

Review

Transformations in Nigeria's foreign policy: From Balewa to Obasanjo

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This article re-examines and reassesses Nigeria's foreign policy from 1960 to 1979. From independence in 1960, all the administrations in Nigeria had similar foreign policy objectives until 1975 when General Murtala Mohammed became the Head of State. General Mohammed was killed in a failed military coup d'état and General Olusegun Obasanjo, his deputy, became the head of state; hence, the usage of Mohammed-Obasanjo administration. The administration of Mohammed and Obasanjo witnessed the first time that Nigerian broke away from her traditional-moderate way of pursuing foreign policy objectives to a new style with emphasis on action, rather rhetoric. The aim of this review article was to re-examine and reassess the transformations in Nigeria's foreign policy and diplomacy during the administration of Mohammed and Obasanjo. This review article discovers that Nigeria's foreign policy truly transformed from reactionary, conservative, static, and lacklustre nature to inspiring, progressive, radical, and dynamic during the administration of Generals Murtala Mohammed and Olusegun Obasanjo. The article concluded that the Mohammed-Obasanjo's foreign policy was the best in Nigeria from independence in 1960 to 1979 when Obasanjo handed power to President Shehu Shagari.

Key words: Nigeria, foreign policy, diplomacy, international relations, security.

INTRODUCTION

According to Ibrahim and Kabir (2018), 'Nigeria's external relations with other African nations since independence in 1960 seem to reveal a consistent pattern'. This statement is true except for Mohammed-Obasanjo's administration from 1975-1979. This review article is necessitated by the need for the current foreign policy framers of Nigeria to take a lesson from the approach and success of the Mohammed-Obasanjo administration in implementation of the country's foreign policy objectives and the framing of what should be the national interest of the country. The

article re-examines the changes, dynamism, merits, and weaknesses of Mohammed-Obasanjo in the realm of foreign policy and their impact on Nigeria and Africa in general. The article also re-investigates the difficulties encountered by many in understanding the foreign policy of Mohammed and Obasanjo administration. The article will also serve as an important informant as well as enlightening material for those with interest in foreign policy and diplomacy. The arguments here are structured under domestic and foreign factors. The two factors have

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different impact on the foreign policy of Nigeria during this period. The framework of this article emphasizes on the dynamism, focus, changes, and failures of Mohammed–Obasanjo administration in foreign policy and diplomacy. The article addresses the actions of the Mohammed and Obasanjo on decolonization in Africa especially Angola, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. It examines the administration and its relations with international organizations such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Commonwealth Organization, United Nations Organization (UNO), and scrutinises the Nigeria and the Arab–Israeli conflict. Finally, this work assesses Nigeria's relations with the Western and Eastern blocs in terms of economic and military collaborations.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

The descriptive analysis was the methodology used in writing this article. The study re-examines and reassesses the books and articles of experts and decision makers in Nigeria's foreign policy such as Bolaji Akinyemi, Olajide Aluko, Ibrahim Gambari, Joseph Garba, George Obiozor, Alaba Ogunsanwo, G.A. Olusanya, R.A. Akindele, Akinjide Osuntokun, Mahmud Tukur, Joseph Wayas, and many others. The opinions and expertise of these players and experts were analysed and contextualised in relation to the success of the Mohammed-Obasanjo administration in the realm of foreign policy and diplomacy. Contemporary opinions of other experts on Nigeria's foreign policy were also utilised to further re-establish the success, progress and dynamism introduced into the country's foreign policy between 1975 and 1979. Newspaper articles and editorial opinions were also employed to further support the arguments.

REVIEW OF NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY 1960 - 1975

Before independence on 1 October 1960, Britain, as Nigeria's colonising power, represented its interest in foreign and defence matters (Ogunsanwo, 1985). Even after independence, Britain continued to influence the country's foreign policy because of the colonial influence on the new ruling elites who inherited Nigeria's foreign policy from Britain. This is the reason why there were no immediate visible changes in Nigeria's external relations after independence (Ogunsanwo, 1985). After independence, the Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, presented some cardinal points to represent the principles and objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy with Africa as its centrepiece (Gray, 1965; Tukur, 1965). These principles and objectives mentioned above are still relevant today, and most Nigerian leaders have pursued them one way or the other with variations only in style of

leadership and implementation.

