

MIGRATION AND FOREIGN POLICY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined Migration and Foreign Policy in Nigeria. Nigeria's foreign policy progressively integrates migration via diaspora diplomacy on an international level. The Nigerian diaspora, one of the largest in Africa, is recognised as a crucial asset for national development through remittances, skill transfer, and investment. The study is anchored on Neoclassical Realism, a theory that bridges systemic pressures in the international system with domestic-level factors in shaping state behavior. Secondary sources of data was used in the paper. It concluded that Migration has become a key factor in Nigeria's foreign policy, shaping policy formulation and diplomatic engagement. Commitments to regional integration, diaspora engagement, and citizen protection show its link to national interest. Meanwhile, pressures from destination states and multilateral actors have integrated migration management into diplomacy, producing a foreign policy marked by cooperation, negotiation, and tension. The paper recommends that Nigeria should develop a clearly articulated migration-focused foreign policy framework that aligns diaspora engagement, consular protection, and regional mobility commitments with broader national development goals. The federal government should strengthen diaspora diplomacy by expanding the capacity of Nigerian embassies to respond to migrant welfare concerns, especially in countries with large Nigerian populations. Nigeria should pursue balanced international cooperation on migration that prioritizes shared responsibility.

Keywords: Migration, Foreign Policy, Colonial Legacies, Regional Integration, Economic Fluctuations.

DOI: 10.31039/bjir.v3i10.102

1. INTRODUCTION

Migration takes a poise place in the foreign policy of Nigeria due to the size of the country in terms of population, geography, and the long history of transnational migration. Nigeria has served as an important source and destination of migrants in West Africa due to the impacts of colonialism, economic shocks, political insecurities and regional integration courtesy of

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The foreign policy of Nigeria has been a reflection of the migration dynamics of the country especially in its devotion to African unity, unrestricted movement of human beings, and the safeguarding of the Nigerians in the foreign countries since gaining independence in 1960 (Adebayo, 2010). These theories have informed the Nigerian relationship with the neighbours and other partners in the international system. The free movement of people, residence, and establishment was another type of migration that Nigerian foreign policy has been endorsing in the West African subregion through the ECOWAS Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, Residence, and Establishment. This protocol concurs with the overall foreign policy mission of Nigeria; that of regional integration and Africa leadership. Nigeria has sometimes been forced by economic recessions and internal demands to resort to restrictive actions like mass deportation of illegal migrants in 1983 and 1985, a factor that indicates the conflict between regional interests and national needs (Adepoju, 2005). The cases highlighted here point to the fact that migration has a constant impact on the foreign policies and regional positioning of Nigeria. The diaspora diplomacy on the global level has increasingly influenced the foreign policy of Nigeria in terms of migration. Nigerian diaspora is one of the biggest African diasporas, known to be an important asset to the development of the nation through the remittances, transfer of skills, and investments. In the foreign policy formulation, the Nigerian government has involved the diaspora in its policy making processes, as witnessed in the formation of the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM) and the recognition of the diaspora as the sixth geopolitical zone (Onyejekwe, 2009). Nigerian diplomatic missions are increasingly engaging in consular protection, crisis evacuation and lobbying of xenophobic attacks on Nigerians abroad, especially South Africa. Migration has been critical in Nigeria in particular with regard to relations with outside forces including the European Union, which is due to issues of irregular migration, human trafficking, and repatriation accords. Migration control is often associated with development aid, border control, and even security cooperation, which focuses on migration as a diplomatic challenge and a bargaining tool in the foreign policies of Nigeria (Adepoju & van der Wiel, 2010). These encounters create questions on sovereignty, developmental agenda and the externalization of migration management. Despite the fact that migration has increasingly gained relevance in the foreign policy of Nigeria, scholarly studies have attached more relevance to remittances or irregular migration, and without giving much emphasis to the role of migration in shaping the diplomatic strategy and decision-making. This gap points at the necessity of a special investigation of the migration and foreign policy in Nigeria, namely to realize how the state balances the regional mandate, diasporic concerns, and

external forces in its changing foreign policy process. It is against this background that the study raises the following research questions.

How has migration influenced the formulation and implementation of Nigeria's foreign policy?

