

“Utmost Freedom: The Real Essence of National Interest”

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Utmost Freedom: The Real Essence of National Interest

Introduction

There are variegated conceptions of interests in the literature. Badejo 2023 examines a number of these before settling for “something that is of great value for, or likely to affect you”¹. In this sense, interests is/are crucial values for human beings. They are goals and objectives, needs or desires of individuals.

However, it is not only individuals that communicate interests in society. Primordial or associational groups have either or both of ascribed and objective realities that are sometimes formally stated in a document dubbed constitution, memorandum of understanding (MoU) or in similar documents. Sometimes, groups may also covertly or scantily declare their interests for whatever reasons that in themselves, are already suggestive of the dynamics of interests. Also, the variance among nation-states as to what is/are most critical for them to survive, thrive, or stay relevant and be accepted in the community of nations is a demonstration of the interplay of interests. In this case, national interest.

In effect, there are different levels in the conceptualisation of interests. The individual interests are aggregated and articulated within larger wholes, starting from the family, to the other levels of progressively widening layers of human organisation. Groups/classes and other collective interests represent a more complex level from that of individuals. Spatial divisions also have varying interests, even if ascribed as part of the consideration of groups/collective interests. Nation-states and the globe within which they exist, operate within different levels of interests with respect to articulation, aggregation and management. It is the later concern on national interest within the current global reality that is of concern in this presentation.

This paper demonstrates that utmost freedom, which is best concretised as the summation of all the rights and freedoms, inherent in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with notable and directly visible impact in the lives of people, is the real essence of national interest.

National Interest

¹ Babafemi A. Badejo, (2023), “Interests”, Inaugural Lecture Series 001, Maiden Edition, Chrisland University, Abeokuta, Nigeria. This paper is an offshoot, and has greatly benefited from this inaugural lecture, including liberally lifting ideas from it.

National interest is constantly posited as the rationale for the behaviour of States in the international system. It is put forth as the basis for the foreign policies of countries². Very easily, national interest brings to the minds of many, issues around sovereignty, territorial integrity, alliances, cooperation and integration arrangements for economic development of a country. This notion is often propagated as if to say the interest of the state, especially vis-a-vis other states is different or removed from the realities of the lives of the people. Hence it is very important to consider our understanding of national interest. What does it entail in any complex country? How do we agree on its parameters? More importantly, of what importance is national interest to the individual as a human being? This raises the question of the interests of the human being or put differently, the purpose of man.

Basically, national interest refers to the set of objectives and goals that a nation puts forth and hopefully implements for the realisation of improved well-being of its nationals. It is not everyday or every other day decisions. They are enduring standpoints based on lasting values that are as fundamental to the right to life for the individual³. National interest involves the core objectives and priorities that nations seek to achieve and protect in their relations with other nations and in the pursuit of their own well-being or interest.

Plato, in his: *Republic*, argued essentially, that what is good for the ruler is good for everyone in the society. He argued that the natural obligation of the ruler is to foster the well-being of his entire society (the bigger picture). Plato argued that the happiness of the parts (individual self-interest) is expendable for the common good. So, in this case, the interest of the ruler is the national interest. Or put another way as Louis XIV, as an absolute monarch, was reported to have said before the Parliament of Paris in 1655: “L’Etat c’est moi”, that is, I am the State. If he had really said so (since there are doubts, he did), it meant that his will was the national interest. In Nazi Germany, Rudolf Walter Richard Hess equally pronounced that: “Hitler is Germany and Germany is Hitler”.⁴

² Babafemi A. Badejo, (2023), “Interests”, Inaugural Lecture Series 001, Maiden Edition, Chrisland University, Abeokuta, Nigeria.

³ Babafemi A. Badejo, (2023), “Interests”, Inaugural Lecture Series 001, Maiden Edition, Chrisland University, Abeokuta, Nigeria.

⁴ Notes on Revelation: Nazis: The Occult Conspiracy. (1998). Judeo-Christian Research. Retrieved June 16, 2023, from <https://iuchre.org/nor/nazis.htm>

Efforts to reduce the powers of Kings in favour of parliamentary governance have resulted in complexities in trying to figure out the interests of the State or national interest. It is easily assumed that representatives and their respective political parties as institutions for the aggregation of individual interests express constituents' interests in Parliaments where compromises are arrived at after rational arguments have been heard. The State, in this sense, is presented as existing for the management of all interests in society.

Nothing could be further from the truth with respect to the State as a disinterested, impartial arbiter of all interests in society. In a review of the literature, we concluded that the State is: "the means of social control and class domination, a social relation which manifests in the form of brute force and/or ideological socialisation, as well as the manipulation of market forces through economic policies, all of which are designed to ensure compliance with defined property rules"⁵.

The State, imbued with dominance over the means of force for ensuring compliance with its dictates, is the State of the dominant forces in society. States represent the dominant forces, (whether internal or external), in their respective territories. The State, at the international level, depending on the level of available power at its disposal, collaborates, competes, or enters into conflicts with other States in ensuring the allocation of global resources towards its dominant social relations.