Under Balewa, Nigeria accepted and honoured all the treaties and agreements signed by Britain; this further increased the British influence on the country's foreign policy. Although Balewa declared Nigerian a non-aligned nation, like most of its members, he never respected the principle behind it because it was clear that he was pro-West, certainly because Nigeria was economically tied to Britain and the Western Bloc. When Nikita Khrushchev, in 1960, the then Prime Minister of Soviet Union demanded that Nigerian should permit them to establish its embassy in Lagos, Balewa replied that 'Application for diplomatic exchange would be considered in order of receipts and would be judged on their merits.' However, the same request was immediately granted to the United States of America (Gray, 1965).

Balewa was anti-communist who turned down scholarship awards to Nigerians from the Soviet bloc and delayed opening of diplomatic relations with them. Balewa invited apartheid, South Africa, to Nigeria's independence celebrations. He was an advocate of a gradual approach to Africa's decolonization. He also rejected the Organization of African Unity's (OAU) plan to break diplomatic ties with Britain because of Rhodesia's (Zimbabwe) Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI). Only Balewa also supported the unpopular Moise Tshombe during the Congo crisis (Tukur, 1965).

Balewa's administration believed that the West and Britain were the best friends of Nigeria. This is seen in his independence speech: 'We are grateful to the British officers whom we have known first as masters and then as leaders and finally as partners but always as friends' (Tukur, 1965, 24). Balewa's foreign policy was weak, inconsistent, and contradictory. His government was overthrown in the first military coup on 15 January 1966 (Olusanya and Akindele, 1986).

Major General Thomas Aguiyi Ironsi became the head of state after the assassination and overthrow of Balewa following the failure of Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu's bid to take power with his co-plotters. Ironsi was killed in a coup d'état on the 29 July 1966, leading to the emergence of Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon as the new Head of State (Ogunsanwo, 1985). Foreign policy under Gowon was quite different from that of Balewa, but Gowon still maintained some of the essential characteristics of the Balewa government. For example, Gowon maintained a moderate view towards foreign policy but strongly believed in 'Personal diplomacy', which is personal involvement or intervention in resolving diplomatic issues. His administration moved closer to the Western Bloc and Britain (Olusanya and Akindele, 1986). The civil war of 1967 – 1970 brought Nigeria close to the Communist bloc because Britain and the USA refused to supply Nigeria with arms to fight the Biafran rebels, which the USSR did (Ogunsanwo, 1985).

Gowon also immediately normalized relations with Gabon, Tanzania, Zambia, Côte d'Ivoire, and France in

1971 despite the recognition and support they gave to Biafra during the civil war. With the support of President Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo, Gowon rallied round other West African countries to form the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975 (Memos of Federal Ministry of External Affairs, 1991).

The leadership role Gowon played at the first Lome Convention, which was a precursor to ECOWAS, was quite commendable. However, Gowon who ruled Nigeria for more than nine years had the opportunity more than any other Nigeria ruler before him to make the foreign policy dynamic, because of the enormous resources and goodwill at his disposal (Akinyemi, 1980).

Even though Nigeria received fighter jets and other weapons from the Communist bloc, the relations did not go beyond that because, after the war, Nigeria reverted to her old friends, that is, Britain and the West (Akinyemi, 1980). Gowon performed better than Balewa in foreign policy. He increased aid to the freedom fighters like South West Africa People Organisation (SWAPO) in Namibia, African National Congress (ANC) and Pan African Congress (PAC) in South Africa and others in Zimbabwe and Angola. His commitment to anti-apartheid, decolonization, ECOWAS and OAU is commendable (Akinyemi, 1980).

At the eight summits of the OAU in Kampala, Uganda, in 1975, Gowon suggested the formation of the African Task Force to handle Military problems in Africa. He warned that: 'Let it be known to friends and foes that the historical tide is irreversible. From now on, we can only move forward. Those countries still under control of foreign powers must be liberated' (The Sunday Guardian, 2 October, 1988). Unfortunately for Gowon, he did not have the chance to prove his words because he was overthrown in a coup d'état before the end of the summit. General Murtala Mohammed became the new head of state on 29 July 1975 (Aluko, 1977).

