

NIGERIA'S QUEST FOR UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL PERMANENT SEAT – CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper delves into Nigeria's longstanding aspiration to secure a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), analyzing the multifaceted challenges and potential avenues for success. Nigeria, as a significant player in the African continent and a key contributor to UN peacekeeping missions, has persistently advocated for reforming the UNSC to reflect contemporary geopolitical realities. However, the path towards attaining a permanent seat faces considerable obstacles, including entrenched power dynamics among existing permanent members, divergent interests within Africa, and skepticism from other global actors. Despite these challenges, Nigeria possesses several strategic advantages, such as its demographic and economic significance, regional leadership, and diplomatic prowess, which could bolster its bid for a permanent UNSC seat. It's examined the complexities of Nigeria's quest for a permanent seat by providing insights into the evolving dynamics of global governance and the imperative for inclusive representation within the UNSC.

Keywords: Unites Nations Security Council UNSC, UN Peace keeping missions, Prospects & Challenges.

Introduction

The Security Council has the primary responsibility under the UN Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security. Composed of fifteen members of whom five are designated permanent namely China, France, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America and ten members elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms (Article 23 of the UN Charter).

With the demise of the Soviet Union, its permanent seat was filled by Russia (Unser, 2010; Blum, 1992). This sparked discussion of possibly adding other states, such as Japan, Germany, and India, as permanent members, but no serious attempt at Charter amendment followed (Jain, 2023; Parvanova, 2023; Guzzardi & Mullenbach, 2007). Ten (originally six) nonpermanent or elected members were chosen by the General Assembly for staggered two-year term (Mingst, Karns & Lyon, 2022). Each member has one vote (Peterson, 2023). This paper will review the literature in order to seek to elucidate Nigeria's quest for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council.

Many countries, especially from Africa and Asia, have claimed that the UNSC is outdated and biased towards the interests of the former colonial powers. They have called for a more representative, democratic, transparent, and accountable UNSC that can effectively deal with the issues of the 21st century (Nadin, 2017).

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is the primary organ responsible for maintaining international peace and security, and its composition is meant to reflect the global distribution of power. However, the current composition of the UNSC does not adequately represent Africa's interests, as no African country has a permanent seat on the council. This under representation has been a source of concern for African nations, as they continue to seek more meaningful participation in the global security architecture (Fendi, 2021).

Africa has been historically underrepresented in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), with the current composition of the council reflecting the global power dynamics at the end of World War II. This under representation has been a source of concern for African nations, as they continue to seek more meaningful participation in the global security architecture. The lack of African representation on the UNSC

has led to a sense of marginalization among African nations, with calls for reform becoming more urgent in recent years (Nigusie & Ali, 2020; Van Wyk, 2015; Hosli & Dörfler, 2015; Souaré, 2011).

United Nations Security Council's Mandate

The name "United Nations", coined by United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt, was first used in the Declaration by United Nations of January 1, 1942, during the Second World War, when representatives of 26 nations pledged their governments to continue fighting together against the Axis Powers (Malone, 2020). The United Nations has six organs namely, the General Assembly, Security Council, Secretariat, ICJ, ECOSOC and the Trusteeship Council.

Beyond peace and security, the UN is now concerned with promoting development, promoting democracy, promoting human rights, protecting the environment and the preventing of nuclear proliferation. In war torn countries, the UN is prosecuting war criminals (Uzar, 2020; Adebayo, 2022). The P5 has a special status of not only permanent members of the UNSC but also have veto power over every issue except on procedural matters. This special recognition was given to the P5 because of the role they played in ending the Second World War and their military might at that time.

Restructuring the United Nations Security Council

Several options for UNSC restructuring were among the proposal submitted by the working group, including a proposal by the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) calling for an increase in permanent seats from five to nine and non-permanent seats from ten to seventeen (Berween, 2002).

As recorded by Uhomoibiri (2008:233), the first shot was fired in 1991 when the country's Head of State addressed the UN General Assembly . . . and was reaffirmed in June 2000 by the Minister of State for Foreign affairs, Dubem Onyia, in a meeting with a delegation representing Kofi Annan the Ghanaian born UN secretary-General at the time".

