

Re-examining Nigeria's Contributions to the African Union and the Domestic Socio-Economic Ramifications

Samuel A. Umezurike¹, Chux Gervase Iwu², Lucky E. Asuelime¹, Chinelo Augustine Umezurike¹

¹University of Zululand, South Africa

²Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa

agonwachuku@yahoo.com, IwuC@cput.ac.za, lucky4real14@gmail.com, chineloumezurike@gmail.com

Abstract: While there have been scholarly studies that address Nigeria's diplomacy and contribution to the African Union (AU), many of them have failed to compare and contrast how those have added to the socio-economic development of Nigeria. We encountered a few instances where attempts were made to explain such, yet a fully-fledged analysis lacked in their conclusions. We applied documentary analysis methodology in our review and found that there is a serious misalignment between Nigeria's diplomacy and support for the African Union on one hand and positive socio-economic development in Nigeria on the other. The study also looks at exploring how the general framework of Nigeria's foreign policy goals and strategies in Africa can serve both its national interest and the overall development goals of Africa. We argue that for Nigeria's role in the AU to be meaningful, the country needs to simultaneously revive its internal socio-economic condition.

Keywords: *African Union, Foreign Policy, Nigeria, Socio-Economic Development*

1. Introduction

As an up-grade of the defunct Organization of African Unity (OAU), the African Union (AU) is a continental union made up of 54 independent African states. African leaders unanimously agreed to form AU in July 2001 at the Lusaka Summit but officially launched it on 8 July, 2002 in South Africa (Udombana, 2002; Onuoha, 2005; Gottschalk, 2012; Murithi, 2008). The highest decision making body of the union is the Assembly of the African Union which is made up of all the heads of states or government of member countries of the union. The union has several specialized institutions including especially a representative body, the Pan African Parliament, which is made up of 265 members elected by the national legislatures of the AU member states (see Gottschalk, 2012). However, since inception, AU has adopted some vital new documents establishing codes of conducts and diverse regulations at continental level in order to complement the already existing ones before the transformation of the union from defunct OAU. These include the AU Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (2003); the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007), and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and its associated Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance. Nigeria has been an active member of the union since inception and as such has actively been involved in the formulation, implementation and guidance of the union's policies.

There have been scholarly studies that address Nigeria's diplomacy and contribution to AU albeit many authors have failed to explain how these bode with the socio-economic development of Nigeria. There have been few instances where attempts were made to explain such, yet a fully-fledged analysis lacked in their conclusions. For example, contributors such as Okereke (2012) and Gusau (2013) limited their analysis to only Nigeria and AU but failed to recognize the contradiction of Nigeria's diplomacy and contribution with Nigeria's socio-economic condition. There is no doubt that many more studies are required in this direction so as to beef up the scant literature that currently exists. We are therefore convinced that this paper makes a worthwhile contribution to literature on the subject. This possibility adds some value in enriching the literature on Nigeria and AU with a reflection on how Nigeria under AU platform has reflected on its socio-economic condition. The study also explores the general framework of Nigeria's foreign policy goals and strategies in Africa and how it can serve both its national interest and the overall development goals of Africa. This paper is structured as follows: following this section is a brief description of the methodology adopted in this paper. What follows thereafter are (1) an overview of Nigeria's foreign policy in Africa; (2) Nigeria and the Organization of African Union (OAU); (3) Nigeria's contribution to AU formation; and (4) understanding Nigeria's AU role and its socio-political economy since independence in 1960, and thereafter we drew conclusions. Thus, this study utilised qualitative method of research reliant on documentary analysis to re-

assess Nigeria's foreign policy within the umbrella of AU and how it has fared in relation to Nigeria's socio-economic values.