Scholars and statesmen alike do attribute some interests to mankind in general. For instance, peace and security in the world (as a whole), is often ascribed as a value for all human beings. This position is clearly stated as one of the main interests of mankind. Development is also added to this category⁶. So also, is the recognition of the importance of the role of the climatic situation on human lives, including accounting for a good percentage of the conflicts among human beings.

Beyond peace and security are problems of the worsening natural environmental situations in terms of climate change and the general deleterious accompanying situations like depletion of the ozone layer, disappearing biodiversity, droughts and flooding, melting of the ice at the north pole, pollution of the environment constituting problems for the ecosystem and threatening the

⁵See, Babafemi A. Badejo, "Some Methodological Issues in the Relationship Between Politics and Planning in the Post-Colonial State," *The Journal of General Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1, (1982), pp. 50-66.

⁶ Babafemi A. Badejo, (2023), "Interests", Inaugural Lecture Series 001, Maiden Edition, Chrisland University, Abeokuta, Nigeria.

quality of air, water, and foods that human beings consume, etc. Efforts on reduction of global warming are also put forward as global interest. However, in spite of the pressures on nature, the more vulnerable countries have, so far, not been able to get the more powerful countries to change track and subsidise the weaker countries in cutting down on scientifically posited causes of global warming.

Power, influence and authority are modalities involved in providing responses to interests-driven demands of each individual, families, groups, classes, spatial entities, and of course, nations/States. Power is an important instrument needed in the allocation of values. In effect, power (the capacity to compel obedience) which can be pulled in both positive and negative directions), is important in managing interests, that is, in the management of international politics⁷.

With power, there is the element of coercion. Influence, on the other hand, appears more subtle. It is the ability to shape the stance of others through persuasion or subtle use of pressure that does not strike the person or the entity at the receiving end that pressure is being exerted. Ideological suasion, at the international level, involves the deployment of heavily suasion laden concepts like democracy and the place of religion as a means of control at the national level.

Authority, considered as power backed by some level of legitimacy, derives from the routinised ways of doing things. It bestows a right to allocate values to individuals and processes. Here, cultures and religions have set patterns on who has the right to allocate values. At the larger level, the routinised ways of doing things have been rendered into constitutions or formal and informal laws, hence the appearance of legitimacy is conferred on those wielding the toga of authority in allocating interests or values. Routinised rules are called upon for operational relationships at the international level. In this regard, emphasis is put on operating on the basis of a “rules based” international order.

Complex International Institutional Arrangements

Beyond the national level, is the international level at which nation-states seek to derive optimal benefits, ostensibly for the totality of the interests in each country. This *raison d’etre*, is based on the ascription of interests to the nation-state⁸. Foremost in this is the protection of the

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

sovereignty, (an attribute of a state that makes it free from the will of other states) and territorial integrity of the State.

There are problems with this conception. Many States, especially in Africa, are unable to defend their respective territories, especially from armed non-state actors. In such situations where non-state actors hoist flags over territories within what is regarded as the boundaries of a nation-state raises questions about defense of territorial integrity as yardstick for a conception of national interest.

The right to life and freedom from poverty and hunger are not guaranteed by many African States. A State that cannot protect the lives and properties of citizens cannot be a sovereign properly so called in spite of a tokenistic seat at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)⁹. Territorial integrity, and permutations of alliances and cooperation is meaningless when the citizens of a State migrate in unreasonably high numbers in search for better life opportunities in other territories that offer same.

The problem of relative power imbalances at the international level was well-designed by the victors at the end of the second world war. The relative wealth of the United States gave it the opportunity to offer grants and loans to devastated Europe¹⁰. Aside from having permanent seats, the US, UK, France, Russia and China agreed to have veto powers among themselves, with respect to the making of substantive decisions at the UN Security Council. The US also granted itself controlling powers within international entities like the Bretton Woods Institutions.

The commitment of these post-second world war institutions to manage resources and power at the world level, in the interests of former colonies, remain in doubt. Leadership in some Asian countries like China, South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, and others, have been able to adopt different approaches, especially in fostering development for the realisation of their respective national interests. Developing countries, in the large part, and especially those in Africa, remain in unequal relationships worsening their respective lots.

Nigeria's National Interest

Nigeria was a colony when many of the interests-managing institutions at the international level were put in place. Nonetheless, it has been able to accede to the treaties that set up several

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

institutions for international governance, without the capacity to change them or influence them for its national interest. This problem has continued even with respect to institutions set up after Nigeria's independence. This complexity of interests and power plays, raises the legitimate question; "Whose Interests in actuality do these International (Bretton-Woods) Institutions really represent? Or put another way, are these institutions friends or foes with respect to the realisation of the interests of African countries.

Since that so-called independence, Nigeria has been trying to define its national interest. For this purpose, the country held two major conferences involving a cross-section of its peoples to define its national interests. The one in 1961 suggested the setting up of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs to assist the Federal Government on its foreign policy goals.

