

# Determinants of Foreign Policy – Domestic and External Factors

- Foreign policy environment connotes the domestic and external variables (factors, dynamics, structures and processes) that determine and motorize foreign policy actions. It is also the sumtotal of the environment within which foreign policy actors operate.
- The foreign policy environment is made up of the domestic and external.
- The **domestic environment** consists of the socio-economic, political and cultural dynamics and institutional frameworks which inform policy choices within a country.
- The **external environment** refers to the configuration of power, the political and economic dynamics and institutional frameworks and structures which define the options and policy choices of actors outside a state's territory.

- Environmental variables incorporate all the aggregate factors, domestic and international, ranging from living to nonliving things that contribute to, or detract from, national survival and affluence.
- These environmental factors affect states and are instrumental in dictating how they behave in the international arena.
- Generally, various environmental variables have had direct and indirect effects on states, in terms of influencing the trajectory of their objectives and the responses arising therefrom.
- Environmental variables can be categorised into domestic and external to depict their origins and effects.

- The domestic environmental variables, in relation to international relations, refer to all the features, factors and forces, indeed the whole ensembles of natural, human and man-made resources peculiar to a state, which determine their national power (Wanjohi 2011).
- The domestic environmental variables are important determinants of the thrust of a state's foreign policy objectives.
- Apart from forming the basis for the formulation of state objectives that guide foreign policy, environmental variables define the tools for their realisation.
- Domestic environmental variables have been identified by Morgenthau (1985) as the constitutive elements of national power. These variables include:

- ***i) Geography:***
- All the physical features that characterise and define a state's territory.
- It includes its climate, the distribution of plant, animal, and human life as well as other natural endowments like seas, lakes, rivers, mountains and land mass.
- Morgenthau (1985:127) has argued that despite advances in transportation and communication, which undoubtedly have diminished their hitherto unrivalled importance, geography remains a "...fundamental factor of permanent importance which the foreign policies of all nations must take into account..."

- ***ii) Demographic factors:***
- The composition of a state's population in terms of size or numerical strength, growth rate, density, and gender and age distribution.
- Large population could be an asset or liability depending on their composition and domestic policy, put in place by a state, for their utilisation.
- The relevance of population as an asset lies in the labour power it provides for economic development.
- On the other hand, the liability associated with large population is the incapacity of a state to train and absorb its population as well as deploy them to productive activities that could add value to a state's economic development agenda (Nweke 1986).

- ***iii) The nature of political system:***
- The type of government operational in a state is essential in determining its foreign policy thrust.
- The government could be democratic and accountable or the opposite.
- Igwe (2002) has argued that as long as a state is a class society, its objectives are not only the product of the ruling elite but also formulated to advance their interest.
- Although this may have some elements of factuality, democratic governments, which operate through elected representatives, could also epitomise elite preferences with the feelings of the masses being at the fringe, in the formulation of state objectives that underpin their foreign policies.

- ***iv) Military capability and preparedness:***
- The formidability of any state is dependent on its capability to march words with action under critical situations.
- The capability of a state's military formation is dependent on several empirical referents such as the size of the armed forces and other ancillary security formations, technology available to them, the source, quality and sophistication of their weaponry and battle-readiness of the armed forces in terms of qualification and training as well as the capacity to satisfy their complex needs (Morgenthau 1985; Nweke 1986; Eze 2009).
- The state of modernity of military skills and security infrastructure is an important determinant of a state's capability to formulate and defend its objectives.



- **v) *Natural resource endowments:***
- The availability and domiciliation of natural resources bestow enormous powers on states.
- It amounts to *argumentum non sequitur* to argue as Eze (2009) has done that “the greater the natural resources at the disposal of a state, the greater it will have influence in international affairs since the resources will facilitate the bargaining power of states”.
- Possessing these resources alone without developing the right technology as well as other institutional capacity to exploit and process them locally might not position a state to operate from a position of strength.
- While African states are home to an assortment of natural resources, none operates from a position of strength.
- This paradox gave rise to such phrases as “Dutch disease” and “resource curse” syndromes.

