is, what Nigeria want and where Nigeria is going in the short, medium and long terms that should guide the conducts of the defence clusters?

Interrogating International Law and Diplomacy in Governance

The background of the paper set the stage for the interrogation of Nigeria's effective and efficient utilisation of human and material resources in its international law and diplomacy.

In spite of the attempt of international law and diplomacy to provide some form of governance for the international system, the international system is, essentially, an ungoverned space. There are semblances of governed ungoverned and ungoverned governed spaces¹⁷ in the international system. Power albeit grotesque power is the determinant of a country's ability to navigate international space in order to attain its objectives.

Clearly, Nigeria does not belong to countries with power let alone the grotesque type, to navigate its interests which is clearly lacking, insufficient and/or regime-based and thus short termed, in the system.

¹⁶ This include convening the National Security Council to approve fund often from the Sovereign Wealth Fund and the Mr. Nasir el-Rufai revelation that N100 billion is deducted annually and given for "security".

¹⁷ I am working on monograph 13 which deals with Ungoverned Space. There is a section on types of ungoverned space particularly as I attempted to distinguish ungoverned spaces in the North and the South.

Nigeria's weak domestic power base and underdeveloped economy significantly affect its engagement with international law and diplomacy both in capacity and credibility. How has this weak domestic power base and underdeveloped economy affected its engagement?

In the first place, Nigeria has limited institutional capacity as it lacks technical, legal and bureaucratic capacity to fully implement its international obligations. Consequently, this affects treaty domestication and enforcement as many signed treaties remain unimplemented. It also affects reporting obligations and monitoring compliance to international bodies.

In the second place, Nigeria suffers credibility and leverage problem in diplomacy. A state's diplomatic influence is tied to its internal strength. Nigeria's chronic corruption, democracy deficits and insecurity undermine its ability to act as a stable and influential diplomatic actor particularly in global platforms. Nigeria's domestic governance issues reduce its credibility among its peers as it aspires for a different position in the international system.

In the third place, Nigeria suffers economic dependence and policy constraints. Nigeria's heavy dependence on oil exports and foreign loans creates external policy pressure. This can limit sovereignty in domestic policy decisions, force alignment with donor or lender-driven priorities sometimes at odds with national interests, reduce Nigeria's negotiating strength in trade deals or investment treaties.

In the fourth place, Nigeria is bedevilled by human rights and rule of law challenges. Persistent human rights abuses, weak and corrupt judiciary and military/police brutality often clash with international norms. As a result of this, Nigeria is a subject of scrutiny by the UN and AU human rights bodies, diplomatic engagements are defensive rather than proactive and treaty enforcement highly politicised and inconsistent.

In the fifth place, Nigeria depends on peacekeeping and security diplomacy. Nigeria has led in African peacekeeping initiatives but financial constraints limit its ability to fund or lead missions, internal insecurity forces a shift inward weakening regional engagement and increased reliance on foreign assistance for military and counterterrorism support affected its foreign policy independence.

In the sixth place, underdeveloped economy and weak domestic power base makes for inconsistent foreign policy. Without a strong institutional or economic base, Nigeria's foreign policy often appeared incoherent or reactive, if it has one at all. There are perennial shifts in priorities with each administration espousing different agenda thus with little continuity. One evident rhetorical gap occasioned by this is the giant of Africa tag and practical influence.

Conclusion

If conflict is the United States foreign policy's permanent feature to which it explores and exploits international law and diplomacy to promote and sustain in order to accommodate its over forty percent share of the global arms industry, over 750 military bases, thousands of troops in over 100 countries and over one trillion dollars defence budget, what is Nigeria's foreign policy permanent feature to which it devotes its understanding of international law and diplomacy to explore and exploit to the benefits of most Nigerians?

Nigeria's foreign policy permanent feature reflects what is arguably its domestic policies' permanent feature. This is the preferences of administrations' personalities tied to their time in office. This is possible because of the absence of a philosophy asking and answering the questions what is Nigeria, whose Nigeria, what is a Nigeria issue and how can Nigeria be achieved. This effectively produces Nigeria's weak domestic power base and economic underdevelopment thus limiting its effectiveness in engaging international law and diplomacy.

Nigeria may remain active and visible on the international stage owing to its potentials. However, Nigeria's influence is constrained by lack of philosophy, transient state capacity, poor governance and external dependencies to explore and exploit international law and diplomacy to the advantage of most of its people.