The 'All-Nigeria People Conference on Foreign Policy,' at Kuru, Jos, in 1986, largely followed the definition of national interest proffered by the military President Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida. He suggested that Nigeria's national interest is coterminous with the national security interest, which he identified as being beyond the narrow sense of military security, offering a conception with a more comprehensive sense of economic, political and social security. This vague conception, in practical terms, has yet to result in pulling most Nigerians out of poverty. The situation may in fact be worsening.

Section 19 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria stipulated some foreign policy objectives that further beam light on the direction of Nigeria's national interest. It states that the foreign policy objectives shall include:

- (a) Promotion and protection of the national interest;
- (b) Promotion of African integration and support for African unity;
- (c) Promotion of international co-operation for the consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect among all nations and elimination of discrimination in all its manifestations;
- (d) Respect for international law and treaty obligations as well as the seeking of settlement of international disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication; and
- (e) Promotion of a just world economic order.

The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), in 2019, came up with a document it called: *National Security Strategy*. In this document, the FGN defined the national interest when it

stated: “Our interests are the preservation of Nigeria’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, security and the welfare of her people. We will preserve democracy, guarantee human security and combat all threats to peace in our territory. As a stakeholder in the global space, Nigeria will continue to contribute to the maintenance of international peace, security and cooperation as well as the prevention and resolution of intra-state, inter-state, regional and international conflicts”.¹¹

The FGN went further to state the mechanisms it would use to achieve the national interest. In this regard, it focused on multilateral institutions it belongs to. These major institutions for the aggregation and articulation of Nigeria’s interests are: The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU), the United Nations (UN), and the norms and standards of international law.¹² The observance of democratic values and their promotion in Africa and beyond as well as the enhancement of cooperation in bilateral, regional and multilateral economic spheres are also expressed in letters as part of our national interest.

Political Scientists and International Relations experts have not been left out of the effort to define Nigeria’s national interest. Many have offered prescriptive answers on Nigeria’s national interest. One such effort was by Olajide Aluko who in his popular 1981 essay defines Nigeria’s national interest as consisting of six important elements in descending order of priority¹³:

- (i) Self-preservation of the country
- (ii) Defense and maintenance of the country’s independence
- (iii) Economic and social well-being of the people
- (iv) Defense, preservation, and promotion of the ways of life, especially their democratic values,
- (v) Enhancement of the country’s standing and status in world capitals, especially in Africa and
- (vi) Promotion of world peace.

¹¹ See, National Counter Terrorism Centre, Office of National Security Adviser. (2020, March 10). *NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY 2019 – The National Counter Terrorism Centre*. The National Counter Terrorism Centre. Retrieved July 15, 2023, from <https://ctc.gov.ng/national-security-strategy-2019/>

¹² Trying to find Nigeria’s national interest in instruments for the achievement of foreign policy, (however best it is called centrepiece, concentricism etc.), cannot be apt.

¹³ Babafemi A. Badejo, (2023), “Interests”, Inaugural Lecture Series 001, Maiden Edition, Chrisland University, Abeokuta, Nigeria.

Aluko suggested that the first three listed are 'vital', or if you like core interests that cannot be compromised under any circumstances. It is important, however, to note that he was not oblivious of the role that national power capabilities play in ensuring that the core interests are realised. Such power capabilities are not limited to military ones. After all, a country that is constantly dependent on other countries to feed its population that are constantly desirous of abandoning ship to other lands cannot be a sovereign properly so called. Neither is a country self-preserving if citizens' rights to life are constantly being challenged by internal and external forces.

It is imperative, however, that it is human (whether as individuals or in groups/classes), interests in society that are of prime importance. Subsistence of a country is of importance if it ensures the interests of people(s) within the country. However, the tendency is to put across, the issue of the well-being of people in abstract terms such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, security, cultural preservation, and the promotion of certain values and ideologies, such as, free enterprise and democracy. What does this conception of national interest mean for the population at large? To what extent is the sovereignty of a country whose citizens are perennially facing armed insurrection without the commitment and capacity of the Sovereign to provide protection, worth being preserved? Or what about the situation of citizens annually facing famine and dying from starvation? What does the defense of territorial integrity mean to such citizens?

Can the protection of the critical and fundamental interests of individuals be used as indices for the assessment of progress in upholding national interests? A response to these questions leads towards the concretisation of national interest in the direction of visible interests of people. This is a superior focus in the handling of national interests. This leads towards an examination of the purpose of the human being.

Utmost Freedom: The Purpose of Human Beings

Humans all over the world genuinely desire freedoms on many grounds. They need protection of their lives and properties; freedom from asphyxiation, dehydration and starvation; they desire the freedom to associate and worship as they prefer etc. Nations are constantly entangled in a struggle for balance that ensures the protection of critical essential liberties (freedoms from

and freedoms to, as provided for in the UDHR and the UN SDGs 2030) while also addressing pressing societal needs and challenges.

A major expected outcome of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the plan of action for people, planet and prosperity, is to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom - a term popularised by Kofi Annan.¹⁴ The comprehensive nature of the SDGs in pointing to many freedoms beyond those articulated by Kofi Annan's "larger freedom", has attracted the usage of utmost freedom for our purposes¹⁵.