Confirming Nigeria's aspiration, President Muhammadu Buhari while at the 71st Session of the UNGA, made a case for Nigeria to be the African permanent representative on the UNSC. He was quoted by Adetutu (2016:6) as having said "Africa should be adequately represented on the UNSC in the permanent member category. In this regard, Nigeria stands ready to serve Africa and the world in a reformed Security Council to advance international peace and security."

Prospects for Permanent Membership of the UN Security Council for Nigeria

The importance of the UNSC particularly the council's permanent seats stems largely from the status and prestige associated with the decision-making authority on questions of global peace and security. As a consequence, it is perhaps not surprising that a number of emerging and global powers throughout the world-including Japan, Germany, India, Brazil, Indonesia, Nigeria, South Africa and Egypt have sought permanent seats on the UNSC during the past few decades.

From the aforementioned, it is important to deduce that for a country to become a permanent member of the Security Council, it must meet these requirements.

Economic Strength:

This entails that the country must have the capability of meeting its financial obligations to the United Nations. It will involve meeting the quota assigned to her in the UN Budget and also in giving of aids, financial grants etc to reduce the suffering of global citizenry in disaster stricken areas, and for example Nigeria donated 1 million United States Dollars to help victims of the lasttsunami disaster in America. This will also encompass the ability of the state to sponsor (financial& materially) military expeditions to be undertaken by the UN, for example the USA has been inthe business of facilitating these military campaign. Ogwu, (1986) stated that this is of utmost importance to states as the primary interest of any sovereign state is to establish a strong economicbase for development and utilize such as a political leverage to act in its external relations.

Assessments as enumerated in the Yearbook of the United Nations (1959), and Galpin (1987), Nick Wadhams (2005) supports these positions.

Role of Nigeria in Africa and global politics

Over the years Nigeria's foreign policy has been guided by principles such as non-alignment, anti-imperialism, and the promotion of African unity (Dubakeme & Folarin, 2023). These principles have historically influenced Nigeria's stance on regional and global issues, emphasizing its autonomy in decision-making. Nigeria, as one of the most populous and economically influential countries in Africa, has sought to play a leadership role on the continent. This includes participation in regional organizations like the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Nigeria actively participates in multilateral forums, including the AU, ECOWAS, and the United Nations, where it collaborates with other African nations and the international community on issues ranging from peacekeeping to sustainable development (Ikponmwonsa, Osaherumwen, Mugadam & Oumar, 2020; Nwokolo, 2020).

Nigeria's economic engagements with African countries involve trade, investment, and infrastructure development. Bilateral and regional economic partnerships contribute to Nigeria's influence and autonomy in shaping economic policies within Africa (Tar & Wapmuk, 2022; Oshewolo & Fayomi, 2021). Consciously, Nigeria's economic strength, particularly in sectors such as oil and gas, agriculture, and telecommunications, contributes to its regional influence. The country's economic policies and initiatives can impact neighboring nations and regional economic dynamics. In addition, Nigeria's cultural influence, particularly through Nollywood, Afrobeats music, and cultural exchanges, contributes to its soft power in the region. Cultural diplomacy enhances the country's appeal and fosters positive relations with other African nations (Mbara & Gopal, 2020; David, 2021).

Nigeria engages in diplomatic efforts to address regional challenges, including conflicts, terrorism, and economic development. Bilateral and multilateral engagements with other African countries, as well as global partners, contribute to Nigeria's strategic positioning in the region. The works of Nash (2020); Mbara, Gopal, Uzodike & Khondlo (2020); Jonah & Olawale (2019) shed light on Nigeria's role in regional security, which is often connected to its aspirations at the UNSC. In terms of peacekeeping in Africa, Nigeria has a history of contributing to peacekeeping missions in Africa, demonstrating its commitment to regional stability. Her involvement in conflict resolution efforts, such as in Liberia and Sierra Leone, showcased its role in fostering peace and security on the continent. As a major player in West Africa, Nigeria collaborates with neighboring countries to address security threats. The fight against Boko Haram, for example, has involved regional cooperation and reflects Nigeria's commitment to securing the stability of the region.