2. Methodology

This paper depended on a desk-top review of secondary data. We are of the view that qualitative research does not necessarily have to establish findings through statistical analysis or by means of quantifying results (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Donalek & Saldawisch, 2004; Marcos, 2010; Silverman, 2013). Thus the purpose of the qualitative approach was to 'contextualize' Nigeria's foreign policy in Africa within AU platform and engaging in the interpretations of events, actions and inactions of actors that occur in this regard including the interpretation of the actors' views. This qualitative interpretivist slant was based on the assumption that knowledge about Nigeria's foreign policy in Africa within AU could provide human interpretations as social phenomena that may have direct relationship with its socio-economic development (see Zijdeveld, 1990; Wester, 1995; Pope, Ziebland, & Mays, 2000; Snape & Spencer, 2003; Wissink, 2009). The intention was to ascribe meanings to the phenomena through interpretations including especially the events that took place as well as actors' behaviours. According to Marcos (2010) qualitative research accommodates the subjective nature of interpretivism, through its emphasis on the importance of understanding views and meanings that people attribute to social phenomenon. In fact, interpretivists suggest that the interpretation of the social world in accordance to the subjective frame of reference of those being studied is also essential. Thus the study has engaged extensively in the interpretation of incidents in Nigeria's foreign policy in Africa and relations with AU. Needless to mention that the bias of the researchers may have had some measure of influence on the meanings assigned to events and social environment being studied albeit this was in our opinion reasonably mitigated with extensive literature references in the study and such is one of the advantages of qualitative research.

3. An Overview of Nigeria's Foreign Policy in Africa

Briggs (2005), Ajaebili (2011), Gusau, (2013) and Umezurike and Asuelime (2015) summarily concluded that the main anchors of foreign policy of Nigeria at independence on October 1, 1960 included:

- a) The Principle of Non-Alignment: This means refusal to align with any of the power blocs namely Western bloc led by the United States of America and the Communist East spearheaded by the defunct Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in the face of cold war that the world experienced. This was of special interest because Nigeria's independence came at the peak of the cold war between the two super powers. Thus the need for neutrality arose in the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy.
- b) Legal Equality of States: This is a foreign policy principle that Nigeria adopted in order to accord respect for the legal sovereignty of all nation-states in the international arena. This principle maintains that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, big or small should be respected and all should have equal playing ground. This is a principle meant to protect both small and newly independent states from the over bearing influence of the developed countries.
- c) Non Interference in the Domestic Affairs of Other States: Nigeria upheld the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. This principle guarantees the ability of the world order to allow independent countries to determine the course to follow in its national and foreign policy objectives. Nigeria has promoted this principle to a very large extent in the global affairs.
- d) The Principle of Multilateralism: This implies the freedom to seek membership of both continental and global multilateral organizations. It is on this basis that Nigeria became a member of several international organizations including the political, economic and social/religious organizations. For example, it was on this basis that Nigeria became a member of United Nations Organization (UNO) and on the same basis it followed up the formation and its membership of OAU/AU till date.
- e) Africa as the centrepiece of Nigeria's Foreign Policy: Africa has remained the cornerstone of Nigeria's foreign policy since independence in 1960 and as such Nigeria has laid much emphasis on Africa in its foreign policy. Its line of argument/action follows better Nigeria, better Africa, and better world. This explains Nigeria's roles in the formation of the continental organization, OAU/AU to stand as a platform for realizing African prosperity.

Nevertheless, it is generally accepted that a vibrant foreign policy derives its strength from domestic imperatives, that is, from the needs of the country and the populace. Africa has remained the centrepiece of Nigeria's foreign policy since independence in 1960 (Ajaebili, 2011; Gusau, 2013; Umezurike, 2015). Nigeria committed much resource - human and material - in realization of decolonized Africa. This was an engagement it accepted as one of its major objectives after independence. Nigeria furthered its desire for a free Africa by way of full support for the struggle against the apartheid/racial regimes in Pretoria and Zimbabwe (Okereke, 2012). It aggressively championed the freedom of Africans in various countries such as in Congo, Angola and Mozambique when they were under the yokes of colonialism (Ajaebili, 2011; Umezurike & Asuelime, 2015). Nigeria has played an unmatched role in restoring peace to conflict-ridden African countries such as Congo, Sudan, Liberia and Sierra Leone (Ajaebili, 2011), to which it always committed huge human and material resources. Nigeria was a frontline state in support of liberation movements in Southern Africa because of its commitment to what it considered a just struggle for freedom in the region and in line with the core principles of its foreign policy. To this end, Nigeria established the big brother project named the Southern African Relief Fund (SARF) (Okereke, 2012; Aremu, 2013; Adebajo, 2015). This was specially funded from compulsory 'significant' deductions from salaries of every Nigerian worker, irrespective of rank, both in the public and private sectors as well as by donations from ordinary Nigerians in all walks of life, including students (Aremu, 2013). This fund was made available to the liberation movements in Southern Africa. Nigeria further provided scholarships for students from South Africa.