The advent of the Murtala - Obasanjo regime

The administration of Mohammed witnessed a progressive change in Nigeria's foreign policy implementation. The regime put more emphasis on Africa as the centrepiece of its foreign policy than any other government. Chukwuemeka Ojeh argues that:

Nigerian regimes have always professed an Africa centered foreign policy. This was mostly demonstrated during the Murtala/Obasanjo military regime 1975 to 1979, manifesting largely, in financial and material supports for liberation struggles in Africa. Studies have shown that the huge wealth which the oil boom of the 1970s and 80s in particular provided was leveraged by regimes to make great foreign policy strides because oil had become a weapon in Nigeria's diplomatic arsenal (Ojeh, 2018).

Mohammed pursued a focused and dynamic foreign policy. Unfortunately for Mohammed, he did not live long to execute his plans entirely. He was killed in a failed coup-d'état on 13 February 1976 (Akinyemi, 1980). General Olusegun Obasanjo, Mohammed's deputy, succeeded him and continued with the administration's policies. The most important achievement of this administration was decolonization in Africa. The efforts of the administration in decolonization are commendable and have never been matched by any other regime before and after it (Obiozor, 1985). It is argued that 'No nation can have true guide as to what it must do and what it needs to do in foreign policy without accepting its national interest as guide' (Obi, 2019). The regime contributed immeasurably to the independence of Angola, Zimbabwe, and the struggle against apartheid South Africa. It supported ANC, PAC, and SWAPO in Namibia (Akinyemi, 1980). The administration for the first time in Nigeria's diplomatic history took unilateral decisions without support from most African states (Garba, 1987).

In 1976 the administration directed the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) to develop a new guideline for foreign policy. A committee was also set up known as Adedeji's committee, chaired by Dr Adebayo Adedeji the then federal commissioner for Economic Development. The committee was setup to provide a complete overhaul of Nigerian foreign policy system, substance, and apparatus (Anglin, 1964). The final report submitted in May 1976, gave the following as the country's permanent interests:

1. The defence of our sovereignty, independence, and territorial Integrity.
 2. Creating of the necessary political and economic conditions in Africa and in the rest of the world, which will facilitate the defence of the independence and territorial integrity of all African countries, while at the same time fostering natural self-reliance and rapid economic development.
 3. Promotion of equality and self-reliance in Africa and the rest of the world.
 4. The promotion and defence of social justice and respect for human dignity especially the dignity of Black man.
 5. The defence and promotion of world peace
9. The Murtala - Obasanjo regime accepted and followed recommendation of the Adedeji's committee in the execution of their foreign policy (Akinyemi, 1980).

DECOLONISATION IN AFRICA AND LIBERATIONS MOVEMENT

This section examines the policies of Nigeria with regard to decolonization and liberations movements in Angola, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. One of the most important achievements of the Mohammed-Obasanjo's regime's

foreign policy was in decolonialisation in Africa. The efforts of the regime on decolonialisation in the African Continent are quite commendable. It has never been marched by any other government up till today in Nigeria. The regime for the first time in the history of Nigeria's external relations changed its policy and took decisions on its own without support from majority of the African countries.

Angola

The first foreign policy decision to be taken by Nigeria was on Angola. Angola for a long time was a colonial territory of the Portuguese. The Portuguese were very much reluctant to give the colonies under them independence, one of them was Angola. But everything changed in Portugal in 1975, when the Military overthrew the civilians and took overpower, the new military rulers also did not hesitate to declare all the colonies under Portugal as independence (Akinyemi, 1980). Before independence there were three main liberation groups fighting for the independence of Angola. These three groups were the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), with its headquarters in Luanda under the leadership of Augustinho Neto. The other two were the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FLNA) led by Holden Roberto, with its headquarters in Huambo. The third group is the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) led by Jonas Savimbi, with its headquarters also in Huambo (Akinyemi, 1980). The MPLA was supported mainly by the communist bloc and Soviet Union in particular. But the UNITA was supported by the United State of America. South Africa was the main backer of FLNA (Garba, 1979: xviii). Shortly before independence, an area called Cabinda seceded from Angola; this was led by the Cabinda Enclave liberation front (FLEC) rebels. Nigeria condemned the secession as rebellious (Garba, 1987).

