

**The Resurging Call for The Reform of the United Nations Security Council:
What Are Nigeria's Chances in its Bid for a Permanent Seat?**

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Abstract

The United Nations came into existence after the Second World War to replace the League of Nations which had failed to avert a war. Consequently, the need to ensure and maintain international peace and security by averting any war or aggression by any state lies at the heart of the existence of the United Nations. The United Nations Charter however vested in the United Nations Security Council, especially its permanent members, the powers to determine the existence of threats to international peace and security as well as when to take steps to deter and avert any danger to peace and security. These Permanent Members are five (5) in number: Britain, France, the United States of America, Russia and China. Other members of the United Nations who are non-permanent members hence, enjoy their seats on temporary and rotational bases have, for a long time called for the reform of the Security Council. The reform suggests that at least every continent should be represented by a state that will enjoy the status of a permanent member. This call waned down a few years ago but with the war in Ukraine, it is gathering momentum. This research discussed Nigeria's prospects and challenges in its desire to become a permanent member representing the African continent on the Security Council. This research adopted the doctrinal approach. It briefly analysed the structure of the United Nations Security Council. It discussed the prospects of other African States contending with Nigeria who are at the forefront of the reform. It concluded by making recommendations.

Keywords: United Nation's Security Council, Permanent Seat, Nigeria, Reform

Introduction

The war in Ukraine has resuscitated the clamour for the reform of the United Nations Security Council, hereinafter referred to as "UNSC"⁴. The Kenyan President, William Ruto, was recently reported to have expressed his support for a reform of the UNSC that will give Africa a permanent seat⁵. The former President of the United States, Joe Biden, advocated for a reform that should favour African States. In supporting African representation on the permanent seat, he identifies three major needs for African representation which include: the

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⁴ The Elect Council "Russian war in Ukraine revives call for the expansion of the security council" <https://electthecouncil.org/russias-war-in-ukraine-revives-calls-for-security-council-expansion/> accessed on the 24/4/2024.

⁵ Ibid.

need to protect the supreme rights of weaker states amongst other states, and the duty to accept the fundamental principles of freedom and respect for international law as well as the imperative for arms control⁶. The US supports an increase in the numbers of both permanent and non-permanent seats on the Council for African, Caribbean and Latin American representation⁷. The South African President, Cyril Ramaphosa, was reported to have told Biden a few days earlier in the White House that the failure to give the African people with a population of over 1.3 billion is an indictment on the world's conscience⁸. Other world leaders like the French President, Emmanuel Macron, and the United Kingdom's ambassador to the UN, James Roscoe, have also learned their voices to reform. With the re-surfaced call for the reform of the UNSC, does Nigeria have any prospects to represent Africa on the permanent seat? Will there be any reform at all? A reform of the UNSC will involve the amendment of the United Nations Charter hereinafter referred to as "The Charter". The Charter has been amended in the past to increase non-permanent seats of the UNSC but there have been no amendments to increase the permanent seats or rather alter the veto powers of the permanent member⁹. In 1994¹⁰, the members of the United Nations General Assembly hereinafter referred to as "UNGA" intensified the call for the increase in the number of the charter-prescribed permanent seats to allow for equitable representation along regional and geographical distribution of its membership. For over two decades now, the UN has not been able to implement that resolution. In this article, we intend to discuss: the politics and possibility of ever implementing the resolution; the opposing interests of world powers as well as the biddings of other states particularly Nigeria, to secure a permanent seat. In discussing Nigeria's Bid for the permanent seat, we intend to discuss Nigeria's Prospects, Problems and Challenges as well as the advantages that Nigeria's bidding holds for itself and Africa as a whole.

The work is divided into 5 segments. The first discusses the structure and powers of the UNSC. The second discusses the criteria for assessing Nigeria's prospects. The third will discuss Nigeria's prospects and impediments. The fourth will consider the possibility of any amendment. The fifth will proffer solutions.

