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Keys to facilitate the monitoring of the Spanish Foreign Policy and the International Relations in 2007

Country profile: Nigeria and its regional context
Annex Foreign policy*

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Foreign Policy

Nigeria has demonstrated a certain degree of consistency at the level of declaration of objectives and principles of its foreign policy. Like all other countries in the world, Nigeria's foreign policy is intended "to promote and protect the country's national interests over which a national consensus is presumed to have clearly emerged and is being articulated by the governing elites".¹ Expectedly, this focuses on the interplay between domestic and external factors, their organization, psychology, politics of decision-making and the instruments (means) available to formulate and implement them. These factors reveal how interests are defined, goals established and specific policies decided and implemented.

Notwithstanding the above, there is a consensus among scholars and policy makers in Nigeria that the core national interests upon which the country's foreign policy decisions had been directed since independence were: (1) the defense of its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity; (2) the restoration of human dignity to black people all over the world; (3) the elimination of colonialism, racism and white minority rule from Africa; (4) the creation of relevant and conducive political and economic conditions in Africa and the rest of the world necessary for facilitating national self-reliance in African countries; and (5) the promotion and sustenance of the economic well-being of Nigerians; and the promotion of world peace with justice.² The principles around which these objectives were pursued were largely determined by the nature and dynamics of the international environment. For instance, between independence in 1960 and the end of the Cold War in 1989, the principle that regulated Nigeria's foreign policy were: non-alignment; equality of states; non-interference in the internal affairs of other states; multilateralism as in working through international organizations and the choice of Africa as the centre-piece of the country's foreign policy.³ While the above represents the general consensus around which the primary issues of Nigeria's foreign policy have been anchored since independence in 1960, operational actions have nevertheless shifted from extreme conservatism to purposeful dynamism. The shift has been mostly conditioned by changes in leadership, political imperatives, economic and internal security objectives and the dynamics at the international environment. One possible best way of attempting an analysis of Nigeria's foreign policy by scholars and policy makers is been by looking it at the level of the various governments in the country since independence.

¹ R.A. Akindele, "Nigeria's Foreign Policy", in Oyeleye Oyediran (ed), *Governance and Development in Nigeria: Essays in Honour of Professor Billy J. Dudley*, Agbo Areo Publishers, Ibadan, 1996, p.136.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*; G.O. Olusanya, "The Fundamentals of Nigerian Foreign Policy and External Economic Relations", in G.O. Olusanya and R.A. Akindele (eds), *Nigeria's External Relations: The First Twenty-five Years*, Ibadan: University Press Ltd, 1986.

Foreign Policy under Sir Tafawa Balewa (1960–1966)

The circumstance under which Nigeria gained independence in 1960 – i.e. ‘platter of gold’ – had demonstrable effect on its foreign policy during Sir Tafawa Balewa who emerged the head of government. It will be necessary to review this at three levels – i.e. international, continental and sub-regional.⁴ Although the country officially expanded on Non-alignment as its response to the Cold War, the Balewa government was in reality pro-West in conducting Nigeria’s foreign policy. Three policy of that government explain this. The first was the infamous Anglo-Nigeria Defense Pact, which terms, as signed by the leaders of three major political parties prior to independence. Under the Pact Nigeria and Britain agreed to “afford each other such assistance as may be necessary for mutual defense and to consult together on the measures to be taken jointly or separately to ensure the fullest cooperation between them for this purpose”.⁵ The Pact which is similar to the type existing between France and its former colonies in the Africa started attracting public outcry at the All Nigerian Peoples Conference (of politicians) called by Prime Minister Balewa in August 1961 and had remained so until it was withdrawn in January 1962. But for the vehement and patriotic mobilization of politicians of progressive stance, labour unions, student movements and the press against it, it would not have been abrogated. The second had to do with the refusal of the Balewa government to accord diplomatic recognition to the People’s Republic of China due to influence of the western world which was openly known for its anti-communist views. The third has to do with the Balewa government’s pro-West and anti-communist posture which was reflected in the ban on importation of communist literature and restrictions on travels of the country’s citizens to the East bloc countries. Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti was a victim of the ban. It was not until 1962 that the Balewa government established diplomatic mission in Moscow, USSR.

On the African scene, the Balewa government was caught on the edge of extreme conservatism and a seeming lack of vision. Out of a futile engagement and negative competition with Nkwame Nkrumah, Prime Minister Balewa was viewed as always waiting for Nkrumah’s Ghana to take initiative on key African issues – particularly on pan-African movement and the formation of the Organization of African Unity – OAU (now Africa Union), before deciding where Nigeria stand. The belief was that the Balewa’s government did not demonstrate any true and positive interest in African liberation, except on paper. At a time when Ghana was the reference point for liberation movement in Africa, Nigeria barked in the background with her role restricted to mere verbal assurances that could not give relevant direction to liberation movements in Africa. It is also believed in some quarters that the then OAU almost got killed in its infancy as a result of unguided utterances of Nigerian leaders; thus betraying the extra-African links of the Balewa government. For instance, Jaja Nwachukwu (the then

⁴ By international level we refer to outside of Africa; continental refers to Africa, while sub-regional means West Africa.

⁵ Claude S. Phillips Jnr, *The Development of Nigerian Foreign Policy*, Evanston, 1964, p.146.

Minister for External Affairs) was reported to have called for the establishment of a rival, purely black African organization in place of the OAU; and this call was in the view of many both divisive and unproductive.

At the level of West Africa it is not known if the Balewa government had much in stock for unity and functional cooperation among countries of the region. Rather than strengthen existing economic ties for regional integration purpose, the government focused its attention on dismantling important regional institutions such as the West African Currency Board and other colonial institutions that were common to Anglophone West Africa. This left the country with only pockets of progress derived as blessings from the Western world until "The Five Majors" struck to terminate the government on January 15, 1966, in a military coup.