It is positive that Nigeria keyed into the UDHR and the SDGs. As a result, it is possible to examine the state of utmost freedom in Nigeria. The state of utmost freedom is an idyllic perfect state¹⁶. It would be the realisation of the conception of paradise on earth rather than waiting for heaven. However, in spite of this state being utopic, it could be approximated as the summation of all the essential freedoms needed for the good life with most of these being pulled together under the UDHR and the SDGs. Utmost freedom is an ideal state on the realisation of freedoms in which all freedoms associated with development, peace and security, human rights, and humanitarianism are optimised. Such an ideal state can be aimed at on earth even if it cannot be realised. An approximation of the extent to which utmost freedom has been attained in a polity can be documented¹⁷.

A final state of utmost freedom is unquantifiable. However, values can be attached to the goals enunciated in the UDHR and the SDGs. Such indices, when calculated, can give a composite figure that could allow time comparison as well as inter-state comparative analysis on efforts towards utmost freedom¹⁸. It is important, to note, however, that the final score aimed at approximating utmost freedom is epoch bound. Knowledge and human capacities could, in a

¹⁴ United Nations, Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A/RES/70/1

¹⁵ Babafemi A. Badejo, "The Interlinkages between the Development, Peace and Security, Human Rights and Humanitarian Pillars in the West and Central Africa Subregions" Submitted to the UN ECA, February 2, 2021 See also, Babafemi A. Badejo, *Nigerians' Views on National Turmoil: A Situational Quadruple Nexus Analysis*, (Lagos: Yintab Books, 2022).

¹⁶ Babafemi A. Badejo, *Nigerians' Views on National Turmoil: A Situational Quadruple Nexus Analysis*, (Lagos: Yintab Books, 2022).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

future epoch, dictate modifications and/or improvements on the current knowledge about requisite freedoms¹⁹.

The rights from which freedoms are derived have been debated for centuries. They have since been stipulated in the UDHR and the SDGs as follows:

Rights/Freedoms Guaranteed under the UDHR

The 30 Articles of the UDHR bear specific rights and freedoms.

1. All human beings are born free and equal.
2. No discrimination. The rights in the UDHR belong to everyone, no matter who we are, where we're from, or whatever we believe.
3. Right to life, to live in freedom safely.
4. Freedom from slavery.
5. No torture and inhuman treatment.
6. Equal right/access to the law.
7. Equality before the law.
8. Right to be treated fairly by the court.
9. Freedom from unfair/unjust detention.
10. Right/Freedom of access to trial.
11. Right of innocence until proven guilty.
12. Right to privacy.
13. Right to movement and residence.
14. Right to Asylum.
15. Right to Nationality.
16. Right to marry and have a family.
17. Right to own properties.
18. Freedom of thought and religion.
19. Freedom of opinion and expression.
20. Right to Assemble.
21. Right to democracy.
22. Right to Social Security.
23. Right to Work.

¹⁹ Ibid.

24. Right to Rest and Holiday.
25. Right to access Social Services.
26. Right to Education.
27. Right/Freedom of Cultural and Arts expression.
28. Freedom around the world.
29. Everyone is free, but subject to the Law.
30. The rights and freedoms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are inalienable or cannot be taken away or denied.

Freedom implicit in the SDGs

S/N	Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Freedom Measure
1.	No Poverty	Freedom from poverty
2.	Zero Hunger	Freedom from hunger
3.	Good Health and Well-being	Freedom from want of quality healthcare
4.	Quality Education	Freedom from illiteracy
5.	Gender Equality	Freedom from gender inequality
6.	Clean Water and Sanitation	Freedom from lack of clean water and sanitary health
7.	Affordable and Clean Energy	Freedom from lack of clean & affordable energy
8.	Decent Work and Economic Growth	Freedom from lack of employment and sources of livelihoods
9.	Industry Innovation and Infrastructure	Freedom of access to industrialisation & innovation
10.	Reduced Inequalities	Freedom from unfair, discriminatory and unequal treatment

11.	Sustainable Cities & Communities	Freedom of access to decent cities & communities
12.	Responsible Consumption and production	Freedom of access to consumption & productivity
13.	Climate Action	Freedom from harmful effects of climate change
14.	Life below Water	Freedom of access to life in the aquatic habitats
15.	Life on Land	Freedom of access to life on land
16.	Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions	Freedom from insecurities and injustices
17.	Partnerships for the Goals	Freedom to build partnerships

Towards an Utmost Freedom Index

The sustained search for improved experience for humanity, has resulted in the design of different measures and instruments for assessing and analysing various aspects of human well-being. Progressively, we have seen the use of the Human Development Index (HDI), and the Human Security Index (HSI).

The HDI was created to emphasize that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth alone. The HDI is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and having a decent standard of living²⁰. The scores for the three HDI dimension indices are then aggregated into a composite index²¹.