The Powers of the United Nations Security Council

Amongst all the organs of the UN, the strongest and the most influential is undoubtedly the UNSC. The reason for this is no doubt the enormous powers that the Charter vests in it particularly in its permanent members. The powers of the UNSC are as contained in Chapters V, VI, VII, and VIII of the Charter. Article 24 makes an express statutory delegation to the UNSC, presumably by all members of the UN, of the primary responsibility of ensuring international peace and security¹¹. The reason for such delegation as contained in the said Article is the need to ensure "*prompt and effective action*". Sub Article 2 of the same Article 24 states the specific powers and guiding parameters for the UNSC in the exercise of its powers. It provides that: "*the Specific powers granted to the UNSC for the discharge of these*

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ The permanent members of the UNSC are Britain, France, the United States of America, Russia and China who are also referred to as the " **The Big Five**"

¹⁰ Press release: SG/SM 5906 "Secretary General Speaks of the Security Council Reform at a lecture at Foreign Ministry of Mexico" <http://www.un.org/press/en/1996/19960304.sgsm5906.html> accessed 20/5/2015

¹¹ Note that the assignment of the obligation implies the assignment of powers and this assignment occurs once a state becomes a member of the United Nations. Article 25 further contains an undertaking by all member states to be bound by and to implement the decisions of the Security Council in accordance with the provisions of the Charter.

powers are laid down in Chapters VI, VII, VIII, and XII". What the forgoing sentence implies is that the UNSC, in performing its duty of ensuring world peace, order and security shall exercise the powers contained in Chapters VI, VII, VIII and XII of the Charter and shall be guided by the purposes and principles of the UN as contained in Article 1.

Chapter VI of the Charter relates to the amicable settlement of disputes. Article 33 requires the parties to any dispute to, on their own accord or upon direction of the UNSC settle their disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration etc.

Chapter VII relates to actions that are: inimical to peace, an infraction of peace and constitute acts of aggression. Article 39 vests in the UNSC the exclusive right and power to decide the whether any threat to peace, disruption of the peace exists or whether any acts sufficient to constitute acts of aggression exists. The UNSC then make recommendations or decide what measures should to be taken in line with articles 41 and 42 to maintain or restore international peace and security. Article 41 allows the UNSC to decide the measures, other than the use of armed forces that should to be deployed to give effect to its decision and to call upon all member states of the UN to comply with the decision.

Chapter VIII empowers the UNSC to utilize regional organizations or agencies to enforce its decisions. It prohibits any regional organizations or agency from taking any enforcement measures without the authorization of the UNSC. Article 54 further obligates the regional arrangement and agencies to inform the UNSC of activities undertaken by her for the maintenance of international peace and security¹².

Chapter XI relates to trusteeship territories. Article 83 vests in the UNSC, all the functions of the United Nations relating to strategic areas, including the approval of the terms of the trusteeship agreements and their alteration or amendment¹³. Apart from the powers of the UNSC as contained in chapters V, VI, VII, VIII, and XII of the Charter, The UNSC also has the power to make recommendations to the United Nations General Assembly hereinafter referred to as the "UNGA" under articles. 4(2), 5, 6, 94(2) and 97. Other international Instruments have vested in the UNSC some powers.

The Organization of The UNSC and Power Distribution Amongst Members

The UNSC is made up of the permanent members (the Permanent five) and non-permanent members. The Secretary General of the United Nations also acts as the Secretary of the Council¹⁴. The distinction between permanent members and non-permanent members implies a disparity in rights. Though all the powers accruable and exercisable by the UNSC appear to be vested in all the members of the UNSC, the voting rights contained in Article 27(3) of the Charter technically concentrate the powers in the permanent members. Article 27(2) provides that the decision of the UNSC on procedural matters shall be made by the affirmative votes of seven members. This Article indiscriminately vests powers in all the members of the UNSC irrespective of whether the member is a permanent member or non-permanent member. The Article only requires the votes of seven members to decide on procedural matters.¹⁵ Article 27(3) on the other hand stipulates that the decisions of the UNSC on all other matters shall be made by an affirmative vote of seven members including the concurring votes of all the permanent members. The implication of sub-article 3 of 27 is

¹² Note that all United Nations missions in Africa are undertaken according to the provisions of this chapter.

¹³ Article 83(3) requires the Security Council to work with the assistance of the Trusteeship Council to perform the functions of the United Nations

¹⁴ See Article 98 of the United Nations Charter.