Foreign Policy under Major-General J.T.U. Aguiyi-Irinsi (1966)

The young military officers' coup that terminated the Balewa government missed the target of seizing power, even though two of the prime targets of the coup – Balewa and Ahmadu Bello (the Premier of Northern Region) lost their lives in the coup. The General J.T.U. Aguiyi-Irinsi regime that took over the government eventually negotiated by politicians and top military brass was too short-lived to conceive of, not to talk of reforming, any meaningful foreign policy for Nigeria. It was therefore no surprising that the then Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon regime who succeeded Gen. Aguiyi-Irinsi in another military coup in six months later became saddled with the responsibility of framing the anticipated shift in the country's foreign policy objectives.

Foreign Policy under Yakubu Gowon (1966–1975)

Gen. Yakubu Gowon, as he later become, presided over a regime that witnessed about the widest scope of foreign policy formulation and opportunities in Nigeria. This ranged from the struggle to garner international opinion to counter the Biafran-rebel propaganda during the civil war to the task of exerting the nation's influence in continental and world affairs in the wake of early 1970s oil boom precipitated by the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East. The Civil War had an unprecedented impact on Nigeria's foreign policy under the Gowon regime, particularly in relations with the superpowers, the then Organisation of African Unity and the country's geographical neighbours. Fought at home and abroad, it took Nigeria many efforts and the resort its long abandoned non-aligned ideology to successfully prosecute the war. It has been observed that the Federal military government was slow to react to the Biafran war propaganda. Even when it later acted the existing structures of the External Affairs ministry proved too inadequate to deal with the magnitude of the task, hence the government's dispatching of Special Teams to explain *The Federalist* position on the conflict to the outside world.

France, Ivory Coast (now Cote d'Ivoire) and Gabon clearly favoured the secessionists' bid, and this led to the granting of official recognition to Biafra by the trio and the acceptance by Tanzania and Zambia to join the fray. It took *The Federalist* argument and the reasoning of the possible implications of encouraging secessionist movements on the continent that majority of the member-states of the OAU resolved to call for a united Nigeria at the last stage of the war. This singular decision by the OAU, in the face of all imperialist intrigues, provided Nigeria with the required opportunity to secure the friendship of her neighbours during the period. Cameroun, for instance, refused the use of its territory by the Biafrans to launch attacks, in spite of pressures from France.

Also, the war provided the opportunity for the Nigerian military government to, in the true spirit of Non-Alignment, receive support from the bi-polar ideological world defined in the East bloc led by the Soviet Union and the West bloc led by the United States, as against earlier behavior of the Balewa government to treat with scorn the issue of establishing contacts with the East bloc. Thus, while the US and Britain vacillated on the supply of crucial armament, the old USSR came to Nigeria's aid through the supply of urgent military equipment. It was only quite belatedly that Britain rushed in aid to Nigeria to prevent its loss of position of influence to the Soviets.

While the overall effect of the civil war on Nigeria's foreign policy was highly remarkable, as it marked a shift from extreme conservatism, the "No Victor, No Vanquish" note on which the Gowon regime declared the war closed won the government a huge respect from the international community. As the task of managing Nigeria's post-war image put it on the world stage, it became expedient for the Gowon regime to move the country from the Balewa-styled pro-West ideological position to a truly non-aligned cause. One of the policy decisions was the lifting of the ban on communist literature that had been in force since Balewa era, while Nigeria continued to establish economic and cultural relations with countries in the East communist bloc.

The oil boom that attended the post-war era under Gowon did not only raise Nigeria's external reserve, it also provided an opportunity for Gowon to take a tour around world capitals and play statesman. Under him the country hosted the 1973 All-African Games and equally hosted the World Black and Africa Festival of Arts and Culture in 1977. Nigeria's newly assertive position on African matters was seen in 1973 when, in an alleged violation of Egypt's territorial sovereignty by Israel as a result of the Arab-Israeli (Yom Kippur) war, Gowon regime mobilize opinions and joined the OAU collective decision to sever diplomatic relations with Israel.

Perhaps, the greatest achievement of Gowon regime to Nigeria's foreign policy was recorded in the area of regional cooperation and integration. Having become more appreciative of the importance of the OAU, Gowon's era as Nigeria's Head of State witnessed a dynamic involvement with the continent's socio-economic, cultural, educational and political issues at large, and West Africa, in particular. For instance, Nigeria under Gowon also played an active role in the negotiation of the Lome Convention involving 46 African countries with the Caribbean and Pacific Countries (ACP) and the European

Economic Community (EEC), part of the results of which favorable tariff reductions, aid fund and stabilizing export prices that were negotiated between 1975 and 1995. The Economic Community of West African States (now ECOWAS Commission) is a product of Nigeria's foreign policy initiative under Gowon to strengthen regional economic cooperation and integration. Despite its obvious problems (language, colonial relics, etc), ECOWAS has, to a large extent, met its objectives of providing a ready market for produce of member-states, reduction in tariff, and appreciable level of free movement of goods and persons with the sub-region.

In what has been described as an outlandish gesture of gratitude, it is alleged that Gowon conceded a stretch of land (Bakassi) to Cameroun, without due approval by the then highest law public decision-making body in the land – the Supreme Military Council (SMC), supposedly in appreciation of the latter's supportive role to Nigeria during the civil war. This land issue had since become a subject of serious disputation between Nigeria and Cameroun and on which the World Court in Hague has given verdict against Nigeria, even though not on the basis of what was alleged against Gowon.

As laudable as the foreign policy of Nigeria under Gowon was, it was not without shortcomings. It has been observed that while he had the brightest opportunity to carve a dynamic and leadership role for Nigeria in foreign affairs, he became contented with the high-profile image of an oil-rich Black African nation, while its continental responsibilities were largely restricted to sponsoring international jamborees and restricting Nigeria's commitment to the liberation efforts, except through the OAU. This is the context in which the coup that brought Gen. Murtala Mohammed as Gen. Gowon's successor was appreciated by many Nigerians.

