

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Nigeria's Afrocentric Foreign Policy Thrust in West Africa: An Appraisal of Cote d'Ivoire's Political Crises 2010-2011

Bello Muazu Alkali ^{1*}, Muhammad Fuad B. Othman ², Nazariah Binti Osman ³

^{1,2,3}School of International Studies, University Utara Malaysia, Kedah, Malaysia

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*Corresponding Author:

mzalkali@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Over time, Nigeria has assumed diverse roles within West Africa through its Afrocentric foreign policy thrust. The country has actively engaged with multilateral organizations, contributing significantly to the pursuit of regional peace, order, and democratic stability. While literature underscores Nigeria's various peacemaking and peacekeeping missions in the region, that of Cote d'Ivoire has yet to be extensively explored. Thus, this study investigates Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy thrust in West Africa regarding Cote d'Ivoire's political crises 2010-2011. The conflict broke out in 2010 between the incumbent president, Gbagbo, who refused to cede power, and the declared winner of the election, Alassane Ouattara. Therefore, Nigeria intervened and returned Cote d'Ivoire to the pathway of political stability. Accordingly, this study critically examines Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy thrust in West Africa, particularly concerning Cote d'Ivoire's democratic instability in 2010 and 2011. It also employs historical and exploratory qualitative research methods from the highest-ranking secondary resources in the existing literature and adopts role and role-model theories to aid analysis. We deductively analyzed the data thematically. The findings reveal that Nigeria's Afrocentric policy and material capacities played a crucial role in accelerating its different functions in West Africa, particularly in resolving the Cote d'Ivoire political crisis. Thus, the outcome was to restore peace, order, and democratic stability in the country. In addition, this study will benefit researchers in history, international affairs, and policymakers. Finally, Nigeria's recent involvement in other West African nations to ensure political stability is a starting point for future studies.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy thrust refers to the country's diplomatic orientation and strategic approach that centres on its commitment to promoting and advancing the interests of Africa and

Africans in the international arena. "Afrocentric" focuses on African values, culture, and solidarity (Ogunnubi and Okeke-Uzodike, 2016). In Nigeria's foreign policy, the country seeks to position itself as a fundamental player and advocate for the well-

being and development of the African continent. The Afrocentric foreign policy thrust emphasizes collaboration, cooperation, and engagement with other African nations while actively participating in global affairs to enhance Africa's overall standing and influence on the world stage (Oshewolo, 2021).

Although Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy, according to many experts in the field of international relations, has been endeared due to its material capabilities or denominators of its relative material preponderance, it is regarded as having regional power and hegemonic status in the region (Schirm, 2006). This assertion is supported by Nolte (2009), Bach (2007), Frazier and Stewart-Ingersoll (2010), and Prys and Jungfernstieg (2010), who argue that in a global political terrain, a country's economic prosperity, population, and military capabilities are strong indicators of its regional powerhood, which can be likened to the material capabilities of Nigeria in West Africa. However, as highlighted above, achieving hegemonic power status can occur when a country uses its relative material preponderance to shoulder regional responsibility for providing goods such as peace, order, and democratic stability.

Aligned with the above, Nigeria has positioned itself as a regional power with hegemonic influence in West Africa through its Afrocentric foreign policy. This leadership role in Africa was assumed immediately after gaining independence in 1960, as Prime Minister Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa declared. He asserted that, as part of its foreign policy objectives, Nigeria harbours ambitions, plans, and well-defined policies to ensure Africa's socio-political and economic stability (Ojakorotu and Adeleke, 2018; Talibu and bin Ahmad, 2016). Subsequently, successive Nigerian administrations have adopted an Afrocentric foreign policy shaped by the country's material capabilities. Bach (2007) affirmed that Nigeria's engagement in Africa is propelled by its material capabilities, empowering it to bear continental responsibilities for sustaining peace and order. That has resulted in Nigeria being recognized as a giant of Africa and a regional hegemon by its regional partners, exemplified by its participation in various peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding efforts in West Africa. Notably, Nigeria played a pivotal role in resolving the political crisis in Cote d'Ivoire

from 2010 to 2011, where its intervention averted humanitarian disasters and restored peace, order, and democratic stability. Hence, this study seeks to answer the question, "What role did Nigeria play through its Afrocentric foreign policy in Cote d'Ivoire?" By its objectives, the study aims to investigate Nigeria's role in quelling Cote d'Ivoire's political crisis in 2010 and 2011 through its Afrocentric foreign policy thrust. The novelty of this research lies in its examination of evidence from various studies on foreign policies and the hegemonic roles of states. Scholarly works by Okunade and Ogunnubi (2016) and Bakare (2019) are reviewed in this context. However, these studies have yet to specifically address Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy thrust in West Africa, particularly concerning the political crises in Cote d'Ivoire during 2010-2011. Consequently, this study aims to fill the existing gap in the body of literature and contribute to the overall body of knowledge.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Afrocentric and Nigeria's foreign policy roles in Africa