Nigeria's quest for regional autonomy

Evidence can be seen in the formation of OAU ON 25TH May 1963, in Addis Ababa and ECOWAS 28TH May 1975, in Lagos. Nigeria's interest in a permanent seat on the UNSC can be traced back to its active role in international affairs, particularly in peacekeeping missions (Olorige, 2023; Dauda & Ameen, 2017; Akpotor & Agbebaku, 2010). Nigeria has historically contributed significantly to UN peacekeeping operations, and it sees a permanent seat as a way to enhance its influence on global security matters. However, it faces challenges to its strategic autonomy, including internal governance issues, economic fluctuations, and security concerns. Nigeria, as one of the major countries in Africa, sees itself as a potential regional leader with the capacity to contribute to international peace and security. It believes that having a permanent seat at the UNSC would allow it to better represent African interests on the global stage.

Nigeria, along with other countries, advocates for reforming the UNSC to reflect the contemporary geopolitical landscape. The current structure of the UNSC, established after World War II, is often criticized as outdated, and many countries, including Nigeria, seek a more inclusive and representative Council. Nigeria engages in diplomatic efforts at various international forums to garner support for its bid for a permanent seat. This involves building alliances with other nations and lobbying for reform within the United Nations (Safiyanu, 2022; Chigozie & Ituma, 2015). Nigeria receives support from the

African Union (AU) in its pursuit of a permanent seat. The AU has consistently advocated for increased representation of African countries in the UNSC. The issue of Nigeria's quest for a permanent seat at the UNSC is a subject of public discourse within the country. Public opinion on the matter may vary, and discussions often touch on the potential benefits and challenges associated with such a role (Oluwafemi, 2020). However, the quest for a permanent seat is not without challenges. There are debates and controversies within the international community regarding UNSC reform. Issues such as the veto power of the current permanent members and the criteria for new permanent members have been points of contention.

Natural Resources and Raw Materials

The natural resources or “gifts of nature of established utility” plays a very important role in making a state powerful. The minerals, petroleum, forest, water coupled with the man-made raw materials like those of cotton, rubber, hides etc possess potential utility that can make a state powerful among others. Nigeria in this regard has varieties of minerals deposited by nature which serves as a source of raw materials. It has been assumed that any mineral not found in Nigeria at present does not mean that such mineral is in total absence but yet to be discovered.

Military Strength

A country aspiring to have a Permanent Seat in the Security Council must exhibit these conventional military indices:

- i. having a large military personnel and the ability to contribute troops in specific UN Peace-Keeping Missions. This will engender the maintenance of international peace and harmony among states as it is the bedrock for the formation for the United Nations; and
- ii. the said state (country) must of necessity have an enormous armament at her disposal. This will help in discouraging pariah states and terrorists groups from holding the global system to ransom.

Diplomatic and Political Exposure

The state (country) must have a strong political structure in the sub-regional, regional and global arena that will be harnessed in troubled times to negotiate for international peace. The point being made is that the nation-state must have political and diplomatic influence that transcends beyond its national borders. For example, the USA have such diplomatic influence in the Middle East crisis, also, China was wielding the same influence in the Darfur conflict (Kpor, 2007). The state must be such that its view on sub-regional, regional and global issues will be sort for, and respected. The USA gave credibility to the controversial Nigerian General Elections of 2007 by sending a high powered delegation led by Senator BILL NELSON (Independent Newspaper 3rd June, 2007).

Engineering Global Development

A country seeking for the exalted Seat of the Security Council must be poised at all times to engineer and engender global development especially, through bilateral and multilateral facilities. The permanent members of the Security Council have at different times pursued this goal though mostly for covert reason thereby, enhancing the growth of the global economy. This, they have done by giving technical assistance to developing states and in some cases undertaking to raise infrastructure in other states or regions of the world.

Commitment to Democracy & Human Rights

It has become general perception that it is only through a democratic arrangement that the human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction to race, sex, language or religion, can be guaranteed as part of the preaches of the United Nations’ Principles.³⁸ Hence, Nigeria has successfully transferred power from one civilian administration to another democratic government since 1999 till date which make the country today to be among the democratic nations in the world.