Foreign policy under General Murtala Mohammed (1975–1976)

Gen. Mohammed regime set the stage for a purposeful and dynamic era in Nigeria's foreign policy. Although short-lived for only 6 months (i.e. 200 days), the regime took Nigeria's foreign policy to what became described as the "Golden age", as the country took her pride of place in African affairs. Out of a determined effort to undertake a thorough cleansing of Nigeria's national life and give foreign policy a facelift, Gen. Mohammed ordered a review of the country's foreign policy through the inauguration of the Adebayo Adedeji's Panel. This was a way of involving foreign policy intellectuals, instead of the old practice of limiting foreign policy decisions to only bureaucrats in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Prior to the release of the report of the Panel the new regime became confronted with the problem of Angolan independence. Uncompromising dynamism and radicalism was demonstrated in Gen. Mohammed government's swift recognition of Augustino Neto's Movement for the Popular Liberation of Angola (MPLA)'s government against UNITA and FNLA, and the granting of 13.5million Nigerian Naira to add muscle to that recognition. Beyond this financial assistance to the MPLA government in Angola, Nigeria under Gen. Mohammed was also unequivocally opposed to the US solution to

the Angolan crisis, arguing that Africa has come of age to take its own decisions. In an apparent rebuff of the US President Gerald Ford and the rest of West who had expressed interest on the Angolan independence problem, Gen. Mohammed said at the 24th OAU extra-ordinary meeting on Angola held in January 1976 that:

"... the United States Government as well as the Governments of many Western countries saw Africa struggle against imperialism as directed against western interests. As long as Africa remains dependent, it is within the orbit of NATO countries and is available for exploitation to sustain Western prosperity while Africa sinks deeper into poverty"

While the above statement obviously vilified the West, Gen. Mohammed valorized the then USSR and other socialist states which he alleged have helped to liberate Africa from the throes of imperialist domination and exploitation. He captured this aptly:

"We are all aware of the heroic role which the Soviet Union and other socialist countries have played in the struggle of the African peoples for liberation. The Soviet Union and other socialist countries have been our traditional suppliers of arms to resist oppression, and to fight for national liberation and human dignity"

The above posture by Gen. Mohammed placed Nigeria in a leading role in the liberation struggle in Africa, as the government gave strong diplomatic and economic support to such liberation movements like Africa National Congress (ANC), South West Africa Peoples Organisation (SWAPO), Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA), MPLA, while still pursuing a dynamic and active non-alignment policy. Such was how in a short spell of time, Gen. Mohammed got Lagos to replace Accra (Ghana) as the Mecca of liberation movements. His assassination in a botched coup d'état on Friday, February 13, 1976, emerged as a big loss not only to Nigeria, but to the entire African continent.

Foreign Policy under General Obasanjo (1976–1979)

Analyses of Nigeria's foreign policy under Gen. Obasanjo (1976-1979), the successor of Gen Mohammed, has been presented in two different views. The first view argues that Nigeria's foreign policy lost her steam, especially to the extent of the clear sense of direction and active dynamism which has characterized Gen. Mohammed's six months reign. The second view, which is contrary to the first position, is that there was practically no difference in the country's foreign policy under both leaders. This has been justified by the argument that as pan-Africanists, both Generals Mohammed and Obasanjo

had represented a good march in the projection and pursuit of a radical foreign policy for Nigeria.

Nigeria's foreign policy under Gen. Obasanjo, as argued by analysts, were well backed by the country's economic strength as founded on its hold of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) on the world economy. Indeed, the support of the struggle against colonialism and white minority rule in southern Africa popularized Nigeria's foreign policy under Gen. Obasanjo. This, and nothing else, explained why, in spite of the physical separation by thousands of miles, Nigeria was the only country outside of southern African region that became a member of the Frontline States.

In spirit of the legacy of his successor (late Gen. Mohammed), Gen. Obasanjo ensured that the view of Lagos – then the seat of power – was constantly sought by parties interested in the struggle against colonialism and the realization of black majority rule in southern Africa region. The country did not only became an active member of the OAU's Liberation Committee Against Apartheid, it also went on the diplomatic offensive with neighboring Niger in competition for one of the two African seats at the UN Security Council and successfully clinched it in what Joe Garba – the then Minister of Foreign Affairs – described as spirit of "enlightened -interest".

Gen Obasanjo recorded quite some outstanding achievements in advancing and asserting Nigeria's foreign policy in the midst of the odds represented by the big powers on the international scene. Amongst these were: the active move by the country to find a peaceful solution to the Chadian crisis; the forceful nationalization of the British Petrol (BP) and Backleys Bank to become African Petrol and Union Bank of Nigeria, respectively, in swift reaction to Britain's hard posture on the Zimbabwean independence.

Whatever were their remarkable successes on foreign policy angle, it must be noted that that Generals Mohammed and Obasanjo regimes were hardly perfect. For instance, like their predecessors, the regimes of both generals were very withdrawn, if not completely silent, on questions of human rights violations in Africa. They safely did this by pleading non-interference in internal matters of the OAU member-states. This excuse, beyond providing unlimited freedom for such African rulers like Idi Amin of Ugandan, Mobutu Sese-Seko of Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo), Jean Bokassa of Central Africa Republic, among others, to butcher thousands of their countries' citizens without any reprimand, raised question mark about the country's pledge to maintain the dignity of the blackman as outlined in its foreign policy objectives.