To what extent have international pressures and cooperation on migration management shaped Nigeria's diplomatic relations?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Migration

Iheanacho and Ughaerumba (2015) contend that migration originates from the first humans on Earth. Migration has demonstrated several trends, including the slave trade, colonialism, urbanisation, industrialisation, and globalisation. The relocation of humans from one place to another has become a common practice. We can trace the history of international migration in Nigeria from the precolonial era, especially during the slave trade, to the colonial and post-colonial epochs. During that period, the entity currently recognised as Nigeria functioned within the framework of kingdoms and empires rather than as a nation-state. This environment made it difficult to classify as either an internal or international structure. We must recognise that this era is closely associated with migration throughout Africa, especially in Nigeria. Migration during these epochs was both compelled and voluntary. In Nigeria throughout the 1960s, international migration became a significant trend, reaching its zenith as Nigerians and other Africans emigrated to Europe. Simultaneously, South-South migration routes were prominent, with Africans moving to other surrounding West African republics mostly for trade, indicating regional integration.

Muhammad (2021) defined migration as the movement of an individual or group from one geographical area to another across an administrative or political boundary, with the aim of establishing residence either permanently or temporarily in a region different from their origin. Migration is the movement of individuals from one geographical area to another, usually with the aim of establishing permanent or semi-permanent residence, often across political boundaries. Migration denotes the movement of individuals from one place to another, either permanently, leading to settlement, or temporarily, with the intention of returning to their

former abode after a specified period. The phenomenon of migration has been a defining feature of geography since antiquity. In ancient times, individuals relocated in search of better agricultural land, more fruitful hunting grounds, improved fishing prospects, prosperous trade, and as refugees from hostile armed forces. Dahiru, 2017. Okeoghene (2017) noted that historically, Africans have migrated across many regions as cattle herders, traders, invaders, or refugees.

A substantial migration has transpired in the West Africa subregion owing to economic, social, and political challenges. This phenomenon predates the independence of African nations and the establishment of international boundaries, which gained prominence in 1884 and culminated in the partition of Africa at Berlin. The divide enforced by colonial authorities limited the unrestricted flow of individuals and goods across borders, establishing various restrictions that required certain protocols for the entry of non-citizens. Nonetheless, despite these regulatory measures, unauthorised immigrants continue to traverse international boundaries, primarily through illicit channels or entry ports.

Foreign policy

Foreign policy is a vital component of international relations with considerable ramifications for the global political arena. It pertains to a state's strategy for attaining its national goals and objectives within the international system. The examination of foreign policy is to comprehend the interactions between states and non-state entities within the global context. Foreign policy is a term frequently employed in political science, history, international relations, and diplomacy to denote the relationship between nation-states. For a comprehensive comprehension of the notion, Adnan (2020) posits that it is essential to deconstruct it into foreign and policy components. She defines Policy as “a decision or a guideline for selecting actions to attain one’s objectives.” “Foreign refers to anything outside the state, encompassing regions where the state lacks authority over territory and individuals.” Foreign policy, in essence, is a framework for selecting activities beyond national borders to attain objectives(Adnan , 2020). Ibrahim (2021) contend that policy may pertain to governmental entities, private sector organisations, groups, individuals, and states. They emphasised the inclusion of presidential executive orders, company policies, and parliamentary regulations. According to Ezirim (2021), foreign policy is defined as a set of acts undertaken by a government concerning defence, security, international political relations, and international economic interactions. It is

the process through which a state engages with other governments, non-governmental organisations, international organisations, and specific individuals.

Adeniran (2009) defines foreign policy as comprising three aspects. The overall orientation and policy aim of one country towards another. The second element is the objective that a nation aims to attain in its interactions with other nations. The third component of foreign policy is the methodology for attaining specific goals or objectives. Foreign policy encompasses objectives, principles, and various instruments employed by the government to establish ties with other nations. Foreign policy arises from interactions within domestic and international contexts. It is frequently articulated specifically for the advancement and protection of national interests, which encompass: the preservation of national sovereignty; the defence of territorial integrity; the promotion of economic, military, and diplomatic interests; and the augmentation and sustenance of power and prestige to influence international occurrences and convey one's capabilities to both potential and actual allies and adversaries (Dauda, Adie, and Nwokedi, 2018).