Scholars such as Oshewolo (2021) feel Nigeria has played distinct roles in ensuring regional peace and order among African countries through its 'Afrocentric' foreign policy. This foreign policy gave birth to Nigeria's roles throughout Africa, intending to deliver regional goods and services such as peace, order, and democratic stability. Furthermore, the country's foreign policy goals spin around four concentric circles. The first concentric circle signifies the nation's internal security, economic stability, and amicable relations with its nearby neighbours, such as Chad, Cameroon, Benin, and Niger. The second concentric circle delineates Nigeria's role in fostering economic and political stability and safeguarding the security and interests of West African countries. Third, Nigeria seeks to ensure the entire African continent's security, peace, stable democracy, and the rule of law. Fourth, Nigeria has international ties with multilateral organizations and the rest of the world (Akinterinwa, 2004; Cook, 2011; Apuuli, 2012).

Amao (2019), on the other hand, shortened the four concentric circles into two intertwined ideas: furthering Africa's interest or ambition and well-being from intra- and extra-diplomatic

perspectives and fulfilling functions on behalf of Africa in the global diplomatic arena. Thus, political scientists and international relations researchers compared Nigeria's foreign relations and leadership responsibilities in Africa to those of the United Kingdom and the United States of America. For instance, Ojatorotu and Adeleke (2018) compare Nigeria's foreign policy and leadership positions to the 1815–1914 'Pax Americana' or 'Pax Britannica.' Although Professor Bolaji Akinyemi, cited by Ojatorotu and Adeleke (2018), argued that 'Pax Britannica' and 'Pax Americana' cannot be compared with 'Pax Nigeriana' because Pax Britannica and Pax Americana have elements of colonialism or economic imperialism, unlike 'Pax Nigeriana' that centres around the country's leadership roles and ambitions for the sustenance and maintenance of peace, order, and democratic stability in Africa, Prys and Jungfernstieg (2010), on the other hand, saw Nigeria's Role in Africa as a systematic approach in which the country expresses its hegemonic power status in Africa, centred on the three "Ps," namely, perception, provision, and projection. The clause alludes to Nigeria's supply of goods and services to Africa. This projection represents Nigeria's role in projecting power to its regional allies or secondary states. Finally, perception refers to the acceptance and recognition of Nigeria as a regional hegemonic power by its regional partners (Talibu and bin Ahmad, 2016; Ukaogo et al., 2020). Furthermore, Oshewolo (2021) supported the preceding statement by stating that Nigeria authentically referred to itself as the African voice or the spokesperson of the continent and projected to the world the continent's collective position on matters of international prominence through its Afrocentric policy, which has remained the cornerstone of the country's several regional roles since 1960.

According to Dauda et al. (2019), in 1961, U Thant, the then Secretary General, appointed Nigeria's police commissioner as the Republic of Congo's chief administrative officer, alongside Major General Aguiyi Ironsi as the military commandant of the U.N. peacekeeping mission, which led to the resolution of the crisis and the subsequent peace, order, and democratic stability of that country. Nigeria has since participated in various peacekeeping operations in

some parts of Africa (Morasso, 2019). Furthermore, Nigeria, as a regional leader, asserted its hegemonic power in Africa in the same year by rejecting France's nuclear test in Algeria's Sahara of Africa. As confirmed by Ebegbulem (2019), Nigeria unilaterally cancelled diplomatic ties with France in 1961 to test its nuclear in the Algerian Sahara. Similarly, it urged the stoppage and cancellation of all future nuclear weapons tests in Africa. It conveyed its plea to the UN Geneva meeting in 1961 to reject any nuclear test in Africa. That resulted in a subsequent moratorium on all atomic tests in Africa during the 1963 UN General Assembly in Moscow.

Moreover, Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy effectively started in West Africa due to President Yakubu Gowon's formation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975 (Omo-Ogbebor, 2017). Following the formation of ECOWAS, the organization is saddled with various responsibilities, including Africa's economic development, integration, political freedom, and subsequent maintenance and sustenance of peace, order, and democratic stability (Okunade and Ogunnubi, 2023; Gambari, 1980). The ECOWAS obligations have become essential due to escalating tensions in the West African sub-region, such as civil unrest, wars, and economic issues. Its head of government-mandated the organization to intervene in and restore democratic stability, peace, and order to affected countries, mainly under the supervision of United Nations peacekeeping, peacemaking, or peacebuilding missions. For example, by asserting its Afrocentric role in West Africa through ECOWAS, Nigeria settled the Chad issue between Kougoni Weddeyye and Hisre Habre between 1975, 1979, and 1980 (Akinyemi, 1987).