During the time of Gowon Nigeria had assisted the liberation movements together. This was in continuity with the O.A.U resolution of finding and establishing National government of unity by the liberation movements. This government of National Unity was proposed by the OAU conciliation commission on Angola. In the report of the commission it was suggested that "A government of national unity can be immediately formed by the liberation movement for the propose of leading Angola into independence" (Garba, 1987). It is important to note that despite the fact that the OAU agreed on the governments of National Unity by the three groups, some African countries were backing one group or the other, for example, Zaire was barking UNITA, Senegal and Zambia were backing FLNA (Garba, 1987).

In view of all these developments in Angola, as well as the activities of the countries in OAU, Nigeria decided to recognize the MPLA government of Augustinho Neto on

the 25 November 1975 as the legitimate government of Angola. To prove the genuineness of the support by the Nigerian government, the new Luanda government was given about 14 million dollars as aid. It is important to know that recognition of MPLA by Nigerian is partly because only the MPLA truly represented the true aspiration and interest of African people. Moreover, it was also because the other two freedom fighters were supported mainly by the western capitalist bloc led by the United States of America and South Africa which they did to prevent the coming of a radical and socialist government in Angola. In fact, the immediate reason for Nigeria's declaration and recognition of MPLA was the South African support for the puppet Democratic People's Republic of Huambo, formed by FLNA. It was also due to a plan of military action by FLNA and UNITA against the MPLA government in Luanda that Nigeria supported Neto and his party (Garba, 1987).

This was a surprise to many African countries who believe that Nigeria would support either UNITA or FLNA. But the recognition of MPLA government by Nigeria does not mean total recognition for the new government by other Africa States. This was because some countries were still supporting UNITA and FLNA. The matter was taken to the OAU Extra Ordinary summit in Addis Ababa 13th of January 1976, where Nigeria led by General Murtala Mohammed and Colonel Joseph Garba, the then External Affairs Commissioner, declared again her support for the MPLA (Garba, 1987). Nigeria's delegation also tried, through lobbying and persuasion to pull other countries to the support of MPLA. But the final voting ended twenty/twenty-two (20-22) against MPLA. This prevented the admission of Angola that day and more over it almost led to the split of OAU. After that Submit, the Nigerian government continued to lobby for the support of the MPLA. Until when most African countries supported MPLA, which eventually led to its admission into OAU the same year (Akinyemi, 1980).

Even though Angola, with the effort of Nigeria was admitted into OAU, some countries like Zaire and Senegal refused to recognize the MPLA government. Instead they continued to support the UNITA and FLNA financially and militarily against the Angolan people. Because of this Nigeria had to scout around, lobby and persuade other countries to normalize relation with Angola. But with all the troubles Nigeria encountered because of supporting the MPLA, such as condemning the letter written by President Gerald Ford of USA to African countries, urging them not to recognize the MPLA government, which caused a setback in the relations between Nigerian and USA, Angola did not show gratitude (Akinyemi, 1980). Even after independence when Augustinho Neto was thanking those countries that helped Angola to independence, Nigeria was not mentioned. Even when Neto was paying official visited to countries that helped Angola to archive independence, Nigeria was among the last to be visited. Angola was

very ungrateful to Nigeria after her independence. Angola signed trade and bilateral agreements with other countries but ignored Nigeria. Garba summed it up when he says, 'In the bilateral terms which after all, is the core of relations between states, we gave and gave to Angola, and in return we got nothing' (Garba, 1979).