¹⁵ Procedural matters refer to matters of procedure at meetings of the council

that: in as much as the decision of the council does not relate to procedural matters, it does not matter that all the 10 non-permanent members concur or support a matter, all the permanent members of the UNSC must concur before it can be said that a decision has been reached by the UNSC. Where there is a veto by any permanent member, there cannot be a decision of the UNSC no matter the profundity of the necessity of a decision. On the other hand, if all the five permanent members vote to support any matter, they will only need two votes of the 10 non-permanent members to reach a valid decision. The powers as contained in Chapters: V, VII, VIII, and XII of the Charter are substantive and not procedural consequently; all decisions under the substantive powers of the UNSC contained in the aforementioned Chapters and any other power provided by any instrument can only be reached by the concurrence of all the permanent members and any two members of the non-permanent members. The provisions of Articles 108 and 109 have further strengthened the forgoing powers by making rigid the process of amendment and review of the Charter so as to frustrate any move to reduce the powers of the Permanent Five through any amendment or review of the Charter¹⁶. The magnitude of powers vested in the permanent members as well as the manner in which these permanent members have exercised these powers to pursue and protect their various state interests in international politics has resulted in a clamour for the reform of the UNSC¹⁷. This reform is required to reflect the regional and geographical distribution of the members of the UN. What then are the criteria for assessing the chances of bidding states?

Criteria for Assessing Nigeria's Prospects and Impediments

The Charter does not provide any criteria for determining the eligibility or otherwise or rather, the prospects of any interested state. This is understandable because the Permanent five (5) who are the pioneer members and promoters of the organization never contemplated or intended to share their veto powers with any other member. While the Charter in Article 23 provides a standard and criteria that would guide the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in electing non-permanent members for the charter-prescribed seats, it does not provide the same for the expansion of the UNSC or the election of permanent members. What then is the content or import of the said Article? Article 23 provides that:

“... The General Assembly shall elect six other members of the United Nations to be non-permanent members of the UNSC, due regard being specially paid, in the first instance to contributions of members of the United Nations to the maintenance of International peace and security and the other purposes of the Organization and also equitable geographical distribution.”

Important points to be garnered from the quoted article are as follows:

- First, the Article reveals the desire of the Charter to involve the UNGA in the election of the Members of the UNSC.
- Second, the need to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security by member states is salient to the selection of any member state.

¹⁶ Article 108 requires the ratification of all the permanent members before an amendment of the charter can come into force. See: Article 109 of the Charter.

¹⁷ Ovigwe Eguegu , Hannah Ryder , and Trevor Lwere “Africa’s Design for a Reformed UN Security Council Commentary “ published October 1, 2024 and accessed on the 5th of October 2024.

- Third, the Charter places value on the adherence, by members of the organization, to the purposes of the organization as well as the equitable geographical distribution of the said members.

Having identified and listed the important points, a brief discussion on them is necessary as they constitute the foundational basis of the criteria that would be used in this work to assess Nigeria's prospects and fate.

As regards the first point, it is obvious that the Charter requires the input of the UNGA in the process of determining or selecting members for the permanent seat of the UNSC. Practically speaking, the input of the UNGA is indispensable in the enlargement of the Security Council in whichever way is intended. This appears to be the effect of the combined reading of the express powers vested in the UNGA as contained in Articles 10 and 108 of the Charter. Article 10 empowers the UNGA to deliberate on any matter within the scope of the charter and make recommendations. The aforementioned power to deliberate is however subject to the provisions of Article 12. Article 108 of the Charter on the other hand regulates the process of amendment of the Charter. The said Article provides that amendments to the Charter can only come into force when they have been adopted by a vote of two-thirds of the members of the UNGA and ratified by a two-thirds majority including all the permanent members of the UNSC. This invariably means that the process of the enlargement of the UNSC begins with the passing of a resolution by two-thirds majority members of the UNGA supporting the enlargement or increase in the number of permanent seats followed by the amendment of the Charter to reflect the increase.

On the Second point, the ability of a member state to contribute to international peace and security is indispensable in selecting states into the club of the Permanent Five. The maintenance of international peace and security underlies the very existence of the United Nations and it constitutes a summary of the functions of the UNSC. This is because article 2 makes it a condition precedent that members of the UNGA can only benefit of membership must meet up with their obligations to the UN which include financial obligations.

The third point is adherence to the purpose of the UN and the need for fair and equitable representation of members on the UNSC. The purposes and principles of the United Nations are contained in Articles 1 and 2 of the Charter respectively. The purposes of the UN as contained in Article 1 include: the imperative to maintain international peace and security; the need to develop friendly relations among nations based on the principles of equal rights and self-determination of people; the desire of achieving international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social cultural or humanitarian character and the need to be at the centre for the harmonization of the actions of nations in the attainment of the aforementioned common ends. The principles through which the United Nations shall achieve its purpose are the principles of sovereign equality of all its members; and settlement of disputes through peaceful means; all members shall fulfil their obligations so as to be entitled to the rights and benefits accruable to them by being members, etc. The above points, in our humble opinion, are points that would be used to assess the prospects of bidding states. What then are Nigeria's prospects and impediments in the light of these points?