Nigerian artists also contributed in this struggle against racism. Nigerian musicians released songs in support of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. A memorable one in this respect was Sonny Okosun's timeless piece, 'Fire in Soweto'. At the international level, Nigeria provided leadership at the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union). Nigeria chaired the UN Special Committee against Apartheid (UNSCAA) for most of its existence (Aremu, 2013; Adebajo, 2015). Nigeria also championed the isolation of apartheid South Africa in the international community until it democratized in 1994. In sport, politics and economics, Nigeria engineered boycotts and the isolation of South Africa because of legal apartheid in the country (Banjo & Omidiran, 2000; Ebegbulem, 2013; Umezurike, 2015). The actual history of Nigeria-South Africa's relations is traceable to the events of the Sharpeville massacre on 21st March, 1960, when the South African police shot and killed 72 blacks and wounded 184 protesters (see Wilmot, 1980; Igwe, 2005; Akinboye, 2013; Ebegbulem, 2013; Chidozie, 2014). The Nigerian Prime Minister, Balewa, cashed in on the incident after Nigeria's independence when he went to the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in March 1961 in London to champion the move that led to the suspension of South Africa from the Commonwealth (see Aluko, 1982; Ajala, 1992; Ajala, 1993; Ebegbulem, 2013). This move later underlined Nigeria's opposition to legal apartheid in South Africa until 1994 when it ended officially. The moves of Nigeria's foreign policy goal is in line with what Lall (2002) had argued that a country's foreign policy is most often in line with its history. The colonial experience of Nigeria makes any form of domination in Africa irritating to its national interest. For this reason, Nigeria staged untiring opposition to colonialism on the African continent, and the racism that existed in South Africa before 1994 (Sega & Lekaba, 2014; Tétényi, 2014; Adebajo, 2015). The beginning of a new era started in the final days of apartheid in South Africa when President de Klerk visited Nigeria in April 1992 to discuss bilateral issues, mostly trade relations (Wren, 1992). We argue here that Nigeria's foreign policy objectives from independence had obliged it to become an active partaker on all the issues of concern to Africa. It is also in like manner that it has engaged with OAU/AU including through the formation periods. Next section broadly engages Nigeria's active membership of OAU/AU since formation.

Nigeria and the Organization of African Union (OAU): This section critically examines the foreign policy of Nigeria since independence in 1960 especially with regard to OAU/AU. It is particularly important because the foreign policy of Nigeria has structural influence on the principles and objectives that guide its relations with OAU/AU. In other words, we argue here that the foreign policy of Nigeria as crafted by its policy-makers has influence in the behaviour of the Nigerian state towards other actors including non-state actors and international organizations in the global system (see Landsberg, 2012; Chidozie, 2014). A critical review of foreign policy of Nigeria reveals its choice to oppose colonization in support of self-determination and self-rule (independence) as the initial core values and philosophy guiding its foreign relations (see Briggs, 2005; Chidozie, 2014). Thus the best approach in understanding Nigeria's contribution to OAU/AU is to appreciate its adoption of Africa as the centrepiece of its foreign policy (Briggs, 2005; Ajaebili, 2011; Gusau, 2013;

Chidozie, 2014). All the successive regimes in Nigeria including military and civilian have respected and followed this philosophy till date in relations to OAU/AU and in the application of the country's foreign policy in general. One can see that Nigeria has consistently played an unmatched role in the decolonization of Africa, together with fight against racism in Africa and subsequent formation of OAU and AU. As a matter of fact after the formation of OAU in 1963, it became the platform Nigeria has used to champion African course in many perspectives including politics, economics and socio-religious issues.

Prior to the formation of OAU, three major groups existed in Africa on what continental organization should resemble. The radical Casablanca Group which wanted immediate political union of African states and the idea of putting in place an African High Command with responsibility to execute decolonization in Africa; the Brazzaville Group comprised especially former French colonies with the idea of portraying continued French legacy and influence. Nigeria on the other hand felt that the division was unhealthy for African hope and aspiration for prosperity and pursuit of African unity, it then organized the Monrovia Conference of six African States, considered as moderate, on 8th May 1961 which led to the birth of the Monrovia Group (see Thom-Otuya, 2014; Ashiru & George, 2013; Gusau, 2013). Even though the meeting was boycotted by the radical Casablanca Group, Nigeria did not give up but made another effort in Lagos in January 1962 towards uniting the conflicting Groups (Ashiru & George, 2013; Gusau, 2013). The Lagos meeting however presented the reconciliation forum for these divergent views on the continental unity and soon led to the adoption of the Lagos Charter (Gusau, 2013). Interestingly, it was the Lagos charter that subsequently defined the OAU agenda as the promotion of African unity and solidarity among African states, the removal of all forms of colonialism and the defense of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of member states. The Nigeria's view incorporated in Lagos Charter was subsequently adopted as the OAU Charter in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 25 May, 1963 (Temple, 2009). In effect, Nigeria vastly influenced the agenda for the then young organization (Ashiru & George, 2013). As a matter of fact many have argued that Nigeria still has great influence on AU after transformation from OAU because of its huge commitment in its formation and maintenance. There is also another angle that captures the disconnection between Nigeria's contribution and influence at AU level especially as it fails to produce affluent state that is viable in the international socio-political economy since independence.