Foreign Policy under Shehu Shagari (1979–1983)

Unlike the radical foreign policy of Generals Mohammed and Obasanjo regimes, the succeeding civilian government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari in 1979, could rightly be likened to the country's very first experience under Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. Despite earlier pledge by Shagari's Minister of External Affairs, Ishaya Audu, to maintain and improve on the tempo raised

by Generals Mohammed and Obasanjo, it was doubtful if the government's action met the constitutional provision (Article 19) that stated the Afrocentric goals of the country's foreign policy. At best, it was a mere rehash of the Balewa style of foreign policy, though there are divergent positions on the acceptability or otherwise on some of the decisions taken by the Shagari government on certain vital foreign policy issues of the era. Among the very first of these issues was the Nigeria-Cameroun border clash over Bakassi which resulted in the killing of five Nigerian soldiers. While most Nigerians raged and call for reprisal, Shagari showed restrained, and instead demanded an explanation, apologies and compensation for Cameroun. While this may have pleased many foreign policy watchers and Nigerians, it never gone down well with many Nigerians who felt that the country condescended too low from its respected diplomatic heights.

Another incident that put Nigeria's foreign policy on test during the Shagari administration was the Chadian crisis in which Libyan intervened on behalf of Goukouni Weddeye. It is alleged that Shagari's government handling of the situation boggled the tremendous diplomatic success recorded by Gen. Obasanjo regime by accepting the western argument of a Libyan grand-design to destabilize democratic states in Central and West Africa, and thus turned Chad into a playground for foreign adventurers. In particular, Shagari government refusal to be dragged into accepting to provide adequate guarantee for the OAU-recognized Government of National Unity in Chad (GNUT), while yet relying on the same OAU for the resolution of the crisis which had been internationalized due to the return of French troops to the country. This, in the opinion of Dayo Adeyeye⁶ did not only relegate Nigeria to the back stage, but it also became an enduring evidence of Shagari's role as a tool of imperialism.

Also, the failure of Nigeria under Alhaji Shagari to mobilize majority opinion within OAU for official recognition of the independence of Western Sahara from Morocco clearly pointed to the declining strength of the country's foreign policy, and by implication, her national interests. In particular, this was evident in the government's complicity in the failure of the two Tripoli (Libya) Summit of the OAU.

Beyond the battered image of Nigeria's foreign policy under Shagari described above, the country nevertheless demonstrated her capacity to still pay its big-brother role of donating money and materials to such countries as Ghana, Zimbabwe, among others. But, even this, Adeyeye said, clearly showed how the administration's penchant for purposelessness, extravagance and unwise boggling of the tremendous diplomatic feat or success of the previous military regimes of Generals Mohammed and Obasanjo.

Foreign Policy under Buhari-Idiagbon (1983–1985)

⁶ Adeyeye, Dayo, "24 Years of Nigeria Foreign Policy: Developments since the Downfall of Gowon".

If the Shagari administration plugged Nigeria's foreign policy direction into mess, it would be naturally expected that the coup that abruptly ended the life of the government and brought the Buhari-Idagbon regime to power on 31 December, 1983, would return the country's foreign policy to its pride place. The fact that all this was going to happen in the midst of fractional domestic politics that is worsened by economic hardship otherwise known as "austerity measure" further magnified the challenge. Despite the unconstitutional manner in which the Buhari-Idiagbon came about, Nigerians were unanimous about certain minimum standards on which the post-Shagari foreign policy should be anchored. It was thus not surprising that as a response to the decay occasioned by Shagari administration, the Buhari-Idiagbon regime resorted to an aggressive and nationalistic foreign policy orientation that operated on the mosaic principle of an eye for an eye. One immediate step in this regard was the regime's forceful recall of Britain's plane to the Murtala Mohammed International Airport in Lagos over the detention of Nigerian plane by the British authorities in London in 1985.

As tough and nationalistic as the foreign policy of the Buhari-Idiagbon regime was, it was the belief of some Nigerians and foreign policy experts that it was largely characterized by inconsistencies and incoherence. The point was made that it lacked a clarity that could point the Nigerian citizens to correct prediction on where their country would stand on matters of international concerns such that would enabling other countries relate with it with utmost seriousness. This criticism of Nigeria's foreign policy under the Buhari-Idiagbon regime, if anything, only confirmed an earlier argument about the general nature of the foreign policies of African states as lacking pragmatism, inconsistent, incoherent and merely a response to developments around the globe.

Foreign Policy under Ibrahim Babangida (1985–1993)

It was not clear whether the above deficiency was what the succeeding Babangida regime wanted to fix, when it alleged that its objective will be to pursue a dynamic, coherent and consistent foreign policy goals that were capable of reflecting Nigeria's leadership position in a fast-changing international system. Pretending to be guided by open consultation, the Babangida regime subjected, even though guided, the vital issue of International Monetary fund (IMF) loan and the determination of political future of Nigeria to a national debate. The government also convened an All Nigeria Conference on Foreign Policy whose outcome became the basis upon which its articulated some major foreign policy thrusts and pursued them with seeming vigour, even in the midst of obvious inconsistencies.

Like its predecessor, the Babangida regime appreciated early enough the impact of the economic crisis on the ability of the Nigerian government to live up to its responsibilities. However, it was not until the time Ike Nwachukwu was appointed Minister of External Affairs that concrete foreign policy efforts later defined as "Economic Diplomacy" were made to tie in to the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) that was the economic programme of the

government at home. Economic diplomacy thus tasked the Nigeria diplomatic community outside the country to sell Nigeria to the world with a view to attracting economic gains to the country via investment and debt forgiveness.

At the sub-regional level, the Babangida regime tried to maintain the country's role in building bilateral trade relations with ECOWAS countries, and in bringing peace to a troubled Liberia through the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), though without its commendations and criticisms. Those who commended Nigeria saw the country's efforts in ECOMOG as the boldest and most courageous diplomatic action ever taken by the government. On the other hand the action raised fundamental issues concerning the principle behind the action, while Nigerians challenged the rationale behind plugging the country's hard earned currency into a matter they considered extraneous to their country, especially in the midst of untold hardship.