The HSI is a transformation of HDI, that followed the conception of the idea of Human Security. The HSI aims to characterise the security of an individual or group at home, in one's village, country, and on earth. It seeks to measure how well everyone is treated. Are humans

²⁰ Human Development Reports. (n.d.). Human Development Index | Human Development Reports. Human Development Reports. Retrieved July 12, 2023, from <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index>

²¹ Ibid.

unduly deprived of education/knowledge and a healthy and peaceful life? The HSI aims to support existing and future developers of well-intentioned indicators which may be used by development analysts/strategists/implementers, by emphasizing outcomes rather than modalities²². The HSI encompasses a wide range of factors, including economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, political, and military security. The purpose of the HSI is to assess the vulnerabilities and risks which individuals face and to promote policies and interventions to enhance human security.

The Human Security Index consists of three key components, which include various different indicators²³:

1. Economic Fabric Index
2. Environmental Fabric Index
3. Social Fabric Index

The Utmost Freedom Index (UFI)

The UFI will be a progression on the HDI and the HSI. The UFI offers a documentation of the extent to which a numeric approximation of utmost freedom has been attained in a polity. The UFI comprises the combination of the UDHR, and the SDGs, with measures of progress in the situational foundational issues: Governance in terms of Leadership Deficit, including efforts on ameliorating corruption; measure of the positive and negative effects of External Dynamics; a measure of the role of Institutions and Resources, as developed in the situational quadruple nexus framework (SQN)²⁴.

The UFI establishes a common denominator (improved/good life for the people) between foreign policy, and domestic politics. This common line of interests is the national interest. It is a focus on the lives of human beings in their respective and collective strives to achieve utmost freedom. A focus on utmost freedom, does not only take away the dichotomy in pigeonholing foreign politics from domestic politics, but also provides a thread of national

²² CROP. (2016, 09 14). The Human Security Index - CROP. Crop.org. Retrieved July 12, 2023, from <https://www.crop.org/Other-Resources/Knowledge-Platforms/The-Human-Security-Index.aspx>

²³ Dimitrijević, I., Stekić, N., & Tatalović, S. (n.d.). HS Index and International Comparisons. Human Security Course. Retrieved July 12, 2023, from <https://humansecuritycourse.info/module-3-human-security-and-development-in-research/hs-index-and-international-comparisons/>

²⁴ This will be elaborated on shortly.

interest that rests wholly on the extent to which the situational foundational issues are addressed towards improving the lives of human beings.

The UFI is a composite measure of three key indicators;

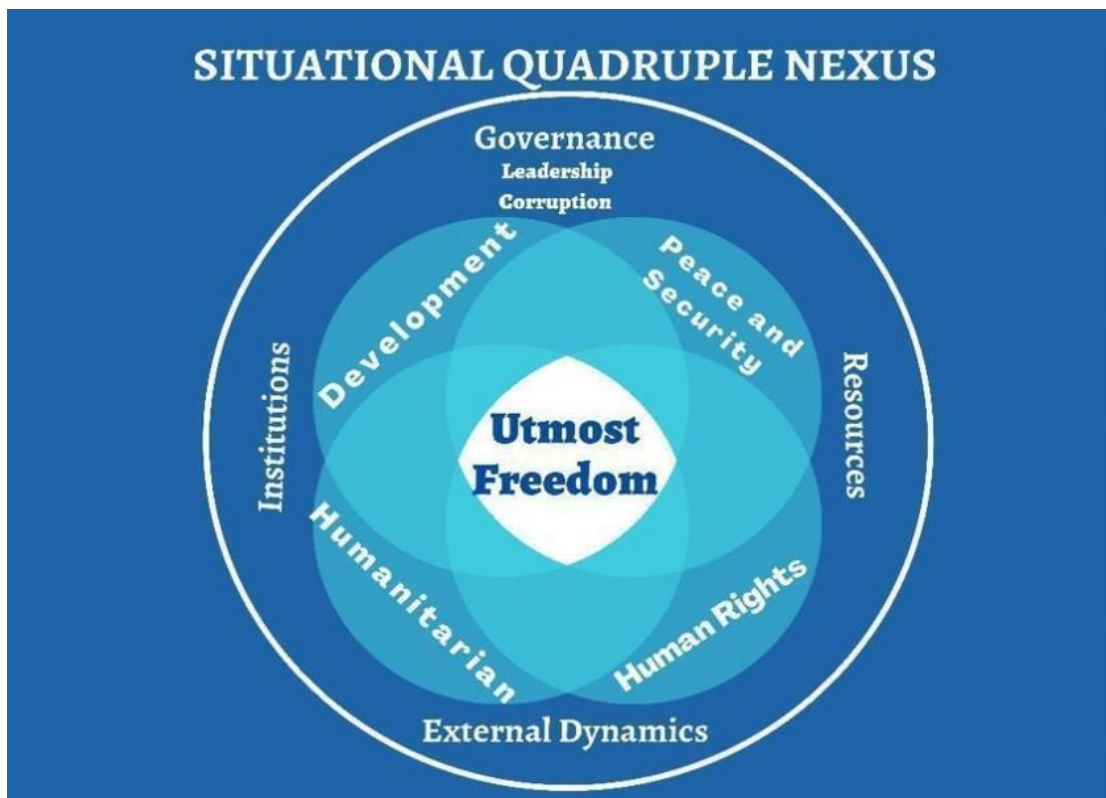
1. Comparative progress in achieving the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
2. Comparative progress in realising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
3. The success in synergising the capacities to enhance the situational foundational issues.