- ***vi) Socio-economic structure:***
- The socio-economic structure of a state refers to the social and economic forces at play in that state to foster development.
- It includes the structure of its production, social relations and overall economic indices that show the healthiness or otherwise of the national economy.
- A state that has a high level of unemployment due to low absorptive capacity, or whose economy is not effectively in the hands of its citizens or that is dependent on importation for its needs may not be truly independent and may be unable to fashion independent foreign policy objectives.
- The dependency syndrome that characterises third world economies is a product of the incapacity of their national economies to independently fend for themselves.

- Again, the level of sophistication of an economy in terms of its productive forces and level of diversification determines its relative strength in the international arena.
- Thus, a state with mono-cultural economic base, no matter the type of product and its saliency internationally, is structurally incapacitated to pursue a vigorous foreign policy (Nweke 1986; Eze 2009).
- ***vii) National morale:***
- National morale simply denotes the general level of belief and confidence which citizens exude toward their countries.
- It is national morale that powers patriotism and loyalty of citizens.
- As Morgenthau (1985:153) has observed, “national morale is the degree of determination with which a nation supports the foreign policies of its government in peace or war”.

- National morale is dependent on the degree to which a state is meeting its obligations to the citizens.
- A state that deviates from the political typology upon which the citizens voted its government into power or is hijacked and personalised by the political elite or is unable to protect its people or provide for them may not expect high morale from its citizen.
- High national morale is vital for the realisation of state objectives in the international arena.
- ***viii) Domestic institutions for national integration:***
- Most states are made up of various groups which are motivated by diverse interests.
- These divisions could be in the form of classes, ethnicity, religious affiliation or socio-cultural pluralism.

- Every state operates through a constitution or other forms of legal codes wherein modalities for frictionless coexistence are embedded. Where institutions for the seamless integration of disparate interests within a state are not effectively operational, the pursuit of foreign policy might be imperilled as it would be perennially preoccupied with addressing domestic tensions.
- Apart from domestic environmental variables, there are external variables that impinge on, and dictate the thrust of state objectives.
- External environmental variables are the gamut of factors that are outside the territorial sphere of a state but which, nevertheless, have multiplier effects on the trajectory of its foreign policy.
- **External environmental variables** include:

- ***i) Regional, continental and international organisations:***
- The international arena is filled with various organisations which are basically differentiated by size or the interest they represent.
- International organisations operate at different levels: while some are formed on the basis of geopolitical boundaries, others are differentiated on the basis of governmental involvement and yet others on the non-involvement of governments.
- Although these organisations are called international because they operate beyond territorial boundaries of states, their internationality is derived from their building blocks which are the states (Udalla 2012).
- International organisations are effective fora for defusing likely tensions among states and even building bridges among states for a more effective cooperation and collaboration (Igwe 2002).
- Many organisations have birthed multilateral agreements that dictate the trajectory of the foreign policy of states.

- ***ii) Bilateral, multilateral or unilateral agreements:***
- As actors in the international arena, states enter into agreements to enhance their objectives.
- When a state enters into an agreement with another state, it falls under the purview of bilateralism.
- When the agreement is between a state and several others, it is multilateral.
- But when a state decides to go it alone by pursuing its preferences, it is unilateralism.
- An important point to note on the last point is that while unilateralism fundamentally promotes a state's interests, it adequately takes the interests of other states into account in the pursuit of those interests (Igwe 2002).
- The foreign policy objectives of states build upon the positive attributes of agreements reached by states at any or all of these levels for two important reasons, namely for the purpose of preserving the integrity of a state in the comity of states; and for the stability of the international system.

- ***iii) Globalisation and neoliberalism:***
- The aim of globalisation is to erect a seamless integration of the whole world.
- The universalisation of the world coincides with the rolling back of the boundaries of states and the “emergence of a global society in which economic, political, environmental, and cultural events in one part of the world quickly come to have significance for people in other parts of the world” (Tabb 2008:np).
- The logic of globalisation is anchored on neoliberal theoretical formulation with emphasis on free market, free trade and democratisation (Nwozor 2012).
- With emphasis on economic reforms and the expansion of the political space through democratisation, globalisation utilises the mechanisms of International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and World Trade Organisation (WTO) to meet the goals of universalising the globe.
- Thus, foreign policy of states, especially the economic and political components must conform to this global trend to be realisable.