Contributions to United Nations Peacekeeping

Nigeria had contributed meaningfully to the peacekeeping and conflict management operations both at the United Nations auspices and ECOMOG in countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote D'Ivoire and many others, acting to prevent civil wars from expanding into regional crises and at the same time assisting in resolving their internal disputes.

It could be seen from the above that each quality is prominent in Nigeria. This is to highlight Nigeria's capabilities and also its chances of being admitted as a permanent member of the Security Council.

Challenges facing Nigeria's Quest for Permanent Seat

International Image

Nigeria has faced challenges in managing its international image, leading to negative perceptions that can overshadow its significant credentials as a prominent African and global nation.

Nigeria has struggled with mismanagement, resource pilferage, and ineffective socio-economic policies that have failed to address the fundamental needs and aspirations of its citizens (Egbebullem, 2007).

Military Technology

The truth is that Nigeria does not possess nuclear power even though she is endowed with uranium, a natural resource to manufacture arms and ammunition (IISS, 2018).

Rule of Law

Neither the State nor its agencies and operators readily obey court orders, citizens frequently resort to taking their own action rather than go to court (Adeyeri, 2013)

Political Instability

Although Nigeria is a democratic state, but the manner at which the country elections were being handled called for a concern. For example, the Nigeria 2007 general election results faced widespread allegations of fraud, "where winner takes all". This kind of occurrence if not properly handled can result to a game of life or death further tarnishing the image of Nigeria in its UNSC aspirations (Adeyeri, 2013)

Insecurity

The gross insecurity nature of Nigeria especially in the Niger-Delta region where less or no value is given to lives and properties, such act is capable of tarnishing Nigeria's good image both nationally and internationally (Raji & Ajibade, 2014). The attitudes of group known as Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), claimed to seek economic and political liberation of the Delta area, by attacking oil installations and other government infrastructures as well as kidnapping of foreign oil workers, in which these attacks had rendered the region quite unsafe to stay.

Competing Bids

South Africa

South Africa is the highest-assessed African state to the UN regular budget, with 0.372 percent, followed by Libya, Algeria, Egypt and Nigeria.

Egypt

While Egypt did undergo a revolution to oust longtime dictator Hosni Mubarak, it is now essentially ruled by another strongman, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. Dissent is heavily suppressed through force, with Egypt accused of torturing dissidents and carrying out extrajudicial executions (Schaer, 2023).

Japan

The case for Japan being granted a permanent seat on the Security Council is reinforced by several factors. First of all, Japan has contributed significantly to the UN's operations and budget as a stakeholder in the organisation (Parvanova, 2023).

Theoretical Framework- Balance of Power Theory

The theoretical framework adopted in the analysis of the subject matter is balance of power. The balance of power theory is a widely recognized concept in international relations that underlines the need for stability and equilibrium among Great Powers to avoid conflict (Kaplan, 2015). It argues that no single state or alliance should have too much influence or control over global politics as this could lead to oppression of weaker states and result in instability.

The theory emphasizes the need for stability and equilibrium among Great Powers to avoid conflict, which is critical if Africa wants to have a permanent seat at the UNSC. If African states are perceived as unstable or lacking power, they would be less likely to receive such a seat. Thus, Nigeria must work with other African countries towards creating an actual equilibrium where no country dominates others.

Methodology

This study was done using the qualitative paradigm and done across board in order to extrapolate findings. The study was done using primary data in parastatals; the National Institute of Foreign Affairs as a case study.

The case study used here was senior affairs in the parastatals; and the study was restricted to their experience on happenings as pertains historical narratives of permanent seat quest.

The study was conducted using structured interviews; and the interviews were conducted using formal means. Historical research design, a subset of Qualitative Research Design. Historical narratives shape public perception and national identity, influencing how Nigeria's quest for a UN Security Council seat is perceived domestically and internationally. Understanding historical narratives surrounding Nigeria's role in international affairs, its aspirations for leadership in Africa, and its commitment to global peace and security provides insight into the domestic legitimacy and international credibility of Nigeria's bid for a permanent seat.

The findings were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Results

The thematic analysis divided the themes into superordinate, and sub-ordinate themes based on relevance of the statements to the objectives of the study.