Just like the HDI, the UFI measures scores for the three UFI dimension indices above, which are then aggregated into a composite index. Such an index takes us far away from abstract terms in favour of a human-centric national interest.

Situational Quadruple Nexus (SQN)

In trying to unravel the interests of nation-states within the global arena and on how to ameliorate deficiencies at the same time, the situational quadruple nexus (SQN) framework is very useful. This analytical framework puts forth the crucial interlinked pillars for subsistence in society: peace/security, development, human rights and humanitarianism²⁵. Realising that interlinked pillars are not self-implementing in society, the SQN analytic framework considers the situational foundation on which interlinked pillars rest. The situational foundational issues as shown pictorially below include: governance, external dynamics, institutions and resources.

²⁵United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. (2022). Interlinkages between the development, peace and security, human rights and humanitarian pillars in West and Central Africa. ECA Repository. Retrieved June 16, 2023, from <https://repository.uneca.org/bitstream/handle/10855/48111/b12004121.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> & Tschudin, A. (2022), Strengthening the Capacity of African Countries to Design and Implement Policies that Promote the Nexus between Peace, Humanitarian Work, Development and Human Rights for an Accelerated Implementation of the SDGs, United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa. https://www.un.org/osaa/sites/www.un.org.osaa/files/files/documents/2022/pub/study_strengthening_capacity_nexus_en.pdf



The Situational Quadruple Nexus Framework²⁶

The situational foundation issues are elaborated as follows:

Governance

The core of governance in this framework are leadership deficit and corruption. To tackle corruption successfully is to solve the problem of rule of law. Corruption has an inverse relationship with the rule of law²⁷.

External dynamics

External dynamics are the totality of influences—positive and negative—that affect policy choices, especially from the point of the relationships between African states with major international interests that could potentially be beneficial or destructive. External dynamics go beyond neo-colonial as well as post-World War II structures to include other recent concerns

²⁶ See, Babafemi A. Badejo., "Peace & Security Operate Within a Quadruple Nexus". Presentation at the International Peace Day town hall & community gathering, September 21, 2020, & Babafemi A. Badejo, *Nigerians' Views on National Turmoil: A Situational Quadruple Nexus Analysis*, (Lagos: Yintab Books, 2022).

²⁷ Badejo, B. A. (2022, December 22). An Approach to Sustainable Development: Understanding the Quadruple Nexus - Kujenga Amani. Kujenga Amani. Retrieved July 12, 2023, from <https://kujenga-amani.ssrc.org/2022/12/22/an-approach-to-sustainable-development-understanding-the-quadruple-nexus/>

like climate change and the impact of terror franchises. External dynamics are often ignored by scholars in the liberal orientation, whereas the structuralist dependency theorists over-focus on it and pay scanty attention to governance inadequacies, in particular, leadership deficit and corruption²⁸.

The realities of external dynamics that inhibit utmost freedom in Africa, could play out in a number of ways either subtly or in overt expressions. It could, for instance, be in the form of benign neglect. Western interests and big power giants in clearly calculated moves, deliberately choose not to interfere or take active measures in ameliorating certain situations affecting Africa and other parts of the world.

Institutions

Institutions handle the aggregation, articulation and management of interests in society. Institutions go beyond pressure groups and parties in the political arena and include others like social institutions, including civil society organisations (CSOs), religious/faith-based entities, traditional and primordial institutions, the media, and even private institutions like securities and exchange institutions etc.

Resources

Resources are always crucial. Availability of human and material resources is important for any effort aimed at moving Africa forward. The continued exploitation of Africa's resources dating back to the colonial enterprise into the era of international finance capitalists and foreign companies cannot be overstated. Marshall Plan for Europe was meant to counter any inroads of communism countering western capitalism. With no similar threat that cannot be contained in Africa, the idea of a similar Marshall Plan arrangement for Africa will not happen. Instead, the post Second World War institutions have aided the global North countries in successfully extracting 152 trillion dollars from the global South countries that Africa belongs.²⁹ Largely, either covertly or overtly, Africa has not enjoyed the liberty to control its resources in the best interests of its people.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Jason Hickel, Dylan Sullivan & Huzaifa Zoomkawala (2021): "Plunder in the Post-Colonial Era: Quantifying Drain from the Global South Through Unequal Exchange, 1960–2018", *New Political Economy*, DOI: 10.1080/13563467.2021.1899153

Threats to the realisation of Utmost Freedom, the real essence of National Interest

Projecting utmost freedom as the real essence of national interest, throws up some challenges. Though not exhaustive, we have identified three of such problems:

1. Poor exercise of citizen participation obligations towards the realisation of leadership and additions to national patrimony sources with respect to taxation.