Background to Nigeria's Foreign Policy

The history of Nigeria's foreign policy is mostly attributed to Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the nation's inaugural Prime Minister and Head of Government from October 1960 to January 1966. It is found in the numerous notable speeches he delivered prior to and following Nigeria's independence. These speeches comprise his declaration in the House of Representatives on August 20, 1960; his Independence Day Address on October 1, 1960; and his Acceptance Speech upon Nigeria's admission to the United Nations in New York on October 8, 1960. These lectures set the key concepts that would govern and shape Nigeria's external relations and its stance towards international organisations post-independence. Nigeria has subsequently conducted its foreign policy in accordance with the fundamental principles and objectives articulated by the Prime Minister. Ajaebili (2011) observed that scholars widely concur on the fundamental ideas of Nigeria's foreign policy derived from the speeches as follows: The Principle of Non-Alignment Jurisdictional Parity Among States Non-Interference in the Internal Affairs of All Other Nations The Principle of Multilateralism: Africa as the Foundation of Nigeria's Foreign Relations (Afrocentrism) The aforementioned concepts were subsequently incorporated into Section 19 of the nation's 1960 independence constitution and have been examined and upheld over time in the 1999 constitution. Section 19(1) of the 1999 Constitution delineates Nigeria's five fundamental foreign policy priorities: (1) adherence to

non-alignment principles; (2) acknowledgement of the legal equality, political independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of all nations; (3) observance of non-interference in the internal matters of other states; (4) pursuit of membership in international organisations to foster functional cooperation; and (5) positioning Africa as the focal point of Nigeria's foreign policy (Amao, & Okeke-Uzodike, 2015).

Evaluation of Nigeria's Foreign Policy Principles

Nigeria's foreign policy since independence has been examined from several viewpoints. Certain scholars argue that Nigeria's foreign policy is perpetually evolving due to internal and external dynamics associated with different administrations (Gubak, 2015), while others assert that despite frequent regime changes, the essence of Nigeria's foreign policy has remained consistent. Despite the many perspectives of researchers regarding the essence of Nigeria's foreign policy, the foundational ideas guiding the country's foreign policy have remained consistent. Ogunnowo, & Joshua (2019) concur with the aforementioned five principal tenets that have shaped and directed Nigeria's foreign policy. Akintola in Ezirim (2010:2) listed five fundamental principles of Nigeria's foreign policy since independence: Non-alignment, Legal Equality of all States, Non-Interference in the Domestic Affairs of Other States, Multilateralism, and Afrocentrism. The following sections elaborate on these themes in detail:

Principle of Non-Alignment

Non-alignment, as defined by Eshiet, (2018) as a novel approach to international relations that repudiates the use of force, the balance of power, and spheres of influence as foundations for international order, advocating instead for negotiation, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence as the primary modes of inter-state interaction. Following the conclusion of the Second World War (WWII), a Cold War ensued between the West and the East, resulting in the bifurcation of the world into two ideological factions: capitalism and socialism. Capitalism was spearheaded by the United States, whereas Socialism was directed by the Soviet Union (Marks, 2012). The nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America emerging from colonialism resolved to remain unaffiliated with both the Western and Eastern blocs. This choice stemmed from the notion that "by remaining detached from great power rivalries, they could preserve their independence and foster amicable relations with all" (Marks, 2012).

Nigeria, upon gaining independence in 1960, adopted this philosophy in its foreign policy, as clearly articulated by Prime Minister Alhaji Tafawa Balewa: "We shall not blindly follow the

lead of anyone, so far as is possible....”It is deemed inappropriate for the Federal Government to routinely align itself with any of the power blocs”. Morton (2017) indicates that Nigeria has exemplified the notion of non-alignment in several sectors. These encompass the United States' invasion of Panama and Russia's annexation of Afghanistan. In both instances, Nigeria did not extend her support to either party. Nigeria not only condemned the atomic bomb explosion in the Sahara Desert but also severed diplomatic relations with France, the nation responsible for the test. Nigeria has once more established foreign missions with both blocs. Despite these limited promises, historians contend that this ideal was insufficiently observed by previous Nigerian leaders, being upheld more in theory than in practice. Coleman, (2022) noted that although Nigeria professed neutrality towards both the West and the East, the nation was, in reality, pro-West, as evidenced by its provision of a £40,000 grant to Britain for the construction of its diplomatic mission in Lagos, without any compensation to Nigeria.

The Balewa government prohibited all publications, including academic works from communist nations, yet proceeded to endorse the contentious Anglo-Nigerian Defence Treaty with Britain (Coleman, 2022). The Balewa administration was unequivocally anti-communist; a source further remarked that: Upon the establishment of the Soviet embassy in Lagos in 1961, its diplomatic personnel was restricted to 10, in contrast to the unrestricted staffing of diplomatic missions from Western European nations and the United States of America. The Soviet embassy received a meagre allocation of five diplomatic automobile plates, while both Britain and the United States were granted one hundred each. It can thus be stated that the establishment of the Soviet embassy was reluctantly permitted: a façade to the international community indicating Nigeria's non-alignment (Institute of Army Education referenced in Ezirim, 2010).