Similarly, as Western nations' influence in Africa waned in the 1990s, Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy focus helped to resolve many crises and wars in the sub-region. According to Ebegbulem (2019) and Dauda et al. (2019), following the post-Cold War era of the 1990s, some regional state actors began shouldering regional duties, forming regional and hegemonic power among states in the international system. Nigeria, as a regional power in West Africa, has expressed its hegemonic inclinations toward sub-regional concerns through its foreign policy. As a

result of the systematic removal of external influences, the country assumes leadership roles in the sub-region. Although before the Cold War and its aftermath in the 1990s, Nigeria had already begun to assert its influence in the sub-region since 1963, following the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975.

However, its influence was not as famous as in the post-Cold War era, as demonstrated by the formation of a military organization from ECOWAS, known as the Economic Community of West African States monitoring group ECOMOG, under President Abacha's regime, which has been combating and suppressing various conflicts and civil wars among West African states (Ayambire, 2019). As underpinned by Touray (2019), former Nigerian President General Sani Abacha influenced the formation of ECOMOG as a collective security body comprised of ECOWAS member states for regional security due to the rising tension in the region, including that of Liberia and Sierra Leone. For example, during the wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, Oshewolo (2021) noted that in terms of military and financial contributions needed for peacekeeping operations, those countries provided a total of 5,000 out of the requested 6,000 soldiers in 1991; in 1993, the country contributed 10,000 out of the requested 12,000 armies; and in 1996, the country sent 12,000 out of the required 13,000 armed forces for peacekeeping operations. Nigeria spent about USD 10,000 on various peacekeeping efforts. Although the peacekeeping missions successfully rescued and safeguarded the lives and property of millions of people and, to some extent, prevented humanitarian disasters, over 2,000 soldiers perished during the assignment.

In line with the above, Ayambire (2019) and Dauda et al. (2019) justified establishing ECOMOG as one of West Africa's solutions to its sociopolitical problems based on the contribution it has made since its inception in averting humanitarian disasters, ending conflicts and wars, or preventing the spread of wars in West Africa. However, other researchers see its establishment as Nigeria's long-term leadership ambitions in the sub-region (Dahiru Aminu and Raja, 2021). Other scholars, such as Ogunnubi and Isike

(2015), and Oladimeji and Kirmanj (2015), view its establishment as being for regional stability, peace, and order.

Similarly, as guided by its Afrocentric foreign policy and ambition to shoulder and represent West Africa and Africa in a global ethos, Nigeria played a significant role in convincing Western powers and creditors to cancel the debts owed by various countries in the region. Nigeria believes cancelling such loans will go a long way in improving the area's political, economic, and security development. Hence, Nigeria's President Obasanjo persuaded creditors to forgive debts owed by those countries, including Niger, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Rwanda, Ghana, and Ethiopia. Similarly, President Obasanjo in 2003 encouraged and influenced the development of the ECOWAS Vision 2020. The essence of this vision is to improve democracy, good governance, security, sustainability, human rights, peace, and order. (Suzuki, 2020; Oshewolo, 2021). He also pioneered the ECOWAS Commission and Responsibility 2 protection concerning sub-regional security, stability, order, human rights, democratic sustenance, and good governance. Equally, Obasanjo influenced the formulation of the revised ECOWAS treaty and 1999 protocol on the mechanism for conflict prevention, security, and peacekeeping, as well as the 2001 protocol for democracy and good governance. Similarly, these Ecowas protocols endear the deployment of different observers' missions and the fact-finding committee in case of the outbreak of any conflict or war in the region. The essence is to resolve the crisis by appointing mediators, envoys, or official representatives to manage or resolve the upheaval, as demonstrated in Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Chad, Mali, Liberia, and Sierra Leone (Musa, 2019; Touray, 2019; Mushtaq and Ahmed, 2022).

Afrocentricity and Nigeria's hegemonic role and self-perception in the African context

The essence of hegemonic power worldwide is to provide regional or global socio-political and economic stability through sustaining and preserving security, peace, order, and democratic stability (Frazier and Stewart-Ingersoll, 2010). In world politics, a country's hegemonic status is classified as global or regional. Regional hegemons primarily serve as proxies for global hegemons. The global hegemon

utilizes regional hegemony to advance its agenda (Geldenhuys, 2008). Although regional hegemony has little constitutional foundation, global hegemony primarily use them to quell strife or war (Møller,

2009). As seen in Table 1, there are 11 international and regional hegemony.