At continental level, the Babangida regime drove Nigerian foreign policy into a ditch of inconsistency and double standards when it reneged on the country's anti-apartheid stance, to invite the South African President Fredrick de Klerk to Nigeria in late 1992. This did not only elicit criticisms both within and outside the country, it also cast aspersions on the country's long commitment to work towards dismantling apartheid and enhancing liberation struggle in Africa, especially against the backdrop of Babangida's vow in his address at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA)'s Patron Dinner in 1988 that "Nigeria is not interested in having a dialogue with the racist minority regime".

The above notwithstanding, Nigeria still remained instrumental to Namibia's independence in 1990. The country donated one hundred million Nigerian Naira to the Sam Nujoma's new government and despatched a contingent of its Police to assist the Namibia's security network. The country also continued its financial and moral supports to the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan African Congress (PAC) and its mobilization of world opinions around the plight of blacks in South Africa, including engaging the leaderships of both ANC and PAC at the high marks of black-on-black violence during the transition to black majority rule which became realized in 1994. In 1989, Nigeria led 32 Commonwealth member-states, largely constituted by African states, to boycott the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh (Scotland) to protest Britain's refusal to effect comprehensive action against Apartheid South Africa, while the Gen. Babangida regime also introduced a laudable innovative strategy to mobilize for Solidarity Fund in Nigeria and Non-Alignment member-states to assist the Frontline States of southern Africa.

In the spirit of global south-south cooperation, the government founded the Technical Aids Corps (TACS) in 1987 to assist states in Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific regions (ACP) with technical and ancillary services through Nigerian professionals – doctors, nurses, teachers, scientists and engineers in these countries – and paid their full emoluments, just as it was regularly at hand to render humanitarian and financial assistance to African countries such as Ethiopia who suffered drought.

Beyond Africa, the Babangida was at hand to with the West from whom he carried favours to resolve Nigeria's economic problem. While this was seen as virtually tying the survival of Nigeria to the goodwill of the West who were its creditors, especially in the context of the re-negotiated time-table for paying its debt, the government nevertheless demonstrated a strong resistance to implement some conditionalities of the International Monetary Fund (IMP) in the face of pains occasioned by acute foreign exchange and balance of payment. The resultant erosion of confidence of the country's creditors on the economy was mitigated by the a globe-trotting embarked upon by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prof. Bolaji Akinyeme, to seek support for the Babangida government, which ironically pushed the regime to seek greater accommodation with imperial forces for foreign policy conduct in the midst of economic crisis.

One of the major consequences of this was an emergent obscurity between the country's claim of Africa being the centre-piece of her foreign policy and her actions. Of particular concern in this regards were Nigeria's acceptance to lead the US-sponsored move to work out political compromise between the MPLA-government of Angola (which it had helped to survived under Generals Mohammed and Obasanjo) and UNITA; acceptance to embark on significant reversal of indigenization decrees of 1972, 1974 and 1977; and the pursuit of Debt reschedule as against the most popular campaign for Debt cancellation as a foreign policy goal. Also of concern was the manner in which the Nigerian government encouraged its diplomats to support the course of western powers to curry their friendship and support, but turn around to rationalize it in a seemingly apologetic manner, on the domestic implication of those crucial foreign policy actions. Amongst these were the First Gulf war on which Nigerians were not too disposed to, in spite of the seeming tacit support of Nigeria; and the enthusiastic embracement of ACP/EEC Lome I – IV Conventions for which the country had earlier rejected. All this caught Nigeria between the web of providing leadership for Africa as depicted in the OAU and the subservience to the West, as against the East-bloc to which the country's relations was at a low ebb.

In the Middle East, the Babangida government continued to observe cordial relations with OPEC member-states in confirmation of the bond between Nigeria and oil producing states in the region. Nigeria's major political milestone under Babangida in the region was the restoration of diplomatic relations with Israel, after two decades of severance of such relations over the latter's policy against the Palestinians. This restoration of relations with Israel was itself alleged to have been intended to seek financial and technical assistance that would help uplift the country from its economic doldrums.

Perhaps, Gen. Babangida regime had its best time in the conduct of foreign policy at the level of Nigeria's participation in international organizations. At this level, the country did not only recognize the usefulness of these organizations in pursuing its foreign policy goals and objectives, she also remained unshaken in its an active and loyal membership commitment. Through such commitment, the country was able to suggest and mobilize for the UN's devotion of its 13th Special Session to African economic problem

during which the world body's Programme of Action of Africa Economic Recovery and Development (UNPAAERD) was adopted and launched in 1986. Nigeria under Gen. Babangida also earned remarkable popularity from participating in UN peace support operations in Somalia, Yugoslavia and Bosnia, and the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group (EPG) on South Africa; a position it utilised immensely, even to the point of becoming the OAU Chairman in 1991. The country secured the Secretary General position of the Commonwealth through Chief Emeka Anyaoku and the Chairmanship of the 44th Session of the UN General Assembly; but it failed to secure nomination for the most respected post of the UN Secretary General for which it sponsored retired Gen. Chief Obasanjo.

In sum, although Nigeria's foreign policy under Gen Babangida suffered some setbacks and degrees of inconsistency owing to harsh economic realities at home, the country was nevertheless pragmatic and cautious, which explained her largely pro-West stance as serviced through its foreign policy of *Economic diplomacy*. But the unceremonious manner the Babangida ended his rule posed serious foreign policy challenges to Chief Ernest Shonekan who succeeded him as Head of Interim National Government (ING).

