

The National Intelligence Agency (NIA) and Nigeria's Diplomatic Relations in Contemporary Times

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Abstract. International politics in an integral component of the international system with each state making moves to promote project and protect their national interest. In a bid to further promote state relations embassies and consulates are established in different countries to serve as formal institutional and symbolic presence of states outside their state hence, overtly and covertly pursuing their national interest. Intelligence, Diplomacy and foreign policies are key instruments in all these processes. This work therefore is an attempt to interrogate the role of the National intelligence Agency in Nigeria diplomatic relations with a view to identifying the strategic importance of this agency while x-raying the political and diplomatic underpinnings that characterise the politics among nations. This paper relies on the secondary data and Gabriel Almond's theory of structural functionalism as instruments for analysis. This paper further posit that the National intelligence Agency (NIA) is pivotal to Nigeria's diplomatic relations and in the final analysis recommends the need to ensure that employees of NIA are experts either in international relations or strategic studies.

Keywords: International Politics, Foreign Policy, Diplomacy, National Interest, Espionage

1. Introduction

It is no longer news that states within the international system cannot live in isolation and this instigates states to interact with one another. The interactions between states are propelled by the desire to promote, project and protect their national interest as enshrined in their foreign policy objectives. In promoting these objectives states devices deferent means, medium and strategies to maximise their relationship. Diplomacy, foreign policy and power are key elements in the politics among nations. These same view was expressed by Morgenthau in his book 'Politics among Nations the Struggle for Power and Peace' when he opined that international politics is about national interest defined as power. Nigeria as state is not left out as far as state relations are concerned. Since the attainment of independence in 1960 Nigeria has established relationships with several other countries in a bid to pursue her foreign policy objectives. In achieving the above, Nigeria has embassies/high commissions in several countries of the world, the Voice of Nigeria was also established to promote Nigeria's foreign policy objectives. More important are other institutional frameworks put in place to achieve her national interest. Diplomacy and intelligence is an integral aspect of international politics. For Nigeria, the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) is at the front burner of gathering intelligence for

Nigeria from outside of Nigeria using diplomacy, impersonation and espionage. The question therefore is how and why will Nigeria use espionage to promote her national interest even when espionage/spy is against international law and even the laws of most states. It is based on the foregoing that this paper intends to investigate in the role of NIA in Nigeria's diplomatic relations

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Issues

Diplomacy: Although diplomacy has been variously defined, scholars have argued that, no general definition of diplomacy can be very satisfactory or very revealing (Palmer and Perkins, 2004: 84). A charming characterization, though attacked to be vague and inadequate, is given by Satow (1966:1), who defines diplomacy as "the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between the governments of independent states". This definition was criticized for obvious reasons – not all diplomats are either intelligent or tactful, yet they all take part in diplomacy (Ogunsanwo, 200:1).

Geoffrey McDermott (1973:37) sees diplomacy as "a science which permits its practitioners to say nothing and shelter behind mysterious nods of the head..., a science whose most successful exponent is he who can swim with his head above streams of events he pretends to conduct". Morgenthau, one of the leading exponents of realism (1978: 529), described diplomacy as "the technique for accommodating conflicts of interest, and the promotion of national interest by peaceful means." According to him, taken in its widest meaning, comprising the whole range of foreign policy, the task of diplomacy is fourfold:

First, diplomacy must determine its objectives in the light of the power actually and potentially available for the pursuit of these objectives. Second, diplomacy must assess the objectives of other nations and the power actually and potentially available for the pursuit of these objectives. Third, diplomacy must determine to what extent these objectives are compatible with each other. Fourth, the diplomacy must employ the means suited to the pursuit of its objectives.

He exhorted that, failure in any of these tasks may jeopardize the success of foreign policy and with it the peace of the world.

However, a more comprehensive definition which underscores its essence and *raison d'être* is that:

Diplomacy is the political process whereby states establish and nurture official inter- relations, direct and indirect, to pursue their respective goals, interest and substantive and procedural policies in the international environment (Plischke, 1977:41)

In the view of Karen Mingst (2004:113-114), diplomacy entails states trying to influence the behaviour of others by negotiating, by taking a specific action or refraining from such an action, or by conducting public diplomacy. According to him, in using diplomacy to project power, a state might:

- Express to the target state, either publicly or privately, unhappiness with its policy choice.
- Suggest that a better relationship would follow if the target state's actions changed in a specific way.
- Threaten that negative consequences will follow if the target states continue to move in a specific direction.
- Turn to an international body to seek multilateral legitimization for its position, thus enlisting the support of other states on its behalf.
- Give the target state what it wants (diplomatic recognition, foreign aid) in return for desired actions.
- Remove what the target states wants (reduce foreign aid, withdraw diplomats, sever diplomatic tie) when it takes undesirable actions.