Nigeria's Contribution to AU: In 1990s, the OAU began to aggressively condemn unconstitutional change of governments in the continent. The steps included declaring coups in the following countries as unconstitutional: Burundi (1996), Sierra Leone (1997), Central African Republic (2003), Guinea-Bissau (2003), São Tomé and Príncipe (2003), Togo (2005), Mauritania (2005 & 2008), Guinea (2008), Madagascar (2009), and Niger (2010) (Williams, 2011). In order to keep the dream of constitutional democracy in Africa attainable, Nigeria has stood up to unconstitutional change of governments in all the countries it occurred in Africa. These actions were in line with and in protection of Article 4 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union which seeks to put an end to unconstitutional changes of power in African continent. Nigeria is resolute in its protection of AU Declaration which proclaims Africa's commitment to democracy with the idea of consolidating this commitment by formulating common values and principles for desirable democratic governance in African states (Okereke, 2012; Udombana, 2002). Basically, the AU views such unconstitutional change as a contradiction of the continent's commitment to enhancing democratic governance and its necessary conditions for growth in Africa (Udombana, 2002). Nigeria's desires to enhance democracy, good governance and human rights in Africa cannot be over emphasized. A major step included especially Nigeria's ratification of African Charter on Democracy, elections and good governance which it deposited to the instrument of ratification with AU (Okereke, 2012). Nigeria went further by providing material and other support to the democratic and electoral processes in Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Senegal, Liberia, Ghana, Niger and other African countries. Internally, the Nigerian government undertook electoral reforms in 2002, 2006 and 2010 respectively with the aim to restore the integrity of the country's electoral process so as to strengthen its democracy which it hoped will serve African interest. The effort of Nigeria in the direction of democracy and good governance is clearly in solidarity with Article 3(g) of the AU Constitutive Act.

During the outbreak of 'Ebola' disease in Africa in 2015, Nigeria deployed 250 volunteers to the countries affected by the deadly virus. These countries were Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. Nigeria, working collectively with the AU, World Health Organization, African Development Bank, Aliko Dangote Group of Companies and other development partners interested in Africa (FMOH, 2015) trained the health personnel.

The supervising Minister of Health, Dr Khaliru Alhassan in Lagos noted that the 250 workers deployed had acquired practical experience during the outbreak in Nigeria as they were trained by the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). This Nigerian gesture was commended by AU Chairperson Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, who also lauded Nigeria for sending volunteers who worked under the auspices of the African Union Support to Ebola Outbreak in West Africa, ASEOWA (FMOH, 2015). So far, Nigeria remains one of the five major financiers of the AU operating budget. As a major financier, Nigeria has full AU voting rights and has been able to sponsor her nationals for strategic positions requiring AU support in various international organizations. The other major financiers are Algeria, Egypt, Libya and South Africa (Okereke, 2012). These five countries contribute 75% of the organization's operating budget. The remaining African countries in the AU contribute 25%. According to a source published in 2008, each of the 'Big Five' contributed US\$14.4 million towards the organization's operating budget. By 2012, these contributions were put at US\$16.7million (Okereke, 2012). The position here is inward looking of Africa to finding sound but common ground in resolving African problems. Judging from inception of OAU and subsequent transformation to AU, Nigeria has been one of the largest contributors to the annual budgets of the organization, paying as much as 15 million US dollars to the running costs of the organization in 2012 alone (Ashiru & George, 2013).