But even though Nigerian did not gain anything bilaterally from Angola, the issue of its independence was a great occasion for the country. This is because the decision to recognize the MPLA for the first-time portrayed Nigeria as a country pursuing decisive, good, and radical foreign policy without control or influence from any of the two warring ideological blocks. The Angolan issue raised the tempo and respect Nigeria had abroad and according to Sunday Guardian 'Showed how dynamic Nigeria's foreign policy could be if properly executed' (Sunday Guardian 2 October, 1988). It was the support given to the MPLA that had many people to regard General Mohammed as a communist. Even Colonel Bukar Sukar Dimka accused Mohammed of being a communist and gave this reason as responsible for their attempt to ever throw him. According to Dimka 'The government was going communist and we intended to re-establish the policy of non-alignment' (Ojiako, 1979). However, the first time in the history of Nigerian foreign policy, the country disagreed with the western bloc led by USA. This even led to verbal exchange between the two countries. Henry Kissinger the then American Secretary of State was disallowed from entering Nigeria in 1975. In fact, this was a great time for Nigeria and its foreign policy because of its resolve to pursue its interest without dictation from the western bloc (Sunday Guardian 2 October, 1988).

It was also the first time, Nigeria and Soviet Union took side on a major foreign policy issue. Femi Aribisala described Nigeria's action as 'An act which became one of the most gratifying achievements in the history of Nigeria's diplomacy (African Concord, 14 June, 1988). Apart from this, Mohammed also closed the Foreign Broadcasting Information Service of America (F.B.I.S.) in Nigeria because of its anti-government activities and anti-Angolan broadcasts. Nigeria's action was also described as 'Singularly the most daring and responsible foreign policy decision taken by the Nigerian government since independence' (Sunday Times Lagos, 1 February 1976). Shortly after the Angolan issue, General Mohammed was assassinated in an abortive coup d'état led by Colonel Dimka of the Nigerian Army Training Corps, on the 13 February 1976. General Obasanjo the deputy of Mohammed immediately became the head of state. The first major foreign policy issue to be handled by Obasanjo was the Rhodesian problem or independence. It is important to note that with the coming of Obasanjo, there was no major change in the foreign policy of the country. This is because many Nigerians including Obasanjo himself claimed his government is a continuation of that of Mohammed.

Zimbabwe (Rhodesia)

Obasanjo therefore continued with the dynamic and action oriented foreign policy started by Mohammed. The Rhodesian crisis started shortly after Obasanjo settled down as the new head of state. Rhodesia for many years had been under the control of the British. But surprisingly in 1961, Ian Smith one of the white settlers in the territory, with the support of other whites declared Rhodesian independent under the so-called Unilateral Declaration of independence (UDI). Many African countries condemned the UDI, more over the Blacks in Rhodesia did not see the UDI as independence but as continuation of white rule. This made the freedom fighters intensified their struggle (Ajala, 1986).

In 1961, there was leadership struggle in the main liberation movement Zimbabwean African People Union (ZAPU). Some of the members led by Ndabingi Sithole and Robert Mugabe were not satisfied with the way Joshua Nkomo was handling the affairs of the ZAPU. So Sithole and Mugabe formed the Zimbabwean African National Union (ZANU) with Sithole as the leader. Both ZAPU and ZANU continued to fight the white regime in Rhodesia up to 1970s. It was in 1978 that the freedom fighters also intensified their struggle for independence. And that was where Nigeria and OAU in general became involved in the issues (Ajala, 1986).

The western bloc wanted to install a puppet government in Zimbabwe. So, they decided to bring about an internal settlement and agreement between Abel Muzorewa and Ian Smith. This government made Muzorewa the puppet prime minister. But the proposal was opposed by Nigerian officials that suggested the idea of the patriotic front, which emphasized on joint effort by the ZAPU and ZANU to gain independence for their country. But unfortunately, the joint effort failed because they could not agree on who to become the prime minister. In April 1979, there was an election and Muzorewa won the election. Margret Thatcher, the prime minister of Britain, and the western block declared it 'free and fair' (Ajala, 1986). Nigeria condemned the election. General Obasanjo believed that it was stage-managed by the British and western bloc to install Muzorewa as prime minister. This made Obasanjo to reject all British tenders for the Apapa port project, declaring that 'until the British government clarify its stands on Rhodesia, no proposal from any British Company would be considered' (Ajala, 1986).