Principle of Legal Equality of all States

This principle emphasises the assumption that all states possess equality within the comity of nations, affording them equal opportunities to promote their perspectives and interests via International Organisations (Ajaebili, 2011). Nigeria's endorsement of this principle signifies its preparedness to manage external relations with other nations in accordance with established norms of international involvement. Nigeria contended that compliance with international law and established norms of conduct is essential for ensuring the security of newly independent, yet comparatively weaker states in its sub-region amidst the fierce rivalry between Eastern and Western powers (Amao, & Okeke-Uzodike, 2015). They contended that an additional driving

element was Nigeria's intention to convince its neighbouring states (Benin, Chad, Niger, and Cameroon) and other African nations that it would not, at any moment, exert its authority over any of its neighbours in Africa. Balewa states: "We shall never impose ourselves upon any other country and shall regard every African territory, regardless of size, as our equal, as we genuinely believe that only on this foundation can peace be sustained in our continent." In accordance with Nigeria's commitment to the equality of all states, it has been appointing and receiving ambassadors to and from all nations without regard to their size, military capability, or economic might.

Principle of Non-Interference in the Domestic Affairs of Other States

Non-interference is a principle that underscores the autonomy and liberty of governments in managing their internal matters. The concept unequivocally forbids Nigeria and other nations from illicit meddling in the internal affairs of other states. Nigeria maintained the concept of non-intervention in the domestic matters of other nations. During the Nigerian Civil War from 1967 to 1970, General Gowon's leadership asserted that the conflict was a local matter and hence fervently dissuaded foreign nations from supporting Biafra's secession (Falode, & Bolarinwa, 2019). Nigeria's pledge that her foreign policy will be guided by this principle over the years has often been challenged by her commitment to the protection of the national interest; a development which often compels the country to intervene in its quest to ensure peace amongst and within its contiguous states (Amao, & Okeke-Uzodike, 2015). Nigeria seems to rationalise its participation in the affairs of other nations under the framework of what Peen Rodt describes as the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P).

This development appears to contradict its policy of noninterference; however, such interventions have predominantly occurred in its role as a non-state actor under the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), as evidenced by its peacekeeping missions, including interventions in the Congo in 1960, support for various Southern African liberation movements from 1970 to 1994, and involvement in resolving the Liberian civil war (1990-2003), the Sierra Leone civil war (1998-2002), and the Darfur crisis, among others. The policy of non-interference in the domestic affairs of member nations, established by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), was disregarded by the African Union (AU) during Chief Obasanjo's tenure. The principle inhibited the OAU from exerting pressure on successive Sudanese governments, predominantly Arab-led in the northern region, to cease practices that fostered genocide against its own populace, especially the indigenous people of

Southern Sudan. This audacious initiative facilitated the engagement of the AU and other international entities in seeking a peaceful resolution to the Darfur issue (Nwokedi, & Obasi, 2025)

Although these actions sought to re-establish peace, many contend that they constituted a "unjustifiable interference in the internal affairs of Liberia" (Souza, 2020). The turmoil in Rwanda and Kosovo, alongside the pursuit of democracy and the prevalence of human rights violations, has prompted a worldwide need for a reevaluation of this principle. The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) posited the concept of 'sovereignty as responsibility,' asserting that a state holds the principal obligation to safeguard its populace, and if it is either incapable or disinclined to fulfil this duty, the international community must assume that responsibility (Marks, 2012). The Constitutive Act of the Union (the Act) stipulates the Union's authority to interfere in a member State under specific circumstances, as well as the right of a member State to solicit such intervention. Article 4 of the Act stipulates: "(h) the Union's right to intervene in a Member State following an Assembly decision concerning severe situations, specifically: war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity"; and "(j) the right of Member States to solicit intervention from the Union to re-establish peace and security." Consequently, there is a transition from non-interference to non-indifference towards a state's internal affairs.

Principle of Multilateralism or Multilateral Diplomacy

This entails the assembly of states, typically three or more, in conferences to deliberate on matters of shared interest. Multilateral diplomacy facilitates discussions on global challenges, such as environmental concerns, climate change, and nuclear weapons, which necessitate the cooperation of multiple governments for resolution (Dauda, Adie, and Nwokedi, 2018). Amao, & Okeke-Uzodike, (2015) contended that Nigeria's adherence to this principle was shaped by the predominant benefits of functional cooperation compared to an African political union, which at that time could not assure a stable future for a newly independent nation such as Nigeria. It anticipated that its dedication to collaborating with other non-state entities would ensure its safety, especially considering the prevailing bipolarity at that time.