Nigeria's Prospects and Impediments

Many believe that the chances of Nigeria are bright. Nigeria, itself, appears to be hopeful that it will succeed in its desire to secure a permanent seat on the UNSC. This is not surprising as Nigeria has asserted, countless times, that it is the giant of Africa. Nigeria's credentials or rather, plus points in its bidding include: Financial contribution to the United Nations,

leadership role in Africa¹⁸, population, political and military contributions to the Maintenance of International Peace and Security in Africa. etc

The financial contributions of member states to the United Nations are not only obligatory as stipulated in Article 4 of the Charter but determine the extent of rights and benefits member states would enjoy. Nigeria, apart from being consistent in meeting its financial obligation¹⁹, pays more than many African states. In the year 2015, Nigeria Paid \$2,442,208 as its financial contribution to the United Nations. Nigeria's contribution between 2008 and 2009 was estimated to constitute 0.048% of United Nations Budget. Its contribution to the United Nations Peace Keeping Budget constituted 0.0096% of the Total Budget. Though Nigeria's contribution appears to be less than 1% of the total Budget, Nigeria pays more than many African countries. In 2018, Nigeria was reported to be amongst the few states that paid on time and paid in full²⁰. Amongst the contenders for a permanent seat on the UNSC in Africa, it is only South Africa and Egypt that contribute more than Nigeria.

Nigeria has not only claimed to be a leader in Africa but actually and practically lived up to its claim of leadership. Its Political, Economic and Financial contributions to the liberation of most African States as well as the maintenance of peace and security are unequalled. Nigeria, upon its admission into the United Nations as the 99th State, on the floor of the United Nations, through its Prime Minister, declared its foreign policy thrust. Nigeria placed Africa at the centre of its foreign policy²¹. Nigeria was instrumental to the liberation and independence of Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Cape Verde²² and South Africa. Nigeria did not stop at assisting African states to attain independence but also assisted them in establishing and maintaining their governments. General Murtala Mohammed led the government, after recognizing and assisting the popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola in forming a government at the centre, gave the government a \$20 million financial grant to assist it meet its special needs which included the purchase of military hardware. It also promised an additional \$100 million interest-free loan²³.

Nigeria's leadership role can also be seen in its ability to spearhead the creation of regional organizations. These organizations include the Organization of African Unity now African Union, ECOWAS and ECOMOG. Nigeria's leadership role can also be seen in its ability to champion the signing of the EEC-ACP pact called the Lome Convention on February 28, 1975²⁴. It is indisputable that if the leadership role of any contending state was the only criterion, Nigeria would have an edge over other contenders.

The Nigerian Armed Forces have played a major role in peacekeeping operations in Africa. In 1960, the Nigerian army was involved in peacekeeping operations in Congo. From 1960

¹⁸ Tunde Rahman "Why Nigeria Deserves UN Security Council Permanent Seat" <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2024/10/07/why-nigeria-deserves-un-security-council-permanent-seat/> accessed on the 9/10/2024.

¹⁹ Fifth committee "Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations" <http://nigeriaunmission.org/fifth-committee/> accessed on the 9/10/2024.

²⁰ Agency Report "Nigeria pays \$5.08m full UN dues". April 9, 2018. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/264393-nigeria-pays-5-08m-full-un-dues.html?tztc=1> accessed on the 20/3/2023.

²¹ Chibundu. V.N. "Foreign Policy: With Particular Reference To Nigeria" :(1961-2008)_Ibadan. Spectrum .2009. Pg .1

²² Fawole. W. A. "Nigeria's External Relations and Foreign Policy under Military Rule" (1996-1999) Ile-Ife. O. A. U. Press Ltd (2003) 59.

²³ Fawole pg 97

²⁴ Fawole 75

till date, Nigeria has been involved in 41 peace keeping missions in Africa²⁵. Nigeria is said to have expended 14,785,572 pounds on Congo apart from its \$1,000,000 contribution to the United Nations bonds issued to help defray UN debts accruing from the operations. The Nigerian Military and police have participated in peacekeeping operations in Somalia, Sierra Leone Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Liberia, Guinea Bissau, Burundi, Darfur in Sudan, and Sao Tome and Principe²⁶. Outside Africa, the Nigerian Military has been involved in peacekeeping missions in Lebanon and Croatia. Nigeria's record of military contributions in Africa is unparalleled by any state²⁷. If Military contributions to UN peacekeeping missions were the singular criterion to be used in determining the eligibility of a state to the permanent seat, Nigeria would not have a rival contender in Africa.

