

Module: Nigeria in the International Community

Topic: Foreign Policy & International Relations

International relations is the study of how nations interact with one another, while **Foreign Policy** is the specific "handbook" or strategy a country uses to protect its interests when dealing with other nations.

1. Principles of Nigeria's Foreign Policy

Since independence in 1960, Nigeria's foreign policy has been guided by specific principles. These are often described as **"concentric circles,"** where the closest neighbors get the most attention.

- **Non-Alignment:** During the Cold War, Nigeria chose not to take sides between the USA (Capitalism) and the USSR (Communism).
- **Legal Equality of States:** Nigeria believes all countries, big or small, should be treated with equal respect in international law.
- **Non-Interference:** Nigeria generally believes that countries should not interfere in the internal affairs of others (unless there is a humanitarian crisis).
- **Afrocentrism:** This is the "Heart" of Nigeria's policy. It means that **Africa is the centerpiece** of Nigeria's foreign policy. Nigeria treats African issues as its top priority.

2. Objectives of Nigerian Foreign Policy

Why does Nigeria engage with the world? According to the **1999 Constitution (Section 19)**, the goals are:

1. **Promotion and Protection of National Interest:** Ensuring Nigeria's security and economic prosperity.
2. **African Integration:** Promoting unity and economic cooperation among African states (e.g., through ECOWAS and AfCFTA).
3. **Settlement of Disputes:** Promoting the peaceful resolution of international conflicts through negotiation and mediation.
4. **Elimination of Discrimination:** Historically, this meant fighting **Apartheid** in South Africa and colonialism across the continent.
5. **Promotion of a Just World Economic Order:** Seeking fair trade for developing nations.

3. International Relations: The Tools of Engagement

Countries interact using several methods:

- **Diplomacy:** The art of conducting negotiations through official representatives called **Ambassadors** (who lead an **Embassy**) or **High Commissioners** (who lead a **High Commission** in Commonwealth countries).
- **Treaties and Agreements:** Written contracts between nations (e.g., a trade agreement to buy Nigerian oil).
- **Foreign Aid:** Giving or receiving help in the form of money, food, or medical supplies.
- **Sanctions:** Punishing a country by cutting off trade or travel to force them to change a policy.

4. Nigeria's Role in International Organizations

Nigeria is a prominent member of several "Clubs" of nations:

Organization	Nigeria's Role
United Nations (UN)	Nigeria contributes one of the world's largest numbers of **Peacekeeping Troops** to maintain order in war-torn countries.
AU (African Union)	Nigeria was a founding member and provides a large portion of its funding.
ECOWAS	Nigeria is the "Big Brother" of West Africa, hosting the ECOWAS headquarters in Abuja.
OPEC	Nigeria is a major oil producer and helps influence global oil prices through this body.
Commonwealth	Nigeria maintains ties with the UK and other former British colonies to promote democracy and education.

5. Factors Influencing Foreign Policy

What decides how Nigeria acts?

- **Geography:** Nigeria's location in West Africa makes it a natural leader for ECOWAS.
- **Economy:** Being an oil-dependent nation, Nigeria must maintain good relations with countries that buy its oil.
- **Military Strength:** A strong military allows Nigeria to lead peacekeeping missions in places like Liberia and Sierra Leone.
- **Public Opinion:** The views of Nigerian citizens (e.g., views on the "Japa" phenomenon) influence how the government treats foreign countries.

6. Key Terms for Students

- **Sovereignty:** The power of a country to govern itself without outside interference.
- **Persona Non-Grata:** When a diplomat is no longer welcome in a country and is asked to leave.
- **Diplomatic Immunity:** Legal protection that prevents ambassadors from being arrested under the host country's laws.

Student Tip: When writing about Foreign Policy in an exam, always remember that **"National Interest"** is the primary driver. A country does not have permanent friends or permanent enemies; it only has **permanent interests.**