Realising the critical mass to move African countries forward whether in terms of leadership or followership is a problem. It is indeed a problem that many Nigerians on the basis of faith-based indoctrination have come to accept that it is okay to suffer under the worst forms of human experiences on earth, but with the hope of enjoying a better life in paradise or heaven. This idea of martyrdom explains why there is a lack of interest

Achieving utmost freedom demands full participation and the obligations of citizens, the same way making it to paradise or heaven is believed with a lot of price and sacrifices. Responsible citizen actions and contributions from the people is very important in realising utmost freedom. There should be a balance between obligations of the government to the citizens, and the obligations of the citizens in achieving progress. There has to be adequate incentives for citizen participation in a sustainable articulation national interest.

2. Internal sabotage

A number internal challenges affecting the realisation of utmost freedom as national interest, further highlights the need for states especially in Africa, to look more piercingly inwards into its domestic affairs. Citizenship orientation and culture, followership, the question of leadership deficit and corruption, political instabilities and conflicts, divisions along social, ethnic and religious lines, poor economic management, infrastructural deficits amongst others will continue to impede progress towards utmost freedom.

3. External sabotage

The place of external sabotage further demonstrates the importance of foreign politics being in a good sync with domestic politics on the basis of a people-serving national interest. Over and over again, it has been reiterated that many of the development problems for many African countries are sourced from unfair, manipulative and exploitative interactions with their developed western counterparts and their institutions that are presented as global institutions.

External sabotage can be seen clearly in the active sabotage in some countries and subterranean sabotage in the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as the well-designed Bretton Woods Institutions sabotage.

Good governance is more and more being emphasised as crucial for Africa to move forward, especially on the realisation of the SDGs³⁰. However, good governance is not enough. There is the need to pay close attention to the totality of the "situational foundational issues" crucial for the move towards utmost freedom. In this context, the external dynamics in which the Post World War II states operate are very critical. There is the need to ask what are the best practices on external support for a collaborative effort for actualizing the goals of the SDGs, and which negative dimensions are actively in operation by external powers to continue to keep Nigeria nay Africa down for the ease of exploitation of Africa?³¹

As highlighted earlier, the post-second world war institutions (Bretton-Woods Institutions), including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), precursors of the World Trade Organization (WTO), were set up to ensure the leadership of a few countries who remain the main beneficiaries of the order they set up³². Interest payments, especially when compounded, will continue to drain Africa of resources that could have gone towards addressing development. Financial flows are not only in terms of stolen funds but even rules of the games that appear legitimate but actually have been set and foisted by stronger powers who determine how the international financial system operates. It is not that the human mind cannot think through alternatives: the problem is the dominant power relations, after all, the Islamic worldview suggests interest-free loans if borrowings were to occur. Malaysia's experience in the Asian economic crisis of 1997 showed us an example of what it means for humans to think of alternatives. Malaysia was outstanding because in the middle of a difficult economic situation, it was able to stand firm by its own unique destiny deciding choice. Malaysia was the only country severely affected by the 1997 Asian economic crisis that

³⁰Tschudin, A. (2022), Strengthening the Capacity of African Countries to Design and Implement Policies that Promote the Nexus between Peace, Humanitarian Work, Development and Human Rights for an Accelerated Implementation of the SDGs, United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa.

https://www.un.org/osaa/sites/www.un.org.osaa/files/files/documents/2022/pub/study_strengthening_capacity_nexus_en.pdf

³¹ Babafemi A. Badejo, (2023), "Interests", Inaugural Lecture Series 001, Maiden Edition, Chrisland University, Abeokuta, Nigeria.

³² Ibid.

declined to adopt an IMF program. Through sheer grit and commitment to its principles, Malaysia did not crumble but also weathered the storm pretty well, recovering almost as quickly as countries that implemented IMF policies and gained a number of significant advantages by charting its own course out of the crisis³³. Malaysia's economic policies during the Asian crisis, on balance, delivered slightly better, and certainly no worse, economic results than those in countries under IMF programs³⁴.

Furthermore, many promising African leaders had been overthrown and many assassinated as others fearfully comply with the dictates of external interests. For example, the 1961 assassination of Patrice Lumumba of Congo and the foisting of Joseph Mobutu, Togo's Sylvanus Olympio killed in 1963 with Gnassingbe Eyadema foisted, the 1966 overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah, and the assassination of Amilcar Cabral leader of the West African Liberation Movement against Portugal of the African Party for the independence of Guinea and Cape Verde in 1973 are mere tips of the iceberg of the planned derailment of Africa. Even Mozambique's, Samora Moises Machel and John Garang of South Sudan, died in respective air crashes in circumstances that remain mysterious till today. Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso also faced the same assassination fate of genuine leaders of Africa on October 15, 1987³⁵. The lack of the deftness skills needed to achieve and escape assassination remains part of the problem of leadership deficit in Africa. Asian leaders may have done better on this score.

Some African leaders see their personal interests as identical to those of the strong countries of the world bent on having Africa, (in spite of its resources), at the bottom of global affairs. Having stolen so much money kept in secret safe havens and with such secrets in the hands of the intelligence networks of powerful countries, they cannot be expected to stand up for Africa.