Foreign Policy under Ernest Shonekan (1993)

Chief Shonekan emerged as Head ING after Gen. Babangida was forced to "step aside" in the face of growing protests that accompanied the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential elections which Chief M.K.O. Abiola was poised to win. The undemocratic circumstances under which Chief Shonekan was handpicked from nowhere to serve as Nigeria's Head of State, coupled with the ever-increasing pressure from the Nigerian citizenry who continued to agitate for the transfer of power to the winner of the "June 12" Presidential Elections, as it came to be known, was ordinarily not going to allow for any review of the country's foreign policy, even though Nigeria needed to take appropriate steps to redefine her relations with the rest of the world then. Thus, despite efforts by the government to reach out to the rest of the world on how it was doing to restore the international community's confidence on Nigeria, the short reign of Shonekan (80 days on the whole) could not provide any sizeable opportunity for a thorough assessment of the country's foreign policy efforts.

Foreign Policy under Sani Abacha (1993-1998)

If Shonekan government could not do much due to the obvious legitimacy challenges that confronted it, the tense euphoria that greeted the regime of his successor, Gen. Sani Abacha, from both local and international scene at time in which military rule had grown to become an aberration around the globe pushed the latter to the edge of history. It was only a question of time after Gen. Abacha had settled down (he ever did) that he resorted to

brutality and highhandedness in dealing with the massive campaign launched by the civil society community with which his government competed in "foreign policy dualism"⁷.

The highhandedness of the Abacha regime in dealing with the problems precipitated by the annulment of the "June 12" Presidential elections was soon to raised questions of human rights violations and add to the scary bad image of the country abroad, requiring more resources (human and money) to douse. Indeed, the challenge before Gen. Abacha and his government was, among others, how to convince the international community of its sincerity with yet another long programme of political transition – to terminate in October 1998 – which was suspected to be orchestrated to his own personal benefit. The following events showed that Gen. Abacha pushed out Chief Shonekan without any serious agenda on how to improve Nigeria's relations with the rest of the international community. Instead, situations got worsen in the face of massive repression of the citizens who rose against the his dictatorship and unprecedented human rights violations that came to a head with the extrajudicial killing of the environmental rights activist (Ken Saro-Wiwa) and eight other Ogonis. This further compounded the country's diplomatic collision with the international community, notably: Commonwealth, European Union and countries such as Canada, South Africa and the United States.

Nigeria became a pariah state with whom only 'compliant' African countries and China could relate with. Note even efforts by the country to send a select delegation of 'famous' Nigerians to bolster the country' image was to any rescue.⁸ With serious mobilization by the exiled fraction of pro-democracy and civil society groups and the increasing highhandedness of the Abacha government to ensure regime security, the space from which the country sought to actualize its foreign policy goals became shrunked. Beyond the series of sanctions slammed on Nigeria and its rulers, the country was also suspended from the Commonwealth in the wake of the judicial execution of Saro-Wiwa and his colleagues in the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) in 1995. And bearing in mind that the foreign policy of any country holds the ace to its economic and political policies, vice-versa, the case for a review of the countries foreign policy began to sink. The efforts to review the foreign policy of Nigeria through various seminars, public lectures and symposia at the government-owned NIIA raised two opposing camps – those who called for a radical shift in Nigeria's foreign policy and those who sued for restraint.

One possible thing that could not be taken from Nigeria during the Abacha regime was Nigeria's continued commitment to its long avowed peacekeeping role in Liberia and Sierra Leone on which the country funded ECOMOG operations. The government's greatest achievement in this regard was the successful use of the ECOMOG to put down the mutiny that ousted Tijan

⁷ On Foreign Policy Dualism, see Brasca Ifeadi, *Foreign Policy Dualism in Nigeria*, Unpublished Master degree dissertation submitted to the Department of Political Science, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria, 2002. Also see Kayode Fayemi, *Out of the Shadows: Exile and the Struggle for Freedom and Democracy*, Centre for Democracy & Development, Lagos and Bookcraft, Ibadan, 2005.

⁸ The Biafran warlord, Chief Dim Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu led one such delegations to Europe.

Kabah of Sierra Leone in May 1997, and returned him to power by March 1998. So great was Sierra Leone's government and its people appreciative of this that while Nigerians were celebrating the death of Gen. Abacha in June 1998, the former's government declared a public holiday to mourn him.

Foreign Policy under Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar (1998–1999)

For whatever reason, the political situation in Nigeria changed on the death of Gen. Abacha and the replacement by Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar. One of the fundamental steps that Gen. Abubakar government took to restore the confidence of the people that it was not just another military regime was the announcement of a timetable for a return to civilian rule in August 1999, and the naming of a 14-member Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to organize the transitional elections. Elections were organized into local councils, states, federal positions in a marathon transition programme⁹ that lasted 11 months, and the country was returned to civilian rule on May 29 1999.

On foreign policy side, the Gen. Abubakar announced his commitment to pulling the country out of isolation and to improving its image abroad. This, he said required the refocusing of the country's goals of foreign policy "as a responsible and respected member of the international community".¹⁰ The government did achieve remarkable transformation in Nigeria's foreign policy and returned the country to its traditional, pro-Western stance and engaged regularly in a series of meetings with the Secretaries-General of the UN and the Commonwealth on how to move the country forward. The point of departure was reconciling the people with themselves and with the Nigerian state, and then the Nigerian state with the rest of the international community. By so doing the symbiotic relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy sought to ease tension at local level with a view to achieving effective coordination at regional and global levels.