Nigeria's Population and Economic Growth

Nigeria, as at 2022 was believed to have a population of about 216,783,381 people²⁸. Its population is also believed to constitute about 47% of West Africa's population. Though the Nigerian State has been plagued by Boko Haram and economic crises, it has great potential. It is the biggest oil exporter in Africa²⁹. It is believed to have over 37 billion barrels of oil reserve and it produces about 2.19 million barrels per day.³⁰ Given Nigeria's rich Potential in human and natural resources, Nigeria is expected to grow a strong and viable economy in some years to come giving the harsh but necessary reforms undertaken by the Government³¹. Nigeria's strong economy coupled with its population is in the best position to scheme and succeed in its bidding for a permanent seat of the United Nations UNSC. This is because its economic strength and population might be advantages that will have assisted it in ensuring international peace and security in the region as well as political stability.

Nigeria's Relations with the Member States of the United Nations

No state in the international scene is an island. Consequently, Nigeria's relations with other member states of the UNGA are an important factor that determines the former's fate as far as its aspiration is concerned. This, as explained earlier, is because the UNGA or its members are key participators in the process of UNSC reform particularly amendment or review of the Charter. Nigeria's relations with the world at large have been described as averagely good³². This is evidenced by Nigeria's ability, in the past to secure the votes of two-thirds for the membership of the UNSC and a non-permanent member. In Africa, Nigeria enjoys the support and goodwill of African states particularly those of the sub-Sahara. Though this may not be a guarantee that it will be able to secure the support of all these states when it comes

²⁵ Michael Olugbode "Nigeria Has Contributed to 41 Peacekeeping Operations Worldwide, Spent \$8bn To Restore Peace in Liberia, Says Defence Chief Irabor" published on the 24th May, 2023. <https://www.arise.tv/nigeria-has-contributed-to-41-peacekeeping-operations-worldwide-spent-irabor> accessed on the 9/10/2024

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ ibid

²⁸ National bureau of statistics "Demographic Statistical Bulletin: executive summary" <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/read/1241422> accessed on the 9/10/2024

²⁹ Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission "Nigeria: Leading Crude Oil Producer In Africa" <https://www.nuprc.gov.ng/nigeria-leading-crude-oil-producer-in-africa/> accessed on the 9/10/2024.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ World Bank Group "Nigeria's Development Update" <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/nigeria/publication/nigeria-development-update-ndu> accessed on the 9/10/2024.

³² Yetunde Bada "Nigeria's Diplomatic relations with the world Good- Anyokuu" <http://www.nannewsnigeria.com/nigerias-diplomatic-relations-world-good-anyaokuu...> accessed 31/5/2015

to voting for its bid, it is most likely that they would support its bid. Nigeria, in the past, has been able to secure the support of two-thirds of members of the General Assembly in its bid for a non-permanent seat. This suggests that it may be able to secure the support of a two-thirds majority now.

With the preceding analysis, one would, ordinarily think that Nigeria's chances of securing a permanent seat are high. We, however, hold a contrary opinion, not because we are not optimistic but because we are being realistic having in mind, the role of the Permanent Five in the increase of the permanent seats. The permanent seats can only be increased when the Charter is amended by way of a review and there cannot be any review of the Charter unless all the Permanent five consent to its review³³. Where a permanent member vetoes the amendment or review, there cannot be a review. What then this means is that every permanent member would have to support the aspirations of any bidder for a permanent seat. Though an aspirant will also need a two-thirds majority of other members of the General Assembly, to our mind, the support of the Permanent Five is more important so that the Permanent Five particularly those that had colonies in Africa can pull votes for an aspirant from their former colonies and allies. The question that now follows is: can Nigeria secure the support of all the Permanent Five?

Impediments to Nigeria's Bid for A Permanent Seat on the United Nations Security Council

Having discussed Nigeria's credentials, it is only proper to consider factors or points that impede its chances of success. These factors are easily ignorable by Nigerian Analysts however; they weigh heavily against Nigeria's interest. These factors are Nigeria's Diplomatic Relations with the Permanent Five and Nigeria's Foreign Policy thrust.

Though Nigeria relies on its foreign policy thrust as a plus point in its bid for a permanent seat, it is my opinion that it is that same foreign policy thrust, particularly to the extent that it places Africa's interest at its heart that stands against its interest. This is because that same policy thrust has placed Nigeria against the interests of America, France and Britain. It would have been consoling if the African states whose interest, Nigeria fought with zeal were appreciative of Nigeria's effort. How do these relations affect Nigeria's interests?