Table 1: The eleven states with hegemonic influence

Regions	Polarity	Regional Hegemonic Powers
North American region	Unipolar	U.S.A.
South American region	Unipolar	Brazil
Europe	Multipolar	UK, France, Germany, and Italy
The western part of Africa	Unipolar	Nigeria
Central Africa	No local or regional power	NA
Horn of Africa	No regional power	NA
Southern Africa	Unipolar	South Africa
Middle east	Multipolar	Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel
Post-Soviet Union	Unipolar	Russia
Southern Asia	Unipolar	India
Eastern Asia	Bipolar	Japan, China

Source: (Talibu, 2016:59 and Frazier and Stewart-Ingersoll, 2010:738)

In line with the above table, Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy began in 1960. As declared by its prime minister, the country has a clear policy regarding Africa's socio-political and economic stability. Although the country's denominator of relative material preponderances like military capability, population size, geographical location, high G.D.P., and economic prosperity, as well as acquired colonial experience such as economic marginalization and slavery, has served as a school of thought guiding its foreign policy, Nigeria's leaders, including Sir Ahmadu Bello, Tafawa Balewa, Sir Herbert Macaulay, Ladipo Solanki, Aminu Kano, and Nnamdi Azikiwe, asserted that Nigeria's independence was incomplete until all African countries had the freedom to govern themselves. This assertion supports Nigeria's hegemonic status emerging from its Afrocentric foreign policy (Talibu and bin Ahmad, 2016; Akinyemi, 1987). In considering the above, the role of Nigeria shall not be mistaken for that of the global hegemony like the U.S. and U.K., Russia, and Germany, even though they have certain similarities like leadership roles, power preponderance, aspiration, and provision of regional goods like democratic stability, peace, and order, as stressed by Talibu (2016) and which Lemke (2002) expounded further as follows:

"Nigeria may not exercise the same degree of hegemony as the U.S., but it is the dominant state of West Africa, and other states fear its preponderance. Its relationship with its neighbours has been competitive

since the 1960s, when France sought to limit Nigeria's dominance over the region by creating an organization of Francophone states to balance against it. However, Nigeria leveraged its robust economic standing in the initial decades following independence to lead the establishment of ECOWAS, solidifying its position as the preeminent force in both the military and economic spheres".

That is why Nigeria's leadership roles are Africa-centred and as old as Nigeria itself, which began immediately after its independence (Folarin, 2010:219). Moreso, in line with the analysis made through various speeches from its leaders, official documents, press conferences, and parliamentary debates, the country's policymakers, political leaders, and military are conversing with the specific roles Nigeria perceives for itself towards Africa's peace, order, and economic and democratic stability.

Afrocentric and Nigeria's regional perception towards Africa

A country's regional perception by its regional partners helps it perform functions expected of a regional leader in guaranteeing and supplying goods and services, such as peace, order, and democratic stability. As a regional leader, its Afrocentric foreign policy focus has earned it some favourable perceptions among its regional partners. These perceptions enable the country to play roles at the invitation of its regional partners to act where appropriate and bring solutions to their sociopolitical

and economic challenges. According to Prys and Jungfernstieg (2010), accepting and recognizing a country's power and influence by its regional partners is essential to its hegemonic status. For example, African Caribbean Countries (ACP). 1975 engaged Nigeria in negotiations with the European Economic Community (EEC) (Gusau, 2013).

Similarly, after the Cold War, several countries, notably in West Africa, including Liberia, Sierra Leone, Chad, Mali, Togo, and Niger, invited Nigeria to save them from approaching catastrophe. Nigeria intervened multilaterally and brought back normalcy, peace, and order. As a result, Africa's illustrious leaders reaffirmed Nigeria's hegemonic role. For example, the former South African president says: *"The entire world would never accord respect to the African continent unless Nigeria gets that respect; also, the whole of black people worldwide needs the country to be tremendous and develop as the primary source of confidence and pride."* (Talibu, 2016)

Robert Mugabe, another former president of Zimbabwe, supported Nelson Mandela's statement: *"Africa without Nigeria is fallow."* (Talibu, 2016)

Thus, Nigeria's numerous peacekeeping, mediation, peacemaking, and peacebuilding operations in re-establishing order in Africa are evidence of the country's multilateral performance of its Afrocentric strategy, which gave rise to its hegemonic leadership responsibilities. For example, after a military coup in Sao Tome that saw the removal of its president from office, Nigeria directed for the president's reinstatement to state power within a day. It was immediately honoured by the troops of Sao Tome.

Afrocentric and Nigeria's proxy hegemon

Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy operates as a proxy hegemon in the region, and this proxy hegemonic status has two parts. First, Nigeria is a Western powers program coordinator in Africa and a member of the G-8 implementation committee. Second, it promotes global principles like security, peacekeeping, peacemaking, and reconstruction. Nigeria's material capabilities in oil, population, military strength, and economic prosperity have elevated its regional power status to hegemonic status. Western countries see it as the continent's first among equals. (Talibu, 2016; Akinterinwa, 2015). For example, if there is a conflict in Africa,

Western nations will always consult Nigeria first. As a result, one of the reasons the country frequently intervenes in West African countries is the importance of peace, order, and democratic stability. According to Oshewolo (2021) and Talibu and bin Ahmad (2016), most of Nigeria's actions in Africa have always or frequently acted on behalf of global powers, through which Nigeria capitalizes and achieves its foreign policy objectives. For example, the United States, the United Nations, and the United Kingdom aided Nigeria by interfering in the civil conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone and in most other countries in Africa, resulting in the resolution of the crises. Accordingly, Nigeria participated in 25 of the 50 United Nations peacekeeping deployments (Bakare, 2019).