Foreign Policy: the concept of foreign policy is omnibus and plethora like most concept in international relations hence the differences in the perception of scholars is also manifested in its definition. It is in recognition of this that Adeyemo (1986), posit that the term "foreign policy" has several interpretations or definitions it can be defined as "reactions to external events

which to a large extent affect a country's national interest" such as security of the state, the welfare of its people, maintenance of its unit, physical or territorial integrity and independence. According to Frankel (1975), Foreign policy is a dynamic process of interaction between the changing domestic demands and supports and the changing external environment. To Holsti (1977), it is the actions of a state towards the external environment and the conditions usually domestic under which these actions are formulated (cited in Asogwa, 2009). Both the definitions of Frankel and Holsti took into consideration the role of domestic factors in foreign policy process. It was based on this that Gambari has also argued that the domestic political structure and process are of great impact on the nature and character of Nigerian FP because they serve as the channel for internalization of the international environment and events, thus making them intelligible and of value to the participants in domestic political roles (1980:1).

National Interest: the concept of national interest like most concepts in Political Science, International Relations, Defence and Strategic Studies is omnibus and plethora in nature. Hence it means different things to different scholars. To Neuchterlein (1976), the term "national interest" has been used by statesmen and scholars since the founding of the nation-state to describe the aspiration and goals of sovereign entities in the international area.

To Clausewitz (1943), all state behaviour is motivated by it needs to survive and prosper. "To safeguard its interests the states must rationally decide to go to war. Ultimately war, however, if foolish, for it serves no national interest". To Mbachu (2011), national interest expresses core socio-economic and political ideas, values and aspirations which are well defended at home, and pursued or promoted or defended beyond national boundaries. These interest could be primary, secondary and general interest.

Some scholars have however linked national interest to foreign policies of nations. For instance Norman (1954:75), maintained that the

starting point of foreign policy making is national interest. This was further buttressed by Morgenthau (1952:718) when he opined that as long as the world is politically organised into nations, national interest is indeed the final word in world politics. Morgenthau (1952) sees national interest as aimed "at promoting national image, prestige and respect both at home and abroad". Morgenthau (1973) wrote that "no nation can have true guide as what it must do and what it needs to do in foreign policy without accepting national interest as a guide". To Palmerston (cited in Ukhani,2015:61) we have no eternal allies and we have no eternal enemies. Our interest is eternal and it is our duty to follow those interests.

3. Theoretical framework

This paper adopts the realist theory as a pedestal to aid understanding of this research investigation. This theory was mainly associated the Morgenthau, Waltz, Keohane etc. the realist school lays much emphasis on power defined as national interest. The realists believe that politics is a tool to advance national interest, increase state power, maintain and demonstrate sovereign power. Rourke (2002:19) wrote that "realists believe that struggles between states to secure their frequently conflicting national interests are the main action on the world stage". This theory maintained that the international system is anarchic hence state must ensure that they have the capacity to protect the national interest rather than assuming that their safety can be guaranteed by collective framework. The theory also attempts to disassociate morality from politics. Morgenthau (1986:39) argued that "the state has no right to let its moral disapprobation... get in the way of successful political action, itself inspired by the moral principle of national survival". Murray (1996: 81-109) wrote that this does not mean that realists are amoral. More moderately, many other realists argue that for a nation to survive and prosper in a dangerous world, requires that morality be weighed prudently against national interest.