Foreign Policy of Nigeria under Chief Olusegun Obasanjo Civilian Administration (1999–2007)

At the return of Nigeria to civilian rule on May 29, 1999, President Olusegun Obasanjo who succeeded Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar as a one time Head of State, lamented how Nigeria had fallen from its pride of place over the years when he said that "Nigeria, once a well-respected country and a key role player in international bodies, became a pariah nation", adding that the task before his administration would be to "pursue a dynamic foreign policy to promote friendly relations with all nations" and to "play a

⁹ The real period for the elections lasted from December 1998 to February 1999

¹⁰ See the Independence Anniversary speech of Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar on October 1, 1998.

constructive role in the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity, and other international bodies.”¹¹

Like Gen. Abdulsalami regime, Chief Obasanjo administration appreciated much the task before it as that of bringing Nigeria out of her dead-end “by consolidating democracy at home, respecting fundamental human rights and encouraging liberal economic reforms, good governance and transparency with a view to boosting international economic cooperation” and to reassuring the rest of the world that Nigeria was truly back on track.¹² Thus, while holding on to the traditional principle of Africa being the centre-piece of Nigeria’s foreign policy, President Obasanjo government appreciated much as well that contemporary thinking in foreign policy must take into account the immediate past experiences of the country and current trends in international relations and diplomacy – i.e. globalization, human rights, and democracy. As the country became a democracy in the age of globalization, couple with the burning desire to clear the mess perpetrated by the Abacha regime, it was only expedient that Africa alone would no longer be the one and only reason for the existence of a foreign policy in Nigeria.¹³

One immediate step the government took in dealing with this was the flagging of a ‘shuttle diplomacy’ by Obasanjo to reassure the international community to communicate this message loud and clear in foremost countries across Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. His credentials as a former Head of State who had handed over power “to a democratically elected government; as founder of the internationally acclaimed Africa Leadership Forum; as a ... member of the Commonwealth appointed Eminent Persons Group and as co-founder of the world’s ombudsman, Transparency International,”¹⁴ altogether added to the diplomatic weight of his foreign policy pursuit. It was also strategic that the international media readily availed itself of the opportunity of sounding out President Obasanjo, cross-checking information about the country and correcting plausible misinformation on issues affecting Nigeria, and above all exploring the opportunities for investment in the country.¹⁵ This brought about a reasonable foreign direct investment (FDI). The diplomatic shuttle provided a platform for Nigeria to seek and secure, at least to a reasonable extent, the repatriation of the country’s stolen money in foreign banks in Switzerland, Britain, America, Belgium and Germany, among others. President Obasanjo also cultivated the habit of holding routine interactions and dialogues with Nigerian communities in the countries he visited to discuss issues of common national interests and update the Diaspora of Nigerian government policies, as well as assistance on possible ways of moving the country forward.

¹¹ See Inauguration Speech of President Olusegun Obasanjo, May 29, 1999.

¹² Ebenezer Okpokpo, “The Challenges facing Nigeria’s Foreign Policy in the Next Millennium” 3(2): 4, 1999, (<http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v3/v3i3a16.htm>)

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ ¹⁴Suleiman Adamu, “Understanding Obasanjo’s Foreign Trips”, *ThisDay*,

¹⁵ Ibid,

Through an Open Skies Agreement with the US Airspace Agency in 1999, the Obasanjo government also secured the lifting of ban on direct flight between Nigeria and the US which had been in place since the time of Gen. Abacha, while the country, to an appreciable degree, regained its lost status as the hub of air and sea transportation in Africa. More international and domestic airlines came on board through private initiatives.

The pro-West foreign policy of Obasanjo also saw Nigeria playing a frontline role in the relations between the G8 and developing countries. The country also played central role in the development of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and its baby – African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) as a response to the development crisis in the continent. It did this through the cooperation of other leading African countries such as Algeria, Senegal and South Africa. It went beyond this to submit itself for self-assessment exercise, the report of which is currently under review by the continental office. The country has also, through mobilization with South Africa, opposed the location of the US-proposed Africa Command (AFRICOM) in the continent. The position of Nigeria and its citizens had been that the establishment of such an outfit will not only lead to the establishment of military bases by the US on African soil, it will also make the continent susceptible and vulnerable to terrorism – a phenomenon which the entire project seems to target in disguise, even though the US continued to play down that aspect. This, if anything, has added to Nigerians' pathological distaste for any military involvement with the US; the most famous of which was the citizens' move against President Obasanjo for agreeing to the restructuring of the Nigeria military through a US-contracted military outfit – the Military Professionals Resource Incorporation (MPRI).

Also, Nigeria's foreign policy thrust under President Obasanjo recorded remarkable achievements in the area of maintenance of peace and security. Beyond active engagement in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Darfur (Sudan) where it sent troops, the country has also brokered peace talks between the Sudanese government and the warring factions in Abuja. The government has equally demonstrated its belief in peace and security as the basis for socio-economic integration of the West African sub-region through strong commitment to the restoration of peace in Liberia and Sierra Leone. In Liberia, it sponsored Nigeria's former leader Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar through ECOWAS to lead the peace process that got Charles Taylor to relinquish power, while it facilitated the second track of peace and reconciliation in Sierra Leone, in collaboration with ECOWAS and its member-states.

The country has also thrown itself behind the sub-region's initiative to nip violent conflicts in the bud in the sub-region through 'Shuttle diplomacy'. Round-table talks brokered by Nigeria have also seen to peaceful resolution of internal conflicts and political uprisings in such ECOWAS member-states as Cote d'Ivoire, Togo and Senegal. The country has mobilized support for the ECOWAS conflict prevention framework to cut Nigeria's contribution to cost of peacekeeping operations in line with an earlier statement by the former Nigeria's Chief of Defense State and later Minister of Defense, Gen. Theophilus Danjuma, that the country was "becoming the United States of

ECOWAS at very great cost".¹⁶ This framework which had gone through a rigorous process of development by the ECOWAS was adopted at Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, during the tenure of President Obasanjo's successor, Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, in January 2008.