Afrocentric and Nigeria's benevolent hegemon

With its Afrocentric foreign policy and hegemonic influence in Africa, Nigeria gives financial and material support to countries (Talibu, 2016; Omiunu and Aniyie, 2020). Nigeria assists other African countries, mainly through the African Union, NEPAD, and ECOWAS. Nigeria, for example, has signed bilateral agreements with other African countries. During President Babangida's military administration, Nigeria established the Educational Aids Corps in 1986 to promote human and technological development in Africa. Furthermore, Nigeria contributes funds to needy African countries such as Guinea-Conakry, Chad, and the Republic of Niger for economic growth or elections (Stoddard, 2017; Oshewolo, 2021; Jam et al., 2011).

The role of Nigeria in Cote d'Ivoire electoral violence

As a regional leader pioneered by its Afrocentric foreign policy, Nigeria interfered in the 2010–2011 political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. The issue erupted due to the Cote d'Ivoire Electoral Commission's proclamation that Alassane Ouattara had won the country's general election and returned elected (Apuuli, 2012). However, the country has two central bodies with constitutional authority to conduct, proclaim, and affirm elections. The two bodies were independent electoral commissions and constitutional courts. The latter declares the provisional result of the election within three days, subject to constitutional court approval; the former responsibility is to affirm or set aside the conditional

result proclaimed by the IEC if there are irregularities during the conduct of an election capable of changing the outcome of the election (Daniel et al., 2020).

Concerning the above, the first round of the election was held on October 31, 2010, as there was no clear winner in the election, as the country's constitution required that a winner must have at least 50 percent of all the votes cast. Thus, following constitutional criteria, the absence of a clear winner resulted in a supplemental election on November 28, 2010, between the first and second candidates who emerged from the election's first round, Laurent Gbagbo and Alassane Ouattara. As a result, following the supplementary election, the president of the IEC announced the provisional results and declared that Alassane Ouattara was the winner, having fulfilled all of the constitutional requirements and receiving the most votes cast at an average of 54.1 percent, compared to the incumbent president Gbagbo, who received 45.9 percent (Erameh and Ologe, 2021; Nangorgo, 2019). The Constitutional Council or Court, which has the legal authority to ratify and validate the provisional election results made public by the IEC, declined to confirm the results and instead nullified them by voiding the sizable number of votes cast in favour of Alassane Ouattara. The cancellation lowered Alassane Ouattara's vote percentage from 54.1 to 48.55 percent and upgraded Laurent Gbagbo's votes with the most votes. Another reason provided by the constitutional court for the cancellation of Ouattara's votes was the IEC's failure to declare the winner within the three days required by the country's constitutions. As a result, to fulfil the constitutional criterion, Laurent Gbagbo was declared the winner and elected (Bassett, 2011).

In keeping with the preceding, the constitutional court appeared to meddle with the election process by subverting people's wills. This further divides the Ivorians. The election and the ensuing split exacerbated hostilities, leading to the 2010–2011 civil war. Thus, as a regional leader, Nigeria pioneered multilateral institutions to negotiate and settle disputes and returned the country to the road of peace, order, and democratic stability (Apuuli, 2012; Gupta, 2020; Musa, 2019; Daniel et al., 2020).

Nigeria dispatched an ECOWAS envoy to Laurent Gbagbo to encourage him to hand over control to

the already-declared victor of the election, Alassane Ouattara. Similarly, Nigeria influences the multilateral organization by denouncing any attempt to subvert the people's will, as indicated below.

"ECOWAS firmly denounced any effort to undermine the will of the people of Cote d'Ivoire and urged all parties involved to recognize and accept the announcement of the electoral commission's result" (ICG 2011a; ICG 2011b)

When Nigeria dispatched an envoy to Cote d'Ivoire to mediate, the highest court had already sworn Gbagbo as president on December 3. (Musa, 2019). On the other hand, under the influence of continental and intercontinental organizations, the United States, and other Western countries, Nigeria also resulted in the inauguration of Alassane Ouattara as president, as the legally certified winner of the IEC election at the Gulf Hotel. That resulted in the creation of two sitting presidents, resulting in a constitutional crisis in Cote d'Ivoire for having two sitting presidents simultaneously, aggravating the country's ethno-religious difficulties between the North and South (Lemke, 2020).