Nigeria's top contribution to Africa's agenda of decolonization and anti-racism was mostly enhanced with the formation of OAU. Using the same approach of African solidarity, the African first ever collective peace-making mission in Chad in 1982 was led by Nigeria under OAU platform (see Osimen, Akinwunmi, & Adetula, 2015). This OAU Peace Keeping Force (OAU PKF) was headed by a Nigerian Major General. Nigeria also paid the bill for the peace mission albeit the initial idea was for Nigeria to be reimbursed later but it never happened. The bill finally went along as one of those big brother projects Nigeria has carried out in Africa. In that mission, Nigeria spent an estimated 40 million US dollars in search of peace in that country (Ashiru & George, 2013). Following the ratification of the protocol relating to the Peace and Security Council (PSC) in December 2003, the then incumbent Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo served as the first Chairman of the Council (Okereke, 2012; Osimen, Akinwunmi, & Adetula, 2015). As the Chairman of the Council, Obasanjo mediated the Darfur crisis in western Sudan. Also during his tenure as Chairman of both the AU and the PSC, peace talks related to the crisis were held in Abuja, Addis Ababa and Tripoli respectively. The Accra meeting in July 2004 centred basically on Côte d'Ivoire and Sudan with President Obasanjo as AU chairman, Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General, and other prominent African leaders in attendance. The aim was to discuss peace initiatives in both countries. Obasanjo took further steps by appointing his predecessor, Abdulsalaam Abubakar as his peace envoy to Sudan and Chad (Okereke, 2012; Osimen et al., 2015).

Another major turning point of Nigeria's contribution to AU projects in Africa included the formation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Nigeria and South Africa worked together tirelessly with other countries to develop the initiative adopted at the OAU Summit held in Lusaka, Zambia in July 2001. There are some speculations that the adopted name (NEPAD) was suggested by Nigeria. Arguably, the success of this mechanism, NEPAD and added to African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) provided both vigour and meaningful direction for the adoption of the Peace and Security Commission in the new AU Commission. All these led to the eventual creation of an AU Standby Force to intervene when necessary, in crisis situations in Africa (Kioko, 2013). The NEPAD as an organ of the AU is a strategic policy framework for removing poverty in Africa with idea of putting the continent on the road to sustainable socio-economic growth and development. The aim is to take Africa out of marginalization and exclusion in power configuration in global affairs (Gusau, 2013). According to Gusau (2013), the NEPAD derives its sustenance from the trio of Lagos Plan Action (LPA), the Final Act of Lagos (1980) and the Abuja Treaty (1991). All the 3 continental documents were drafted and finalized in Nigeria using Nigeria's human and material resources. For Nigeria's role during the formative era of the AU, it chaired both the AU and the steering and implementation committee of the NEPAD from 2004-2006 (Gusau, 2013). Indeed, Nigeria was instrumental in the formation of Africa's new development initiative, NEPAD in 2001, and its governance tool; APRM in 2003 (Chidozie, 2014).

Nigeria produced the draft Protocol on Peace and Security, apart from the initial draft Rules of Procedure of the Executive Council, the Permanent Representatives Committee and the Statute of the AU Commission which were finally adopted with minor changes. Nigeria has always been a member of OAU Commissions on Mediation, Reconciliation and Arbitration charged with dealing with other disputes on the African continent (Ashiru & George, 2013). All the contributions are in pursuit of the dreams of the founding fathers of the OAU

of the need for Africans to play a major role in resolving conflicts on the continent. Good examples of Nigeria's roles in this direction in Africa include its peace efforts in Liberia through ECOMOG in 1990s, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Sudan, DRC and several others (see Williams, 2011; Okereke, 2012; Tétényi, 2014). These contributions have earned Nigeria the respect of the international community especially considering the financial, material and personnel burden it has borne in this direction. Our argument here is that Nigeria's sacrifices for the peace, security and unity of the continent is often at the detriment of her national interests. Okereke (2012) pointed out that Nigeria has steadily committed itself to Articles 3 and 4 of the AU Constitutive Act which contain the objectives and principles of the organization respectively. Nigeria has engaged with peace and security issues on the continent, including the pursuit of integration and development in Africa (Okereke, 2012). Consequently Nigeria has hosted important AU meetings, including especially the 4th AU summit, in 2005 in Abuja and the 44th session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR) in Abuja in November 2008. In August 2004, the AU PSC headed by Obasanjo held peace talks in Abuja, Nigeria between the government of Sudan and rebels in Darfur in order to prevent UN sanctions on Sudan (Okereke, 2012; Abdulwaheed, 2012; Ebegebulem, 2012). This round of talks which involved Nigeria in several dimensions led to the adoption of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) on 5th May, 2006 (Okereke, 2005). Nigeria has been actively involved in the implementation of Africa's Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). Nigeria takes part in the AU Capacity building exercise for the military, police and civilian components of the African Standby Force (ASF) which is an integral part of APSA (Okereke, 2012; Chergui, & Dewar, 2014). Nigeria's National Defense College, Abuja remains AU's centre of excellence in the training of Peace Support Operations (PSOs) at the strategic level. The exercises and training remain vital in the pursuit of one of AU's objectives particularly peace and security in Africa. In order to legitimise its own effort in African security, Nigeria's claim has been that it is in control of its internal security threats yet it has recently accepted multilateral actions against Boko Haram.