- ***iv) Climate change:***
- Climate change is a direct consequence of centuries of anthropogenic exploitation of nature.
- The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) set the parameters of what climate change is in Article 1 section 2, where it denotes it as “a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods” (cited in Nwozor 2013:164).
- The negative effects of climate change manifest in the depletion of the ozone layers that protect the earth from harmful solar radiation and the distortion of the climactic condition with multiplier effects on the capacity of states to fend for themselves without global cooperation and collaboration.

- As Nwozor (2013:165) explains,
- “The phenomenon of climate change is more like an octopus with its tentacles clawed into every area of development through the environment. The environmental consequences of climate change such as flooding, drought, desertification, soil degradation, erratic rainfall patterns, heat stress, disease and pest outbreaks on crops and livestock impact negatively on livelihoods, socio-economic orders, peace and conflicts, political stability and sustainability of economies”.

- ***v) Food security and poverty:***
- It was held by the World Food Summit in 1996 that food security exists “when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO 2006:1).
- Essentially, food security connotes the availability of food (in the right varieties, nutrients and quantities), unhindered access to it and appropriate use based on knowledge of basic nutrition and care.
- In other words, if there is no food or the quantity is such that there is a possibility that it may not meet the dietary requirements of a state or access is restricted by whatever reason, or knowledge about nutritional facts of the food is lacking, then there is no food security.
- Poverty is generally a state of lack. Poverty comprises many dimensions ranging from relative to absolute.

- A state of poverty is characterised by:
  - ✓ low incomes arising from unemployment, underemployment or non-employment;
  - ✓ the inability to acquire the basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity;
  - ✓ low levels of health and education;
  - ✓ poor access to clean water and sanitation;
  - ✓ inadequate physical security; and
  - ✓ inadequate or absence of peace (2010).
- Despite the progress made to better one's chances of good life and reverse the trends of poverty (defined as living below US\$1.25 per day), which World Bank sources claimed plummeted from 52 percent in 1981 to 21 percent in 2010, it is estimated that some 1 billion people would still be living in extreme poverty by 2015 (World Bank nd).
- The state of food security and level of poverty impinges on the capacity of states to articulate their objectives and pursue same.

- ***vi) Law of the sea and ocean politics:***
- The oceans and seas are very important to states both for navigation and the enormous resources hidden in their treasures.
- These resources have, for centuries, been sources of tension among states.
- It was, therefore, part of global efforts to reduce the possibility of tension, its escalation and degeneration into military actions that the law of the sea was signed by states.
- The law of the sea, which was a product of three UN Conventions that started in 1958, was signed in 1982 and came into effect in 1994.
- The essential features of the law of the sea include:
  - ✓ the fixture of a state's territorial waters at 12 nautical miles;
  - ✓ right of innocent passage to foreign commercial vessels through the 12-mile exclusive zone;

- ✓ free passage to all vessels and aircraft beyond states' exclusive zones;
  - ✓ exclusive rights to coastal states to the fish and marine life in waters extending 200 nautical miles from shore; and,
  - ✓ exclusive rights to every state that has a continental shelf to the oil, gas, and other resources in the shelf up to 200 miles from shore.
- To safeguard poor countries of the world as well as those that are technologically backward, the law designated the minerals and other resources domiciled on the ocean floor beneath the high seas as "the common heritage of mankind."
  - The implication of this is that the exploitation of such minerals will be collectively governed.
  - The law also set production ceilings for such minerals to prevent economic harm to land-based producers of the same minerals.
  - Foreign policies of states must juxtapose all these provisions with their objectives in order to avoid being on a collision course with other states.

- **vii) Terrorism:** Terrorism has assumed added significance which is traceable to the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States. Terrorism connotes premeditated, deliberate and targeted deployment of violence or threat of violence to bring about certain envisaged outcome or chains of outcomes. Terrorism relies on the creation and exploitation of fear as its major tool of accomplishing its objectives (Abonyi 2006). Terrorist networks have assumed a complex web and pose serious threats to states. There have been global efforts to undercut the livewire of terrorist networks and their sponsors. The fight against terrorism has reshaped the foreign policy thrust of many countries, leading to bilateral and multilateral agreements.