As a result, in exercising its Afrocentric policy dominance as a regional hegemon, Nigeria persuaded Africa's highest continental body, the African Union (AU), to mediate and resolve issues. The African Union dispatched teams of some African presidents to Gbagbo to persuade him to relinquish state power to the certified winner of the poll. However, the AU delegate could have persuaded Gbagbo to step down more successfully. Accordingly, Nigeria requested an emergency meeting of the ECOWAS heads of government in Abuja, Nigeria's capital, on December 7, 2010. Following the conference, Nigeria's president, Jonathan, read a communiqué on behalf of the rest of the West African countries, confirming that Ouattara was the actual winner of the election and, thus, the president of Cote d'Ivoire. Nigeria persuaded Western countries that Ouattara had won the election, influencing Gbagbo's regime's economic sanctions. America imposed a visa ban, and Nigeria persuaded both ECOWAS and the A.U. to impose an embargo on the Gbagbo regime, prohibiting their member states from establishing any political or economic ties with Cote d'Ivoire under President Gbagbo until he agreed to cede power to the election

winner (Benedikter et al., 2019; Apuuli, 2012). Following Gbagbo's refusal to relinquish state power to Ouattara, Nigeria, backed by ECOWAS and AU forces, he overcame his administration on April 11, 2011, arrested him, and handed him to the International Criminal Court (ICC). The arrest of President Gbagbo cleared the way for President Ouattara to assume. Several scholars have written about Nigeria's foreign relations and hegemonic roles in West Africa and Africa, including Uwakata and Aregbeshola (2023), Bakare (2019), and Oshewolo (2021). However, none of the studies in the corpus of literature examined literature or addressed Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy thrust in West Africa, evaluating Cote d'Ivoire's political upheavals 2010-2011. Based on the gap above in the literature and the need for comprehensive documentation, this research is determined to fill the gap and contribute to the body of knowledge. control of Cote d'Ivoire. Similarly, it was an important landmark for its return to democratic stability, peace, and order (Musa, 2022; Dahiru Aminu and Raja, 2021).

Several scholars, including Uwakata and Aregbeshola (2023), Bakare (2019), and Oshewolo (2021), have written on Nigeria's foreign relations and hegemonic roles in West Africa and Africa. However, none of the above studies in the body of literature were found to examine or to have addressed Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy thrust in West Africa, appraising Cote d'Ivoire's political crises from 2010-2011. Based on the above vacuum in the literature and insufficient comprehensive documentation, this research is determined to fill the gap in the body of literature and contribute to the body of knowledge.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy stance during the 2010–2011 political upheavals in Côte d'Ivoire is examined in this study using historical and exploratory qualitative methods. Thus, the Cote d'Ivoire political crisis emanated when Allassane Ouattara was declared the election winner, but former president Gbagbo refused to cede power, leading to the political crisis. Ultimately, Nigeria steered Cote d'Ivoire toward democratic stability by intervening in this conflict to protect lives and property (Musa, 2019; Apuuli, 2012). Given the above, credible secondary

sources such as books, journal articles, reports, and newspapers were also used to extract substantial data. The data from esteemed books and journals was verified and examined using a thorough thematic analysis that comprised abstracts, keywords, and full-text screening. The books and articles directly relevant to the study phenomenon were selected, and those irrelevant were ignored. The study also applies role and role model theories to aid data analysis. Equally, its findings are supported by literary evidence that harmonizes with these theoretical frameworks and is significant in studying Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy endeavours in West Africa, particularly in evaluating the political situation in Cote d'Ivoire from 2010 to 2011. This study is valuable to scholars studying Nigeria's foreign policy dynamics because of the meticulous approach that was utilized to arrive at its conclusions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

This study uses role and role model theories to analyze the political crisis in Cote d'Ivoire in 2010–2011 and to look at Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy thrust in West Africa. For two main reasons, this study applies role and role model theories. To begin with, we must show that the democratic instability in Côte d'Ivoire was resolved due to Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy thrust. Furthermore, it is essential to clarify how the personal qualities of Nigeria's leader and the country's material resources contributed to stabilizing Cote d'Ivoire's political crisis. However, it should be noted that the dominant rivalry and the unilateral extension of the incumbent leader's tenure have been the focal points of numerous theories attempting to explain several African conflicts (Talibu, 2016). Therefore, this research fills the gap.