Thus, Nigeria has consistently exhibited its support for and dedication to various international organisations, including, but not limited to, the UN, the Commonwealth of Nations, OPEC, the African Union, and ECOWAS. Maza, (2014) concurred that the principle is based on the notion

that achieving international peace necessitates unanimity among governments on a wide array of subjects. Nigeria, a staunch advocate of multilateralism, has significantly broadened its membership in various international organisations since becoming the 99th member of the United Nations on October 7, 1960 (Dauda, Adie, and Nwokedi, 2018), resulting in a notably elevated international profile. The nation has employed this approach to convey its foreign policy (national interest) to the international community (Agaba, Tumukunde, Tindimwebwa, & Kwizera, 2017).

Nigeria played a pivotal role in the establishment of ECOWAS and OAU, and when the OAU underwent transformation, Professor Adele Jinadu, a Nigerian, was among the six specialists tasked with draughting the AU Constituent Act. Nigeria has consistently financed the work of the African Union and other organisations. In 2012, Nigeria reportedly disbursed a total of \$15 million towards the operational expenses of the African Union (Dauda, Adie, and Nwokedi, 2018). Her dedication to the principle of multilateralism compelled her to urge aggrieved continental belligerents to consistently submit to OAU mediation. The disputes encompass the Guinea-Senegal border contention, the 1971 Arab-Israeli conflict, the Sudanese civil war, the tribal massacre in Burundi, persistent border skirmishes between Tanzania and Uganda, the conflict between Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, and the dispute between Morocco and Mauritania regarding the Spanish Sahara. Although Nigeria's acceptance of this foreign policy objective is praiseworthy, the country's membership in several international organisations, many of which offer limited advantages, should be viewed with scepticism. Nigeria currently belongs to 310 international organisations and has an outstanding debt of \$120 million in membership fees and other financial obligations, resulting in significant embarrassment before the world community (Awojulugbe, 2017).

Factors Affecting Foreign Policy

Various factors influence a state's foreign policy. These factors may be internal or external and can vary according to the state's historical context, cultural dynamics, and geopolitical environment (Lusha, 2024). A crucial internal factor affecting international policy is home politics. Domestic political elements, such as elections and public emotion, can influence a state's foreign policy decisions. A leader pursuing re-election may implement a foreign policy that aligns with public mood, irrespective of its congruence with the state's long-term goals. A domestic concern that may influence international policy is the state's economic interests. Economic considerations, such as trade and investment, can affect a state's foreign policy

objectives and activities. A state may prioritise trade relations with particular nations to ensure access to markets and resources. External factors may also impact a state's foreign policy. An important external component is the international system (Agaba, Tumukunde, Tindimwebwa, & Kwizera, 2017).

The structure of the international system, encompassing the balance of power and the presence of international organisations, can affect a state's foreign policy decisions. A state may seek to establish alliances to counteract a more powerful state within the international system. Geography is an external factor that can influence a state's foreign policy. The physical location of a state and its proximity to other states and regions can affect its foreign policy objectives and initiatives. A state situated in a perilous area may emphasise stability and security in its foreign policy.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Neoclassical Realism

Migration and foreign policy research in Nigeria has its foundation on Neoclassical Realism which is one of the theoretical frameworks that integrate systemic pressures in the international system and domestic level considerations in the formation of state behaviour. In the 1990s, neoclassical realism developed, in particular by Gideon Rose (1998), in reaction to the constraints of the classical and structural realism. Although structural realism describes the international behaviour of states mainly on the basis of power distribution within the international system, neoclassical realism argues that the results of foreign policy are refracted through domestic institutions, state capacity, leader perceptions, and internal constraints. Neoclassical realism as applied to migration and foreign policy in Nigeria offers an effective perspective on the interaction between external pressures that are associated with migration and internal political, economic, and institutional realities. At the systemic level, Nigeria is a country in a global environment where destinations countries and blocs, especially, the European Union, discuss the migration as a security and governance issue. These external actors subject Nigeria to pressure by engaging with it diplomatically, providing development aid and entering into cooperation agreements to manage irregular migration, human trafficking and returning of undocumented immigrants. These international pressures according to the view of the neoclassical realist are part of the wider allocation of power and interests which Nigeria must react to in its foreign-policy calculus (Rose, 1998). Nonetheless, external