- **viii) Nuclear weapons, armament and disarmament:** A major component of national power, one which confers the tag of superiority on the armed forces of a state, is the possession of nuclear weaponry. This understanding underpins the quest by states to develop capability in nuclear power manufacture. What conferred power on, and attracted international respect to, the superpowers of the cold war era was their possession of this capability. The possession of nuclear weapons by states alters power configuration in interstate relations. The potential dangers of unregulated access to nuclear capability have led to global restrictions on nuclear weapons development. Thus, a country with the resources to build nuclear capability for weapons development would definitely have the international community to contend with. Presently, Iran, Pakistan, India and North Korea are facing various forms of inquiries from the international community on account of their nuclear programmes.



- ***ix) Democratisation and human rights:*** Contemporary wave of democratisation is a component of globalisation and it is directed at setting up accountable governments around the globe. The international emphasis on democratisation was due to the collapse of the former USSR and the attendant ideological antagonism that pitted it against the US in the cold war era. Prior to this era, these super powers had arbitrarily supported unaccountable governments across third World countries, and even imposed some of their own. As Amaraegbu (2012:45) corroborates, “the end of the Cold War changed the balance of forces and removed any compelling need to support corrupt regimes for national security reasons”. Thus, the withdrawal of support from most of these regimes led to their collapse and the adoption of liberal democratic system. Human rights are essential components of democratic regimes and are given more attention in the international arena. The particular attention that human rights receive is demonstrated by the activities of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights.

- ***x) Transnational migration:*** The trend in the international arena is the dismantling of restrictions that had, hitherto, made free movement of people difficult. The relaxation of national laws on immigration by most countries, in response to the logic of globalisation, opened up opportunities that made it possible for people to respond to global economic forces and local concerns (Balaam & Veseth 2005). The direct implication of lax immigration policies is the creation of complex web of citizenship and diaspora. The term diaspora is used to denote a community of citizens who are domiciled outside the boundaries of their state. These citizens who find themselves beyond the shores of their homelands form powerful networks that have proved vital in interstate relations. Thus, most countries have miniature replications through the diaspora community across the world. The diaspora have proved to be veritable sources of diplomatic craftsmanship.

- Nigeria is often described as the “Giant of Africa.”
- Its foreign policy is best understood and assessed in the context of its regional and continental ambitions which have been demonstrated over the course of the country’s 56-year history.
- Nigeria’s leaders of all political persuasions have come to see their country as the “natural leader” of the African continent.
- This aspiration to continental leadership, manifest since the country’s independence in 1960, is central to understanding some of the principal features of Nigeria’s foreign policy.
- It is clear from a historical examination of Nigeria’s foreign relations that its hegemonic ambitions have not, however, necessarily led to relevant, coherent and effective policies.
- Examining both the theoretical and practical aspects of Nigeria’s foreign policy is therefore key to understanding the country’s foreign policy.

- The theory of Nigeria's foreign policy has often been explained by Nigerian diplomats and scholars in terms of four "concentric circles" of national interest. According to Ibrahim A. Gambari in his book ***Theory and Reality in Foreign Policy Making: Nigeria After the Second Republic*** (1989), the concentric circle encompasses:
  - The innermost circle which represents Nigeria's own security, independence and prosperity and is centered on its immediate neighbours - Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger;
  - the second circle which revolves around Nigeria's relations with its West African neighbors;
  - the third circle which focuses on continental African issues of peace, development and democratization; and,
  - the fourth circle which involves Nigeria's relations with organizations, institutions and states outside Africa.
- This concept still guides Nigeria's foreign policy priorities.

- **The Changing Environment/Challenges Of Foreign Policy Making and Implementation In Nigeria**
- Nigeria's foreign policy environment has been influenced by both the domestic and international factors.
- Factors that influence the domestic environment of Nigeria's foreign policy include: ethnic composition of the country, colonial heritage, attitude and perception of the elite and priorities which the government sets for itself.
- Other factors include the state of interethnic relations, the level of political stability, ethno-religious conflict, unemployment and other socio-economic factors.
- The external environment refers to the configuration of power, the political and economic dynamics and institutional frameworks and structures which define options and policy choices of actors.