Similarly, role and role model theories were deemed analytically significant, as observed by Talibu(2016), Talibu and bin Ahmad (2016), Alo (2013), and Etekepe (2012), in understanding a state's foreign relations and duties in a specific geographical territory. According to Holsti (1970), Holsti (1919), and Prys and Jungfernstieg (2010), every state has its own foreign policy goals, orientations, and roles it hopes to play in the international political system. In support of the claim made above, researchers, including Oshewolo (2022), Haruna (2020), and Talibu and

bin Ahmad (2016), highlight the need to analyze state foreign policies within a particular geographical setting. Thus, Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy role in resolving various crises in West African countries centres around perception and conception and makes the country regarded as a regional leader, liberator, protector, and supporter, all of which underlying the assumptions of the theories and show how states' foreign policy thrust and the strategic use of material advantages lead to democratic stability, peace, and order in the region. For example, Nigeria's participation in resolving the Côte d'Ivoire political crisis and returning the country to peace and stability lent credence to the above assertion. Also, in line with the leader's personal qualities, the role model theory depicts that a leader's unique qualities positively impact his regional socio-political stability. Regarding the above, the main points of the theory show how the leader's character affected the stability and peace in the sub-region. For example, the president of Nigeria, who is also the chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), has a dual role that affects how his

country gets involved in the political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. Bakare (2019) made a similar point, stating that President Jonathan demonstrated his leadership abilities by successfully supporting the declaration made by the IEC regarding Allassane Ouattara's victory over world leaders and international and national organizations and affirmed democracy has come to stay in Cote d'Ivoire. Despite Nigeria's best efforts, Gbagbo remains steadfast in his refusal to relinquish power. So, President Jonathan of Nigeria was instrumental in resolving the crisis and returning Cote d'Ivoire to a path of stability through the UN, AU, and ECOWAS (Aleman, 2018; Apuuli, 2012). Given the above, Prys and Jungfernstieg (2010) argues that Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy and African engagement represent a systematic effort to exercise its influence, emphasizing the "three Ps": perception, provision, and projection. In the face of multiple regional political problems, Nigeria has made it clear that instability in any region of West Africa is controllable (Dahiru Aminu and Raja, 2021; Ukaogo et al., 2020). Consequently, the following diagram shows the basic assumptions based on these theories.

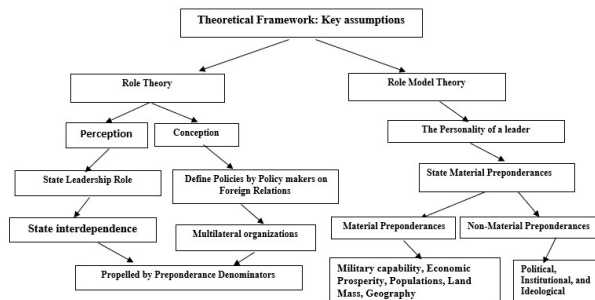


Figure 1: Theoretical model

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The literature reviewed for this study yielded several findings that can be categorized as follows:

Afrocentric and Nigeria's foreign policy towards Africa

Numerous scholars, such as Talibu and bin Ahmad (2016), Bakare (2019), and Sambo et al. (2017), found that Nigeria, as a continental leader with hegemonic power, especially in West Africa, performed various roles in ensuring regional stability. Nigeria's roles made its regional partners call it a giant of Africa. Also, it was discovered in this research that soon

after Nigeria's independence in 1960, Prime Minister Sir Tafawa Balewa formally stated the country's foreign policy towards Africa. The word "Afrocentric" was used to describe this foreign policy, which emphasized Africa. Nigeria's succeeding civilian and military governments have maintained the country's Afrocentric agenda, according to the sources consulted for this analysis (Bello et al., 2017). It was further found that Nigeria's foreign policy remains its primary means of seeking and establishing hegemonic dominance in its traditional West African areas of influence. That has aided Nigeria's national goal of

ensuring Africa's political and economic stability. Similarly, this study discovered in the revelations made by Ade-Ibijola (2013), Bakare (2019), and Oshewolo (2021) that four concentric circles make up Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy. The first circle deals with domestic stability and relationships with neighbouring countries like Niger, Benin, Chad, and Cameroon. The second circle deals with relationships within West Africa. The third circle deals with Nigeria's relationships with the rest of Africa. Fourth, Nigeria's relations with multilateral organizations and other parts of the world. However, this study by Oshewolo (2021) and Bakare (2019) found that the four concentric circles of Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy have been merged into two interrelated ideas: first, representing Africa in a global arena, and second, providing a diplomatic voice for Africa on a worldwide scale.

Afrocentric: Nigeria's regional and hegemonic power

Researchers including Prys and Jungfernstieg (2010), Bach (2007), Schirm (2006), and Nolte (2009), among others, found that relative material preponderance, including military might, population, high G.D.P., and economic prosperity, were the leading indicators of regional power position in the global political system. Hence, Nigeria is the most potent regional player among its long-established West African areas of influence. Likewise, compared to other West African countries, Nigeria's military constitutes more than half of those of other West African countries. As this study discovered, Nigeria has solidified its position as a regional powerhouse by capitalizing on its relative material dominance over the essence of regional goods and services. Another result of this study is that a state with regional powers can attain hegemonic status; according to Prys and Jungfernstieg (2010) and Bach (2007), a state with regional powers can earn hegemonic status if it shoulders regional responsibilities and delivers and guarantees regional goods, such as democratic stability, peace, and order. Thus, this study discovers that Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy, coupled with its relative material preponderance, was a significant factor that contributed to resolving Cote d'Ivoire's political crisis and, subsequently, put the country back on the path of political stability.