Superordinate theme	Subordinate theme	Quotes
Proposals for Permanent Seat	The Ezelwuni Consensus:	I feel the Ezewunmi consensus experienced in 2005 advanced to argue for the review of the composition of the NSCH”
	The Koffi Annan proposal of Freedom for Fear, Want, Security and Insecurity	When Koffi Annan, 2 nd African Secretary General of UN; after Boutros Ghalli wrote a proposal of freedom for fear, want, security and insecurity, summarized into 95 pgs; giving slots to Africa; there were two terms within the proposal; but the more pronounced one has been the option of two countries of African origin to be on the security council, one to join from Asia, then one or two more from Europe; Japan and Germany particularly who have qualified long before China, France and U.K.
Resistance	Africa is lobbying the West but the West is strategic	“Egypt shut the door from Gaza. Egypt did that to please the West and the UNSC; and tame other Arab states”
	Internal resistance;	“. At the ECOWAS Level, the Gambia under Yaya Djamein said they also had interest;”
Challenges	Power Hegemony and Credible Threat (P5 and others)	“they don’t want another person; because they are using it; by that I mean the veto power.”,
	Africa’s lack of domestic ideologies	“In Nigeria and in Africa, there are no solid ideologies... “Nigeria can be told off based on the domestic politics being shoddy”
	Africa is deep in conflict hence poor extra-territorial alignment	“I do not think that UNSC sees as Africa; being the theatre of conflict in the world; has implications on our readiness on our relative stability”
Prospects	Nigeria’s foreign policy is Afrocentric	“Ab initio 1960, Nigeria’s foreign policy is Afrocentric” “Nigeria marched to Queens Drive to where French embassy is to burn it down, Nigeria also reported France at the UNSC”
	Nigeria is currently preferred candidate geopolitically	“we know what to expect at the market”
Emergent Themes	ECOWAS had been Nigeria’s success story in foreign policy till recently	“Nigeria’s success story is ECOMOG. In spite of the regional military takeovers, there is infiltration of western blocs in these activities; and this makes it look like Nigeria is no longer as strong as it used to be. There is currently war and instability in West Africa; on the one hand it looks like the countries are severing ties with the French government, on the other hand, it seems like they are in bed with the Russian government, critical times are upon us”
	UNSC can no longer guarantee peace due to its undemocratic process	“Japan and Germany particularly who have qualified long before China, France and U.K.” “there is war everywhere and they believe they are guaranteeing peace; member countries even in a cold war on opposing sides of NATO” Having an understanding of what to do is necessary towards doing it well.”

Conclusion

The major findings include that the challenges are: the P5, lack of domestic ideologies, with Africa deep in conflict hence less extra-territorial alignment; while the prospects are the Afrocentric foreign policy and geopolitical cues that favour Nigeria.

The findings from the current study reiterate Nigeria's central role in spearheading Africa's push for greater representation to address the imbalance of power under colonial legacy institutions like the United Nations Security Council. Nigeria has leveraged its peacekeeping contributions regionally and globally and role as a mediator to advance its credentials as a leader in the continent. However, progress remains stagnant due to opposition from not just external powers wary of losing the P5 dominance, but also regional rivals undermining Nigeria’s chances and African unity.

Ultimately, permanent UN Security Council seats would signal autonomy for Nigeria and Africa. It would also correct the glaring omission of a region with the largest voting bloc, and commensurate influence to match its UN membership. An equitable global order on the council would ensure accountability from the P5 countries, curb selective interests in the council’s voting, while fostering policies that benefit everyone in the developing world. With unity and diplomacy, the findings from this study suggest that Nigeria is well positioned to secure these permanent seats on the Council.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the current study, the researcher makes the following recommendations;

1. Nigeria should continue to actively leverage its leadership roles across regional blocs like the African Union, ECOWAS and others to boost its credentials and influence in the bid for United Nations Security Council reform, and getting its permanent seat

2. African countries need to actively counter interference by building awareness of this threat, and exposing any sponsored attempts to divide Africa on United Nations reform.
3. Nigeria and the African Union should focus their efforts on building a consensus for viable reform proposals, based on equitable representation, contributions to peacekeeping, and other criteria that will be agreed upon.

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