demands are not enough to explain the actual foreign-policy response of Nigeria to the migration issues. The difference between domestic factors and their influence on the way these pressures are interpolated and responded to is decisive. On the internal level, Nigeria has been experiencing high unemployment, lack of security, and poor institutional capacity, all of which have spurred outward migration and limited policy options. The Nigerian state should thus strike a balance between foreign pressures to control migration and domestic needs to ensure the citizens are safeguarded in foreign countries and put to use the contributions of the diaspora in promoting the state. This is the reason as to why Nigeria cooperates with the destination states in migration management and at the same time insists on the diaspora diplomacy and consular protection in its stance of foreign-policy. The neoclassical realism may also formulate the contradictions of the migration-related foreign policy of Nigeria like the adherence of Nigeria to ECOWAS free movement, and the occasional restrictive policy. These contradictions indicate the change of domestic political priorities, economic situation, and attitudes toward leadership instead of the complete dismissal of regional norms. The theory therefore reflects the dynamic interplay between regional leadership ambitions of Nigeria against internal pressures that cause slow implementation of policies.

Analysis of Migration and implementation of Nigeria's foreign policy

Migration as well has had a huge impact on the way the Nigerian foreign policy is formulated and implemented as it has led to the redefining of the diplomatic priorities, institutional structures and international interaction. Traditionally, the focus on the free movement of persons made Nigeria the hub of external relations especially by supporting the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons. This was an expression of leadership of the Nigerian in West Africa and its concern with stability in the region (Adepoju, 2005). As time went by, the growing outward migration, the growing incidences of irregular migration as well as the vulnerability of the Nigerians in foreign land has necessitated the policymakers to consider consular protection, diaspora engagement and migration governance as part of the foreign-policy planning. Foreign-policy orientation has also been shaped by the awareness of the diaspora as a development partner and various institutional mechanisms have been put in place which include the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission and increased attention to remittances, skills transfer, and welfare of citizens abroad (Onyejekwe, 2009). In these developments, it is clear that migration now transcends into a social problem into one of foreign-policy concerns characterized by the national interest.

Analysis of international pressures and cooperation on migration management shaped Nigeria's diplomatic relations

The efforts of international pressures and migration management cooperation have also been decisive in the formation of the relation of Nigeria in the diplomatic sphere. Migration is being framed by destination countries and regional blocs especially the European Union in terms of security and border control. This has made bilateral and multilateral relations of Nigeria grow up to migration control agreements, human trafficking, return and readmission, and border management. Technical assistance and aid to development are usually conditional on collusion to curb irregular migration, which places Nigeria in a dilemma of negotiations between foreign demands and national interests (Adepoju & van der Wiel, 2010). As much as Nigeria is involved in such cooperative structures to ensure diplomatic goodwill and acquire aid in its development, it has resisted any policies that are seen as weakening the sovereignty or heavily imposing on sending states. The development has influenced the diplomatic orientation in Nigeria to make it seek a balance between cooperation and advocacy of shared responsibility and defense of migrant rights in international politics. Altogether, pressures of international migration have transformed Nigerian foreign relations to incorporate the management of migration in the larger diplomacy.

4. CONCLUSION

Migration has emerged as a central variable in Nigeria's foreign policy, influencing both policy formulation and diplomatic practice. Nigeria's commitment to regional integration, protection of its citizens abroad, and engagement with its diaspora reflects how migration concerns are embedded in national interest considerations. At the same time, international pressures, particularly from destination countries and multilateral partners, have compelled Nigeria to incorporate migration management into its diplomatic relations. The interaction of domestic migration drivers and external demands has produced a complex foreign policy response, marked by cooperation, negotiation, and occasional tension.

Recommendations

- a. Nigeria should develop a clearly articulated migration-focused foreign policy framework that aligns diaspora engagement, consular protection, and regional mobility commitments with broader national development goals.

- b. The federal government should strengthen diaspora diplomacy by expanding the capacity of Nigerian embassies to respond to migrant welfare concerns, especially in countries with large Nigerian populations.
- c. Nigeria should pursue balanced international cooperation on migration that prioritizes shared responsibility. In negotiations with destination countries and the European Union, emphasis should be placed on legal migration pathways, skills mobility, and development support rather than border control alone.
- d. Nigeria should deepen regional collaboration within ECOWAS by addressing implementation gaps in free movement protocols, particularly through improved border governance and data sharing, to manage mobility while maintaining regional stability.

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