Afrocentric and Nigeria's hegemonic position in West Africa

According to the literature consulted for this analysis, Nigeria's hegemonic power in West Africa and its Afrocentric foreign policy prompted it to play an active role in promoting democratic stability, peace, and order in the region through its efforts at both peacekeeping and peacemaking. The country played a crucial role in ending several wars and civil crises, especially in West African nations. Out of fifty peacekeeping missions sent by the UN, Nigeria took part in twenty-five. For instance, Nigeria intervened and resolved the Chad crisis between 1975, 1979, and 1980 between Kougoni Weddeyye and Hisse Habre. Another finding of this study is that Between the 1990s and 2003 in Liberia and the 1990s and 2001 in Sierra Leone, Nigeria was integral to resolving and quelling those civil wars. Other examples of intervention, as discovered by this study, include resolving the electoral issue in countries like Gambia in 2016, guiding Togo through its 2005 political standstill, and, most significantly, rescuing Côte d'Ivoire from its 2010–2011 political crisis, helping to resolve the concerns and lead Côte d'Ivoire back to democratic stability (Apuuli, 2012; Musa, 2019).

Role of Nigeria in resolving Cote d'Ivoire's political crisis

The literature found that Nigeria took the lead in urging the Western countries' continental organizations to acknowledge the election results declared by the IEC in Cote d'Ivoire (Musa, 2019; Mkhabela, 2011; Bassett, 2011). The country successfully influenced the ECOWAS member states to unanimously recognize Ouattara as the victor. Also, this research found that Nigeria, as the AU's primary member and one of its founding members, significantly impacted the organization's choice to acknowledge Ouattara as the rightful election victor and to begin dispatching envoys to convince Gbagbo to hand over power to Ouattara, which Gbagbo declined to step down (Benedikter et al., 2019). Furthermore, this research found that during the crisis, the constitutional court, headed by a person loyal to Gbagbo, illegally rejected and nullified Alassane Ouattara's votes because of purported voting irregularities and the IEC's failure to declare the victor within three days. Thus, this was why the

constitutional court officially installed Gbagbo as president. Concurrently, the research discovered immediately after the swearing of Gbagbo, Nigeria, had an impact on the swearing-in of Allassane Ouattara, the officially recognized victor. It also influenced the subsequent ICC arrest of Laurent Gbagbo, which paved the way to the return of peace and democratic stability in Côte d'Ivoire (Musa, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Scholars such as Bello et al. (2017) documented that Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy has made it a hegemonic leader in the region. Also, its relative material capabilities, which include economic preponderance and military power or strength, outnumbered half of the other armed forces in West Africa. Sambo et al. (2017) posited that Nigeria's material capabilities and the shouldering of regional responsibilities propelled its position as a hegemon. That is why Nigeria, through the UN, AU, and ECOWAS, has been preventing and resolving crises and wars in West Africa. For example, in the context of Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria was essential in persuading Western countries that Ouattara had triumphed in the election, supporting his cause and eventually enabling him to be sworn in as the full-fledged president of the country (Musa, 2019).

Also, within its traditional sphere of influence in West Africa and in line with its diversified functions, Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy has contributed significantly to Africa's relative political and economic stability. According to the literature reviewed, Gbagbo faced several internal and international sanctions or embargoes because of his unwillingness to hand over power to the election winner. These punishments severely impacted his administrative operations and popularity among his supporters, weakening his influence and leading to his capture and sending him to ICC (Musa, 2019; Aleman, 2018).

Consequently, despite the above role played by Nigeria, there is a need for the country to do more to ensure that its member states avoid political crises and civil wars in the future, given its position as a regional leader. Lastly, those in academia and government who are concerned with promoting regional stability and peace will benefit from this study. Also, due to its limitations, the research

mainly aimed to analyze Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy in the context of its involvement in the democratic instability in Côte d'Ivoire from 2010 to 2011. Nevertheless, the study failed to thoroughly investigate how Nigeria has helped other West African nations deal with comparable issues. Still, the study's breadth allowed it to incorporate historical and exploratory qualitative research methods and theories of roles and role models. Therefore, studying Nigeria's foreign policy from a theoretical perspective could be an exciting avenue for future studies. In addition, by conducting this academic research, we may lay a more vital conceptual groundwork for comprehending the workings of Afrocentric foreign policies within the framework of regional hegemony. Researchers in the future should also try to compare how Nigeria intervened in various West African democracies, taking into account the varying political, social, and economic settings in each. By comparing the two, we can learn more about the strengths and weaknesses of Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy toward fostering peace in the region.

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