Obasanjo went ahead to nationalise the British Petroleum (BP) and changed the name to African Petroleum (A.P.). Barclays Bank and Standard Banks were also nationalised, and their names changed to Union and First Bank, respectively. This was all in bid to show the British and the western world, that Nigeria would not accept the puppet Muzorewa's government in Zimbabwe (Ajala, 1986). Nigeria also threatens to use oil weapon against the American government if it recognized

the Muzorewa's government. Nigeria also promised to continue the nationalization of British companies until Thatcher stopped recognizing the Muzorewa's government at the Lusaka Commonwealth Summit held in August 1979. This led to the Lancaster House Constitutional Conference in 1979, which was to draw up a new constitution for Zimbabwe (Ajala, 1986). Nigeria continued to support both ZAPU and ZANU, because Nigeria wanted a one man, one vote, free and fair election in Zimbabwe. The Lancaster House Conference drew up a constitution and fixed up a date for the independence of Zimbabwe. After the election, ZANU won it and Zimbabwe became independence on 18 April 1980, with Robert Mugabe as the prime Minister (Ajala, 1986). The issue of Zimbabwe also marked another important occasion or episode for the portrayal of the dynamism and action oriented foreign policy of the Mohammed-Obasanjo regime.

South Africa

The issue of South Africa was not a new thing in the history of Nigeria's foreign relations. Right from independence, the country under different government had condemned the apartheid - regime in South Africa, as well and aided the freedom fighters and liberation movements fighting for freedom and independence in that country. The Balewa government was very moderate on this issue. These can be seen in a situation when the Balewa government even invited South Africa to Nigeria's independence celebrations and suggested a gradual approach to the issue of decolonization and apartheid in South Africa (Gray, 1965; Tukur, 1965). Gowon improved over Balewa's policy. It was during Gowon's time that Nigeria started to give aid to the freedom fighters and the liberation movements in Southern Africa (Ogunsanwo, 1985). Despite this, the effort of Gowon was inadequate. The coming of Mohammed changed everything. There was a new approach to the issue of apartheid in South Africa. Nigeria started a more radical policy in the issue of apartheid in South Africa.

Nigeria started to give aid to freedom fighter in a way quite different from that of Gowon's era. More money was given to several groups rather than just African National Congress (ANC). For the first time history, Nigeria was more serious about the issue of apartheid. Nigeria started to play an important role, more than rhetoric and condemnation of South Africa that had characterized our foreign policy under Balewa and Gowon (Ogunsanwo, 1985). Nigeria first declared its recognition for the two main freedom fighters in South Africa that is the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan Africans Congress (PAC). Nigeria gave financial and military aid and support to these two-organisations fighting the South African apartheid regime (Ogunsanwo, 1985). Nigeria succeeded in isolating South Africa from trade and participation in

international organisations. For examples in October 1975, Nigeria was one of the first countries to condemn the creation of South African home lands, otherwise known as the Bantustans. Nigeria and the African countries also succeeded in persuading the United Nations General Assembly in 1975 to refuse the recognition of the Bantustans and all countries agreed except the USA, which obtained from condemning the Bantustans as 'A Sham and invalid independence' (Ajala, 1986).

Nigeria also made use of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigerian, External Service to beam programs to South Africa to enlighten the people about the evil of apartheid and the need to fight it. The National Committee for Action against Apartheid (NACAP) was also established in 1975. This was also founded to inform Nigerians and Africa in general about the evils of apartheid (Garba, 1987). The South African Relief Fund (SARF) was established by the Federal Government in 19 December 1976 to raise fund for the freedom fighters in South Africa. In June 1976 Nigeria spearheaded another resolution in UN which condemned the South African regime and apartheid. The resolution revealed that 'Apartheid seriously disturbs international peace and security' (Garba, 1987). Nigeria also used the politics of sport against South Africa. Nigeria boycotted the Montreal Olympics in Canada in 1976. This is to protest the issue of apartheid. This led to a situation whereby many countries put embargo on sports links with South Africa. After the Soweto massacre of 1976, Nigeria offered refuge for the children of Soweto (Ajala, 1986). South African students were given Nigerian Scholarship to Study overseas and in Nigerian higher institutions of learning. Nigeria offered to train the freedom fighters in Nigerian Defense Academy (NDA). Many recognized the effort of Nigeria and Nigeria was termed as 'the Meccan of liberation movement' (Ejiofor, 1981).