4. Understanding Nigeria's AU Role and Nigeria's Socio-Political Economy

Nigeria's continuous big brother role in Africa especially under AU platform has been contentious because there is agreeable misalignment between the socio-political economy of the country and its Afrocentric foreign policy. Some critics are of the view that Nigeria's unmatched role under AU platform is a typical pretence of great power status for the country when in reality its domestic socio-economic realities point to a different direction; such syndromes as mass poverty, corruption, political instability and widespread infrastructural decay contradict Nigeria's pivotal role in AU (see Ukeje, 2000). Many on the other hand also argue that Nigeria is an affluent state in Africa and it has the clarion obligation of assisting its neighbours and in turn Nigeria would place itself in a position of strength in order to realize its foreign policy objectives for the service of its national interest (see Okereke, 2012). Notwithstanding, many have argued that Nigeria has not utilized its full potentials since independence from Great Britain on the 1st of October, 1960 to the benefit of the country (see Ogbeidi, 2012; Balkaran, 2011). There is a wide range of problems in the socio-economic system of the country. These include particularly poverty, decay of public infrastructure, military establishment in politics and economics, leadership failure and subsequent corruption prevalent in the country (see Maiangwa, 2012; Ogbeidi, 2012; David, Asuelime & Onapajo, 2015). These factors have plunged Nigerian state into several political crises including especially the three year civil war from 1967 - 1970, tribal riots and counter religious riots. Others include June 12, 2003 presidential election crises, Niger-Delta militancy and Boko Haram terrorism. As a result, Nigeria has continued to be characterized by numerous political violence culture mostly directed at the socio-political system to the extent that the country continues to drift towards the wrong end of the annual Failed State Index produced by Foreign Policy Magazine (see David et al., 2015). In an attempt to explore the socio-economic condition of Nigeria in the wave of security threats by Boko Haram, David et al. (2015) provided the following general framework for analysis and description of its political-economy of Nigeria:- the nature of state economic symbiosis, the oil-centric economy, corruption among the elites, the economic crises in Nigeria, and high poverty level. For clarity on Nigerian socio-political economy, the analysis of this section on Nigerian socio-political economy is divided into two sub-headings; the state and economic symbiosis and oil-centric economy.

a. The state and economic symbiosis: The state is distinguished from all other groups in the society especially because of its ability to monopolize the use of force to prevent anarchy in society particularly in relation to other groups (David et al., 2015). This state monopoly of force and legitimate use of same to

provide security in order to maintain cohesion in the society is indeed based on its acceptable level of sovereignty. In the state's exercise of its authority, sovereignty largely depends upon how it manages all the other groups or forces in the society to enhance economic growth and stability. Thus David et al. (p.40) asserted: "On the one hand, the survival of the state in carrying out its responsibilities largely depends on how it effectively manages its economy, that is, the production and consumption of goods and services in a given community. The reasons are not far-fetched; the state requires a strong economy for its continual functioning."

In the case of Nigeria since independence in 1960, it has continued to see the loss of its economic and political leverage that was predicted to have the capacity to catapult African socio-political economy into a new level in the international political economy. Nigerian economy is bedridden with neo-imperialism largely because of its structural asymmetries of Western oriented unequal exchange trade pattern. It is noteworthy that this systematic unequal exchange was already established in Nigeria before its independence from Great Britain. Western multi-national companies determined the structure of the colonial Nigerian economy, a structure largely geared towards maximizing the selfish interest of the British economy at the expense of objective interests of Nigerians (David et al., 2015; Chidozie, 2014). We argue here that one of the major causes of Nigeria's poor economic growth is hanging on neo-imperialism through consolidated unequal exchange between the Nigerian developing economy and the developed capitalist Britain and its Western allies. Thus Nigeria's continuous push for African unity and progress under the umbrella of AU may not deliver much change in Africa because of the structural contradictions in Nigeria's political economy. Effectively Nigeria state has not been a good example in terms of stability including in politics, economics and socio-cultural cohesion.