Nigeria's Diplomatic Relations with the Permanent Five were not mentioned earlier as a criterion for assessing Nigeria's prospects, it is practically speaking, the most important factor that determines whether or not there will be any reform or enlargement of the UNSC and whether or not Nigeria will secure a permanent seat. This is because there cannot be any reform without the amendment of the Charter and there cannot be any amendment without the unanimous agreement of the Permanent Five. The provisions of Article 108 prescribe that amendments to the Charter can only come into force when they have been adopted by a vote of two-thirds of the members of the UNGA, and ratified by a two-thirds majority, including all the Permanent Members of the UNSC. The concluding clause of the Article vests in the Permanent Five a Veto power similar to what is obtainable in article 27(3) of the Charter. This means that a decline by one of the permanent members will foil or scuttle the process of amendment and reform of the UNSC. Since Nigeria's biggest hurdle will be its ability to secure the support of all the Permanent Five, what then can we say is the nature, strength and value of Nigeria's Diplomatic relations with the Permanent Five?

³³ See articles 108 and 109 of the Charter.

(a) Nigeria's Diplomatic Relations with the United States

Nigeria's relationship with the US started on a good footing with The US establishing diplomatic ties with the former on the 1st of October 1960³⁴. On that same day, the US sent Joseph Palmer II as its diplomatic envoy to Nigeria³⁵. The seemingly good relationship continued until 1967 when the Nigerian Civil War broke out. Nigeria, during the war, approached the US for support and supply of arms but the US foot dragged and eventually turned down the request. Surprisingly, Russia which had not been Nigeria's friend and which Nigeria kept at bay, gave the latter assistance. After the civil war, Nigeria welcomed Russia as a friend. This development was not welcomed by the US. Nigeria, still in a bid to keep to her foreign policy of supporting the independence of African colonies and states placed herself against the interest of America. Nigeria's unilateral recognition of MPLA (Movement for the Liberation of Angola) party against America's favoured UNITA (Union for the Total Independence of Angola) party of Angola³⁶ estranged Nigeria as a friend. The relations between Nigeria and the US reached hit the bottom during the regime of Gen. Sani Abacha.³⁷ With the nature of the inconsistent relations between the two countries, it is uncertain if the US will support Nigeria's Bid. In any case, the interest of the US is key to her foreign Policy and relations. This means that if at the material time, the Interest of the US is better buttered by Nigeria's bid for the permanent seat; it will support the bid of the latter.

(b) Nigeria's Relations with France

Nigeria established relations with France on the 1st of October 1960³⁸. Since then, the established relations have blown hot and cold. Though presently, the relations appear to be cordial and warm, the said relations commenced on a bad note with the latter's atomic bomb test on the Sahara Desert in 1961. Nigeria, under its foreign policy thrust of Africa as its centerpiece, immediately terminated its relations with France³⁹. From 1961 to 1967 when civil war commenced, Nigeria and France never had warm relations. The thaw in the relations culminated in the latter's support for Biafra⁴⁰. This was all in a bid to destabilize Nigeria to reduce its influence on Francophone states. After the civil war, Nigeria moved to exert more influence on Francophone countries by strengthening them and assisting them financially particularly the Franco-Phone countries that were her neighbour. Nigeria through the framework of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) now referred to as the African Union (AU) maintained control and influence on Franco-phone states all to the chagrin of France⁴¹. With the latter's experience with Nigeria, it will be difficult for it to support its bid. At present, the relations between the two states appear to be warm and good but then, it would never result in France supporting Nigeria's Bid for a permanent seat. Apart from the said experience, France would always prefer to support its former colony against any other country. This is not unconnected with

³⁴ US-Nigeria Business Council "History of the United States Ambassadors to Nigeria" <https://www.usnigeria.org/history-of-united-states-ambassadors-to-nigeria/> accessed on the 9/10/2024.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Fawole. W.A. loc cit.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Lawal. A.A: "Nigeria-France Relations-Political" <http://www.nigeriafrance.com/page16.html> accessed on the 12/5/2015.

³⁹ JANGUZA AREWA "Nigeria and France: Geo-Political Rivals No more" <http://janguzaarewa.blogspot.com.ng/2015/07/nigeria-and-france-geopolitical-rivals.html> Accessed on the 20/12/2015

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

its policy of assimilation⁴². It is doubtful if France will support the revolting states of Niger, Burkina Faso, etc. All these points suggest that Nigeria is never close to securing France's vote for a permanent seat.