³³ Buckley, R. P., & Fitzgerald, S. M. (2004). An assessment of Malaysia's response to the IMF during the Asian economic crisis. *Singapore Journal of Legal Studies*, (July), 96–116.
<https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.189627767121153>

³⁴ Buckley, R. P., & Fitzgerald, S. M. (2004). An assessment of Malaysia's response to the IMF during the Asian economic crisis. *Singapore Journal of Legal Studies*, (July), 96–116.
<https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.189627767121153>

³⁵ Ibid.

Good governance is not enough to sustain political institutions, and this explains the need to continue to crave for credible political institutions. Undoubtedly, experiences across the globe have shown that strong political institutions help in recruiting and shaping good leadership.

Resources are equally important. Good governance can bring some progress, but success is easier if the human and material resources are available for the necessary leadership efforts to have a coherent and coordinated quadruple nexus response. It is also important to note that the push on quadruple nexus will not succeed without factoring in and ameliorating on the quadruple situational foundation on which the quadruple nexus rests.

What is to be done

There has to be a commitment to a continuous quest for paths towards utmost freedom, that idyllic state of a strive towards paradise on earth as opposed to the religious preference to paradise only in heaven.

It is extremely important that the Nigerian government in its agenda setting for foreign policy, international relations and the management of national interest, first commits to developing its domestic realities. Especially in first pursuing sound economic policy capable of meaningful impact on the lives of the people. The domestic dimension to realising utmost freedom is very critical and has suffered neglect over the years.

It is also expedient that Nigeria's foreign policy is reviewed to suit present day realities. It is imperative to build productive capacities locally or internationally. Nigeria's weakened global influence needs to be revisited. If Nigeria deserves to contribute meaningfully in shaping regional and global developments beyond tokenistic involvement, it needs to get its internal stability right. Nigeria cannot afford to be seen to be suffocated by many internal challenges, hence incapable of global relevance.

It is important for Nigeria's foreign policy direction to re-examine Nigeria's approach to friendship in the international community. What has been the basis for Nigeria's involvement with other countries or regions of the world? What needs to change?

National interest is expressed in abstract priorities of a nation deemed as core objectives. Building core objectives in terms of concrete human needs lead in the direction of individual interests that in themselves are pointers to the purpose of the human being on earth: the pursuit of utmost freedom. In effect, it is critical to recognize that the true essence of national interest lies in the promotion and safeguarding of utmost freedom for citizens.

The pursuit of utmost freedom within the context of national interest cannot be complete without responsible governance that deftly avoids counter measures from stronger powers and equally maximises opportunities at the external environment. In this regard, effective governance, good leadership are crucial to improving the well-being of citizens. Recruiting good leaders remains compelling because good leaders are expected to show total disdain for corruption.

Leadership that eschews corruption and really fights against corruption will help a nation in its pursuit of utmost freedom. Even though the importance of good governance has continually received attention among citizens, it should be done holistically, considering both the local and international dimensions.

Of importance are also the external dynamics that nation-states face. It is a dog-eat-dog situation at the international level. Nigeria/African State(s) must operate in handling collaboration, competition and conflictual situations with respect to their respective interests vis-à-vis others. Building viable integration institutions within Africa and beyond are useful for leveraging interests at the international level. Making effective and optimal usage of the huge human and material resources in Nigeria/Africa, is also part of the overall SQN approach to handling the problems of peace/security, development, respect for human rights and ensuring humanitarian resilience.

On a final note, international civil servants assisting in aid delivery must be trained to stop being shy of pointing out adverse facts about leadership deficit and corruption. They must also consciously note and design how to handle external dynamics in Africa³⁶.

National interest in foreign policy extends beyond mere theoretical or abstract ideas. While national interest varies depending on the specific context and priorities of countries, it should involve the aggregation and articulation of utmost freedom and the pursuit of objectives that are deemed vital to a nation's overall well-being. It is important for the Nigerian government to develop comprehensive strategies to address underlying socioeconomic challenges, such as poverty, unemployment, and marginalization, in contributing to the quality of life in the pursuit of utmost freedom for the people. It is essential to note that utmost freedom captures human security and brings the main challenges in terms of situational foundational issues into focus.

³⁶ Babafemi A. Badejo, *Nigerians' Views on National Turmoil: A Situational Quadruple Nexus Analysis*, (Lagos: Yintab Books, 2022).

Given the trans-boundary nature of the challenges that Nigeria is dealing with, not much can be achieved without a strategic regional approach to foreign policy in enhancing collaboration with neighbouring countries and regional organisations to address cross-border security threats, such as terrorism, arms trafficking, and transnational crime inhibiting utmost freedom.

Utmost Freedom, which is the centre of human existence, is the core of the inter-connections of interests that informs global interactions. Irrespective of the complexities at play in international relations, they are meaningless and futile, if they fail to promote utmost freedom: the composite summation of the UDHR, the SDGs and the amelioration of the inherent challenges of the situational foundational issues.

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