On regional economic integration front, Nigeria under President Obasanjo moved on the West African Gas Pipeline Project (WAPCO) that had been billed to facilitate the supply of natural gas to four countries in West Africa – i.e. Benin, Ghana, Togo, and subsequently Cote d'Ivoire. Although the country could not meet the 2006 deadline slated for the completion of the project due to unforeseen challenges, including the crisis in the Niger Delta, but the country remained very steadfast on the project for both its regional integration and improved national economic potentials.¹⁷

Obasanjo government has also championed projects such as Gulf of Guinea Commission comprising Nigeria, Cameroun, Cape Verde, South Tome and Principe, Ghana and Sao Tome and Principe, just has continued to service existing ones like provision of assistance and loans to its neighbours, including Ghana, Sierra Leone and Sao Tome and Principe. The country has also attempted to strengthen bilateral relations with Cameroun with which it had settled the long dispute over Bakassi through the Nigeria-Cameroun Border Commission and the Republic of Benin with which it tried to address issues of cross-border crimes.¹⁸ It has also made overtures of selling oil at concessionary price to Cote d'Ivoire, if the latter assisted in combating the phenomenon of illegal oil bunkering. Cote d'Ivoire is alleged to play criminal havens to cheap stolen oil from Nigeria.

Foreign Policy under President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (2007–Date)

Obasanjo was succeeded by Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua in a terribly flawed electoral process of April 2007. In his inaugural speech of May 29, 2007, President Yar'Adua accorded recognition to the progress that Nigeria has made since its return to democracy in 1999, as well as his predecessor's courage and "boundless energy in creating the roadmap toward that united and economically thriving Nigeria that we seek" and thus promised "to build on the greatest accomplishments of the past few years" by working to increase the country's chances of rapid economic growth and development. He thus set the foreign policy goal of his administration to lifting Nigeria to become "one of the 20 largest economies in the world by the year 2020."¹⁹

¹⁶ See Vanguard (Lagos), Wednesday, August 18, 1999.

¹⁷ See "Contractual Breakdown: Small Arms, Intolerance and Tragedy in Nigeria's Delta Region", AfricaFiles, At Issue Elzine, Vol. *AfricaFile*, At Issue Elzine, Vol. 5, No. 4, Canada, <http://www.africafiles.org/atissueezine.asp#art1>

¹⁸ The cross-border criminal activities of Shina Rambo and Hammani Tidjani were very central to this policy step. It is through this effort that Nigeria secured the extradition of an allegedly notorious cross-border criminal, Hamman Tidjani.

¹⁹ See Inauguration Speech of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, 29 May, 2007.

This, he hoped would be achieved within the context of “our national interest and then the interest of our sub-region and then Africa, then the interest of world peace”, adding that “that is the progression of my foreign policy thrust and that would inform my intervention in foreign affairs.”²⁰

The details of the above have been captured in September 2007 foreign policy framework announced by Nigeria’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chief Ojo Maduekwe, as “citizenship diplomacy”. The concept, which is without any fundamental change in content, except for an upbeat approach to the country’s uplift, is situated within its original meaning in a democracy, that individuals have rights and responsibilities to help shape foreign relations. It is geared towards “protecting” the image and integrity of Nigeria and possibly retaliating against countries who are hostile and who brand Nigeria as “corrupt”, on the basis of an insignificant number of its citizens who engage in criminal activities around the world; and as such scare foreign investors and the opportunity required for wealth creation and development from the country.²¹ Affirmative of the claim that the country’s foreign policy has come of age and that the age of innocence is over, Chief Maduekwe explained the diplomacy the government herein refers to as:

“a diplomacy of consequences. If you are nice to us, then of course, we should be nice to you. If you were not nice to us, then of course there would be a cost. This is called the concept of reciprocity. This is called the diplomacy of consequences.”²²

In recognition of Nigeria’s enormous burden as the symbol of the success of Africa and black race, and the fact that there could never be a black success story, “unless it is a Nigeria success story,”²³ President Yar’Adua has promised to maintain Africa as the cornerstone of country’s foreign relations, and has defined the content of that foreign policy as follows:

“To our larger African family, you have our commitment to the goal of African integration. We will continue to collaborate with fellow African states to reduce conflict and free our people from the leg chains of poverty. To all our friends in the international community, we pledge our continuing fidelity to the goals of progress in Africa and peace in the world.”²⁴

It is not unlikely that the country will be able to pull the same strings as it had done in the past. With oil price rising above \$100 per barrel and with energy-hungry countries like China and the United States knocking at its door, Nigeria looks strategically positioned to redeem itself economically and to once again flex its muscles in the international arena.²⁵ This emerging sign

²⁰ http://www.nigerianmuse.com/specialinterviews/INTERVIEW_My_Main_Priorities_By_Yar_Adua

²¹ See *ThisDay* (Lagos), Wednesday, September 12, 2007.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/ike_okonta/2008/01/nigerias_oil_diplomacy.html

of a resurgent oil-driven foreign policy is already demonstrated in its effective collaboration with South Africa in opposing US plans to deploy its new African military command (AFRICOM), on the continent; arguing that such a foreign policy priority would not only amount to a dangerous continuation of US military expansion around the globe, but would also make Africa dependent on external powers as well as delay its responsible solutions to continental security issues.²⁶ Already, Nigeria has asked its National Assembly to write off \$13million of Liberia's \$43m bilateral debt, after Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf withdrew Liberia's offer to host the new command.²⁷

It is important to stress that it too early to do a conclusive assessment of President Yar'Adua's foreign policy. How far he goes in terms of progress or otherwise remains a question time.

Nigeria participation in Peacekeeping missions in 2008

Operation	Organization	Troops
African Union/United Nations Hybrid operation in Darfur UNAMID	UN / AU	3.111
United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)	UN	2.140
United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH)	UN	131
United Nations Mission in Sudan. UNMIS	UN	54
United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT)	UN	53
United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC)	UN	21
United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)	UN	20
United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE)	UN	10
United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN)	UN	8
United Nations peacekeeping mission in Western Sahara (MINURSO)	UN	7
United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI)	UN	8
United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL)	UN	6
United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)	UN	1
United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG)	UN	1
TOTAL		5.571

Source: <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/>
(January 2008)

²⁶ Danny Glover & Nicole C. Lee, "Say No to AFRICOM", *The Nation (New York)*, November 19, 2007.

²⁷ *Ibid.*