Nigeria – United Kingdom Diplomatic Relation

Nigeria's relations with Britain began on a good note. Nigeria got her independence without arms struggle. Britain, before and after it handed over power, expressed high hopes and confidence in the ability of Nigeria to govern itself. The Prime Minister, Tafawa Belewa, in declaring the foreign policy of Nigeria admitted that though Nigeria would not align with any power bloc as a matter of routine, it will not forget its old friends and it was proud to have been accepted into the commonwealth⁴³.

The somewhat warm relations of the two countries soon thawed. Nigeria soon became strong-willed and stubborn. Nigeria in a bid to promote her interest and that of Africa, forced foreign companies, most of whom were British companies to indigenize so as to allow for Nigerian participation. Nigerian Government unilaterally cancelled the scheduled visit of the British monarch to Nigeria. Nigeria-British relations reached its lowest ebb when the then Military Government of General Muhammadu Buhari orchestrated a botched attempt to kidnap Alhaji Umaru Dikko in London for onward journey home. This act was considered by Britain as an insult and a security breach⁴⁴. The British authorities responded by seizing the Nigerian Airways cargo plane, and expelling two Nigerian Diplomats from Britain, namely: Peter Oyedele (counsellor) and Edet Okon (attaché) for engaging in acts incompatible with their diplomatic status. Nigeria retaliated by seizing a British Caledonian Jumbo Jet en route to London with two hundred and twenty-one passengers and a crew of twenty-two. It also expelled two British Diplomats, namely: John Harrison (Head of Chancery)⁴⁵ and Stewart Evans (an attaché) and proceeded to recall its High Commissioners in London, and asked London to recall its counterpart in Lagos: sir Hamilton Whyte⁴⁶. Though in the recent past, Nigeria-Britain relations have not been bad, it is doubtful if Nigeria's interest will have the support of Britain. This is more so that British Colonial policy and interest were nothing but economic benefits.

Nigeria – China Diplomatic Relation

Though Nigeria, in 1960, declared to the world its desire not to align with any power bloc, it had a soft spot for Western States. The Pre-Nigerian Civil War period did not experience any significant relations with China. During the civil war, the Chinese Government was alleged to have supported the secessionist Biafra⁴⁷. After the civil war, Nigeria sought friendship with China. General Gowon in 1971, for the first time, visited China⁴⁸. Since then, Nigeria's

⁴² Dashe. N.D. "Nigeria in the 21st Century: challenges in Diplomatic relations" www.academia.edu/.../NIGERIA_IN_THE_21_ST_CENTURY_CHAL... accessed on the 15th of May 2016.

⁴³ This statement implies that Nigeria still desired to keep its good and warm relations with Britain as a friend and

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Abdul-Gafar Tobi Oshodi "Nigeria and China: understanding the imbalance relationship" <https://www.theafricareport.com/29060/nigeria-and-china-understanding-the-imbalanced-relationship/> accessed on the 9/10/2024

⁴⁸ Chukwuma Mwanya et al "how I helped establish Nigeria-China relations by Gowon" <https://guardian.ng/news/how-i-helped-establish-nigeria-china-relations-by-gowon/> accessed on the 9/10/2024

relations with China particularly in the area of trade have grown steadily⁴⁹. Nigerian Leaders like General Olusegun Obasanjo, Gen. Sani Abacha, President Yar'adua, Mohammadu Buhari etc. have successively strengthened ties with China. As it remains today, Nigeria is one of China's big markets in Africa⁵⁰. The question now is: will this trade with China result in the latter's support of Nigeria's Bid for a permanent seat on the Security Council? It may, to our minds result in support for Nigeria's bid. This is more so that China has not exercised veto powers in an unjust manner like Russia and America have done. Since China has not had any serious face-off with Nigeria, it may support Nigeria's Bid. The then-Chinese leader of Parliament, Zhang Dejiang had expressed China's resolve to support Nigeria in its bid to secure a permanent seat on the Security Council⁵¹. Whether this support will truly play out when the time comes is another question for another day.