b. The oil-centric economy: This is a tendency that has reduced Nigerian economy into a mono-cultural economy with serious negative economic disadvantage where other economic sectors are neglected. Prior to the discovery of petroleum in commercial quantity in Nigeria, it was one of the world's leading producers of groundnut, cocoa, rubber, palm tree product, hides/skin, and cotton. In fact, before the emergence of its oil-dependent economy in the 1970s, Nigeria was an agriculture-based economy as agriculture accounted for over 85 % of the nation's total export (David et al., 2015). As the mainstay of the national economy, accounting for almost 60% and over 70% of the nation's GDP and total export earnings respectively, in the 1960s; the agricultural sector not only provided employment for over 75% of the population, but also funded notable national development projects (Ileso, 2000). However, the discovery of oil in commercial quantity in Nigeria led to the neglect of virtually every other economic sector of Nigerian economy including solid minerals. This situation which spans especially from 1970s ultimately led to serious economic crises ranging from the 1980s, and the consequence of its mismanagement is embedded particularly in the macro-economic and macro-social implications of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) (David et al., 2015). This programme was a complete failure in Nigeria both at policy formulation and implementation level. The situation has led to high levels of poverty in Nigeria which seem to have defied all economic measures including especially the SAP. Accordingly, the basis and objectives of post independent Nigerian Foreign Policy makes its participation in global and African regional PSOs inevitable. Thus, it has contributed both personnel and other resources in peace operations especially in Africa. Nigeria's effort in peace building and peacekeeping have been felt at the continental level in Congo, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sudan, and Ivory Coast. Beyond African continent, it has participated in peace building in Lebanon, former Yugoslavia and in Kuwait (Sule, 2013). As at 2013, it was recorded that Nigeria had contributed armed military contingents, unarmed military observers, military staff officers, uniformed police units and police advisors as well as civilian experts to more than 40 UN, OAU/AU and ECOWAS missions (Sule, 2013). Nigeria's notable participation in international peacekeeping often earns its praise at both continental and global level. It has incurred human, material and financial pressure on Nigerian socio-political economy (Sule, 2013). Noteworthy is the opinion held by some that Nigeria fails to take advantage of its active participation in the numerous peacekeeping operations around the world by not getting commensurate economic, military and political remuneration for its involvement.

5. Conclusion

Nigeria has been playing an unmatched role in Africa since its independence in 1960 including especially its role in the eradication of colonialism in Africa and racism in the continent. Nigeria gave support to liberation movements in the continent. The measure of support it provided to freedom fighters in Africa is exemplified in the extra-ordinary role it played in bringing to an end apartheid regime in South Africa. Nigeria provided material support and finance to anti-apartheid movements throughout the struggle. Nigeria's foreign policy revolves around Africa as the centrepiece and it has remained so from regime to regime. For this purpose Nigeria played a crucial role in the formation of the OAU. Nigeria's ability to mediate conflicts in the continent was instrumental to the formation of the group. From formation, Nigeria has continued to play major roles in Africa through the organization including the promotion of peace in the continent. Thus Nigeria's peace role in Africa cannot be over emphasized because it spans even beyond its immediate sub-region including under AU and UN. Nigeria also played vital roles in the successful transformation of OAU to AU. It has also continued to play vital roles in the maintenance of the group; such important role could be seen from its contribution to the formation of both NEPAD and APRM. Nigeria has also been active in the pursuance of AU goals in Africa including the implementation of its charters. For example it has played major roles in the pursuance of democracy in the continent despite its own democracy being fragile. There is a clear disconnect between Nigeria's role under AU and the socio-economic development of Nigeria. For example Nigeria's political system remains fragile while its role under AU presents the state of Nigeria as one with strength and might. Lack of stability in Nigeria's political system could be exemplified in the numerous socio-economic problems in the country; including especially the civil war from 1967-1960, religious riots, Niger-delta militant activities and the current Boko Haram insurgencies and threats in the country. Other socio-economic problems of Nigeria include poverty, corruption and lack of purposeful leadership in the country. Essentially, Nigeria has not been able to transform its role under AU to its national benefit.

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