The basic assumptions of realism are:

- Politics is governed by objective laws that have their root in human nature
- The main signpost that help realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics is the concept of interest defines as power
- Power and interest are variable in content
- Universal moral principles cannot be applied to the action of state
- Political realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe
- The autonomy of the political sphere (Morgenthau,1954:4)
- Promotion and protection of national interest ;
- Promotion of African integration and support for African unity;
- Promotion of international cooperation 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
- Promotion of just world economic order

From the above assumptions of realism one can clearly see its emphasis on power and national interest and the need for states to improve upon military capacity so as to meet security threats and challenges. However, realism like Nigeria's defence policy is highly state-centric and this does not address the current trends of national defence and security. The increasing relevance of non-state actors in international security shows another pitfall of realism that recognizes states as the key actor in international politics. The role of the NIA in Nigeria's external relations clearly depicts the principles of realism. The nature of NIA covert operations shows the extent to which state go for the purpose of promoting their national interest. Though espionage constitute a major offence both under international law and municipal law of most countries, states still employ the secret agents to gather intelligence for their country. This accounts for the reason why realism disassociates morality from politics.

4. The National Intelligence Agency and Nigeria's Diplomatic Relations

A discuss on the role of the National Intelligence Agency in Nigeria's external relations will be better understood against the backdrop of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives and national interest. According to Section 19 of the 1999 constitution as amended, the foreign policy objectives of Nigeria shall be:

Obasanjo (1976) defined the national interest of Nigeria as consisting of four components: namely:

- a) The creation of a suitable political and economic environment in Africa and the World at large, which will facilitate the defence of the territorial integrity of African States
- b) The promotion of equality and self-reliance in Africa and the World
- c) Defence of social justice and human dignity of the Black man, and
- d) The defence and promotion of world peace.

Aluko (1981:265) presented six elements of national interest to include:

- Self-preservation of the country
- Defence and maintenance of the country's independence
- Economic and social well-being of the people
- Defence, preservation, and promotion of the ways of life, especially their democratic values
- Enhancement of the country's standing and status in world capitals, especially in Africa
- Promotion of the world peace.

It is important to note that for the purpose of promoting Nigeria's national interest abroad, the National Intelligence Agency is made an integral part of the Nigerian Foreign Service thereby constituting the intelligence arm of the Service, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs constitutes

its diplomatic arm. The role of the NIA will be better appreciated within the context of its objectives and functions. The objective of the National Intelligence Agency is the protection, promotion and enhancement of Nigeria's security, national interest, economy and Government's policy objectives outside Nigeria (Adejoh, 2017).

Other more specific objectives are as contained in the NSA (1986), are as follows:

- Obtain by convert sources or other means, external intelligence on the activities of Nigerians or any person, organisation or country outside Nigeria, whose conduct is aimed at bringing disrepute to Nigeria and her leaders or undermining the security of Nigeria;
- Obtain by convert sources or other means, external intelligence that is capable of advancing Nigeria's vital interest;
- Identify and assist in the apprehension of persons outside Nigeria believed to have committed any crime against the security of Nigeria;
- Monitor the intentions, activities, and policies of foreign countries/Governments towards Nigeria;
- Monitor any external plans or acts of subversion, sabotage or terrorism against Nigeria, its economy or people;
- Conduct espionage, convert operations and counter intelligence activities outside Nigeria;
- Collect, collate, analyse, make projections/estimations, and research on external intelligence in relation to political, socioeconomic, technological, security matters, etc;
- Provide protection in liaison with host security services for the President, Commander-in -Chief of the Armed Forces and other important Nigerian Government dignitaries on visit abroad; and
- Perform such other functions as the President Commander-in- Chief of the Armed Forces may assign or direct.

In pursuance of the National Intelligence Agency activities abroad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shall provide diplomatic cover for the Agency's staff in Nigerian Missions abroad. Similarly, other government establishments and organisations with offices abroad shall also provide cover for the operation of the Agency whenever the need arises (NSA Act Cap N278, 1986).

The National Security Act (1986) further states that:

The Director-General shall in consultation with the National Security Adviser post such number and category of staff of the Agency as he may consider necessary to Nigerian missions or organizations abroad in accordance with the exigencies of service requirements. The Director General shall on continuous basis identify missions and organizations of strategic national security interest and determine the level of officers to be posted to such missions and/or organisations in accordance with the provisions of sub-section (3) of this section.

In order to foster effective coordination and promote a good working relationship between the Agency and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Director-General shall establish a liaison office at the Ministry which shall be manned by a senior officer of appropriate level to be appointed by the Director-General, and shall participate in all relevant committee meetings of the Ministry particularly those dealing with postings, discipline etc (NSA Act Cap N278, 1986).

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