Nigeria – Russia Diplomatic Relation

Nigeria is said to have established relations with Russia in 1961. Ever since Nigeria established relations with Russia, there has been a sustained relationship though no special Commitment from Nigeria particularly before the Civil War. Nigeria was, before the Civil War, a member of the Non-Alignment States in principle but was in actions, pro-west. The Nigerian Government banned Soviet Literature and discouraged Nigerians from taking Soviet Scholarship. During the Civil War, the Soviet Union, which did not enjoy Nigeria's friendship, stood by Nigeria⁵². This resulted in General Gowon Visiting the Soviet Union for the first time in 1970. Since the visit in 1970, Nigeria's relations with the Soviet Union now Russia have grown significantly. The climax of the relations was reached in 2001 when the then president of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo visited Russia and the Russian president returned the visit⁵³. The Nigerian Government has signed many agreements with Russia though a large number of such agreements have not yielded results⁵⁴. Though both countries appear to have a good relationship, it is not sure if Russia would support Nigeria's bid for a permanent seat on the UNSC. This is because Russia has also established the same extent of relations if not more with other bidding states. Russia is a member of the BRICS Group⁵⁵. BRICS is the acronym for an association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa⁵⁶. Russian relations with South Africa, Mali and Burkina Faso grow by the day⁵⁷. Amongst these BRICS states are two aspirants namely India and South Africa. This development mares Nigeria's chances of getting Russia's support.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Tijani.Mayowa "China 'backs' Nigeria for permanent UN seat" August 31, 2015 8:52 pm <https://www.thecable.ng/china-supports-nigeria-permanent-un-security-council-seat/> accessed on the 9/10/2024

⁵² Edgar Githua. "Nigeria and Russia – a history of broken promises" <https://african.business/2024/08/economy/nigeria-and-russia-a-history-of-broken-promises> accessed on the 9/10/2024

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ B.B.C "Brics: What is the group and which countries have joined?" <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-66525474> accessed on the 9/10/2024

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Mariel Ferragamo "Russia's Growing Footprint in Africa" Council on foreign relations <https://www.cfr.org/background/russias-growing-footprint-africa> accessed on the 9/10/2024

Prospect of Reform of the UN Security Council

It is our view that a hundred years from now, there will never be any reform of the UNSC to increase the permanent seats on the UNSC unless the United Nations crumbles as a result of its failure to avert a third world war in which case a new body would be formed. Our opinion is informed by our knowledge of how the UN was formed. The formation of the United Nations was headed by the allied powers who were the victors of the Second World War. The Allied forces began by drafting the United Nations Declaration which was signed by 26 nations in January 1942 as an act of opposition to Germany, Italy and Japan being the axis powers⁵⁸. The idea soon metamorphosed into the formation of the UN with the charter as its constituting instrument⁵⁹. On the 25th of April 1945, at the San Francisco conference, the principles of the Charter were formulated. The Charter was signed by the representatives of fifty (50) Countries on the 26 of June 1945. The UN officially came into existence on the 24th of October 1945 when the Charter was ratified by the Permanent Five. The pioneer members accepted the position of the Permanent Five as the “police” of the world⁶⁰. They may have accepted it in good faith and ignorant of the implications but then, their acceptance of this arrangement has closed the door against them. If the allied powers had wanted an all-inclusive UNSC, they would have invited members of the Council under the defunct League of Nations but they did not. This clearly shows that they did not intend to share their veto powers as permanent members of the UNSC with any state outside their league. How then would they want to share it now more so that the increase in the membership of the UN has increased their sphere of influence? America had given a condition that it would only support the reform if new members would not be given veto powers. We all know that the substance or the potency of the powers of the permanent members of the UNSC lies in their veto powers. The world would wait forever but the permanent members of the UNSC would never support the increase in the seat of permanent members. If some states like Russia and the US had the opportunity to displace each other on their seat, they would do that.

Summary and Conclusion

Having discussed extensively the powers of the UNSC, Its structure and the clamour for its reform, we hereby recommend that if other states that are not permanent members of the Security Council are kin about their clamour for a reform, they should unite and threaten to pull out of the UN to form another organization. This will force the permanent members to reform the Security Council. The UNSC has shown clearly that it cannot maintain international peace and security. Its permanent members like the US and Russia have, engaged in acts that are capable of undermining international peace and security. The US has vetoed many resolutions for the creation of the state of Palestine as well as any step towards the sanctioning Israel. Russia has annexed Crimea and invaded Ukraine without any threat from the UNSC. China has vowed to take over Taiwan on the basis that it is her territory. The Permanent Five who are supposed to ensure international peace and security are undermining the said peace and security and are most likely going to plunge the world into another third world war.

⁵⁸ MILESTONE 1937-1945: OFFICE OF THE HISTORIAN “The formation of the United Nations” <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/un> accessed on the 9/10/2024

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.