Mohammed and Obasanjo allowed the liberation movement to open their offices in Lagos. All exiles from South Africa could come to Nigeria. Substantial amount was raised in 1975 for South African Relief Fund (SARF) in Nigeria both from the government and private sector. This generally had nothing to do with the Nigeria's Contribution to the OAU liberation fund, which the regime increased in 1975 (Ejiofor, 1981). Nigeria also urged the freedom fighters in South Africa to unite as a front to fight apartheid. Nigeria attempted to unite the ANC and PAC and sponsored South African Youth Revolutionary Council (SAYRC). The ANC and SAYRC planned the Soweto uprising which led to Soweto Massacre in 1976 (Ejiofor, 1981). As part of Nigeria's effort against apartheid, Nigeria also hosted the United Nations World Conference for Action against Apartheid (WCAAA) in 1976 in Ibadan. A resolution was reached to nationalise all foreign investment with business connections in South Africa. The International Conference against Apartheid was held in Lagos in August 1977, which condemned

businesses and western countries that sustain the South African apartheid government (Ajala, 1986). Nigeria also contributed a lot financially and materially to the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) which is the main freedom group fighting for the independence of Namibia. Nigeria allowed SWAPO under Sam Nujoma to open its office in Lagos in 1978 (Ajala, 1986).

International organisations

This part of the work examines Nigeria's activities in Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Organisation of African Unity (OAU), Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the Commonwealth Organisation and the United Nations (UN). It is important to note that the above regional and international organisation were not the only ones Nigeria belonged to during Mohammed - Obasanjo regime. But they were the most important with regard to the country's foreign policy.

ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS)

ECOWAS was the idea of General Yakubu Gowon, the former Nigerian Head of State and General Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo. The two persuaded and lobbied the rest of the West African countries to join the organisation. The charter of the organisation was signed on the 28th of May 1975 about two months before Gowon was overthrown. Gowon had the intention of using the organisation to open market for Nigerian goods and increase economic development in the West African sub-region (Olaniyan, 1986). In the first instance many thought that since it was Gowon and Eyadema who started ECOWAS, Mohammed and Obasanjo would withdraw Nigeria's membership because of their differences with Gowon. But surprisingly they supported the organisation to the maximum. They encourage the Nigerian business community to support ECOWAS. The same encouragement was given to West African Chamber of Commerce and Industry Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA) (Olaniyan, 1986).

As soon as Mohammed came to power, he succeeded in persuading Eyadema to allow the ECOWAS headquarters to be sited in Nigeria. This was because Gowon already conceded the ECOWAS headquarters to Togo as a compensation for being a co-founder of the organisation (Olaniyan, 1986). However, Mohammed argues that Nigeria should have the headquarters since the country contributes a third of the ECOWAS budget (Olaniyan, 1986). Mohammed and Obasanjo also succeeded in persuading the francophone countries in West Africa led by Senegal and Ivory Coast, to forget about the proposal that Central African Countries like

Zaire should be included in the organisation. This was intended to prevent Nigeria's domination in the organisation. This almost prevented the signing of the five crucial protocols that hold the ECOWAS together. But with Nigeria's persuasion, it was signed at the second summit - meeting in November 1972 (Olaniyan, 1986).

The organisation also gave Nigeria a lot of opportunity to market its crude oil in the regional market because most of the countries import their already processed oil product from overseas countries. Another achievement of Nigeria was over the signing of non-aggression pact. Nigeria has always exercised a leadership role in the organisation (Dokang, 1980). Nigeria has succeeded in retaining the chairmanship of the organisation up till today. Nigeria has also succeeded in spreading its trading activities in form of crude oil, petrol chemicals, agriculture, and mineral resources. Trading agreements were also signed with countries like Senegal, Ivory Coast and Ghana. Nigeria 'offended creative and effective leadership aimed at maintaining the integrity of the union and guiding its goals, thus enabling it to adopt to new and exchanging need and circumstances' (Dokang, 1980). Ebenezer Oni and Abayomi Taiwo have argued that 'Nigeria's foreign policy is conducted on the pedestal of "Big Brotherism" without concomitant and lucidly wrapped economic agenda that benefits the people and government in Nigeria' (Oni and Taiwo, 2016). However, this was not the case with Mohammed-Obasanjo because they demonstrated that the continuation of Nigeria's membership of ECOWAS was strictly to harness the economies of the West African Sub-region to the advantage of Nigeria.

ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN UNITY (O.A.U)

The participation of Nigeria in the OAU during the time of Mohammed and Obasanjo was quite different from what Nigeria had done before. Before the coming of this regime, Balewa and his successor Gowon pursued a very conservative and moderate foreign policy. They adhered too much to the final decisions or resolutions of the OAU, which in some cases were not favourable to the interest of the country. At that time, Nigeria hardly executed any independence action out of the general agreement of the organisation. But Mohammed and Obasanjo changed to more active, leadership and dynamic way of doing things. Nigeria contributed a lot to OAU financially, materially as well as morally. And the regime of Mohammed Obasanjo even did better on that matter. Nigeria pays the highest of dues in the continental body about a third (Aluko, 1981). Nigeria always pays her dues on time. Nigeria in its foreign policy objectives and aspiration ration followed the Article II of the OAU charter which was for the promotion of African Unity and solidarity of African states. Nigeria has never done anything to under - mine the importance of this charter. Nigeria also adhered strictly to

the section that emphasizes on peaceful settlements of disputes by negotiation, meditation, conciliation, and arbitration (Aluko, 1981).

A good example was the case of Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea. In 1975, there were more than 20,000 Nigerians in Equatorial Guinea serving and working as industrial workers on cocoa plantations. They were the people sustaining the country's economy because the country depended entirely on the exportation of cocoa (Ofoagbu, 1979). Under the leadership of President Macias Nguema, with military and police brutality and terror, many Nigerian citizens were killed and brutalised (Osuntokun, 1978). The Nigerian populace complained to the Federal Government. Many advised Nigeria to annexe with Equatorial Guinea, but Mohammed refused, instead he ordered all Nigerian to come back home. This directly crippled the economy of the country because the cocoa plantations were all abandoned. By taking these economic measures Nigeria dealt with Equatorial Guinea at the same time but did not violate the charters of OAU, which is against military aggression as well as interference in the affairs of other state (Osuntokun, 1978). It is important to note that, had Nigeria attacked and annexed with Equatorial Guinea, it would have generated ill feeling for Nigeria in OAU and the world in general. Nigeria is described as 'The largest exporter of peace in Africa' (Obi, 2019). Some countries would have used the aggression of Equatorial Guinea to invade and annex the country.

Another foreign policy achievement of Nigeria in the OAU was the Angolan issue. Nigeria succeeded in persuading other OAU member states to recognize the MPLA as the legitimate government of Angola. Wayas argues that it is 'The most generally acclaimed act of the OAU in its history' (Wayas, 1979). Nigeria showed a lot of diplomacy in the August 1976 OAU Extra Ordinary Summit in Addis Ababa, on the Angolan independent. On the independence of Zimbabwe, the effort of Nigeria is commendable both in the OAU's Libreville and Khartoum Summits in 1979. Nigeria tried so much, to see that peaceful settlement was reached through the patriotic front of ZANU and ZAPU, which later led to the independence of Zimbabwe.

With the support of Nigeria, assistance to freedom fighters was increased. The South African Relief Fund was established with the support of Nigeria, the OAU liberation fund was also established to raise fund for the freedom fighters in Southern Africa. Apart from this, Nigeria also gave financial and technical aid to many poor African countries in the OAU; such countries include Chad, Niger, Togo, Republic of Benin, and Sudan. Countries bordering South Africa were also aided. These include Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Zambia, all suffering from military aggression and destructive activities of the apartheid South Africa (Ajala, 1986). Although Nigeria has been a member of many committees for long time, these were increased

tremendously. Nigeria was a member of almost all the OAU Committees. Some of the important ones were the Ad-hoc Committee on Western Sahara established in 1977, Implementation Committees of OAU on the Western Sahara 1977 and the Liberation Committee also of 1977. Obasanjo also tried to solve the Chadian conflict which led to civil war and the problems of Morocco and Western Sahara (Akinyemi, 1980).

ORGANISATION OF PETROLEUM EXPORTING COUNTRIES (OPEC)

Nigeria joined the organisation in 1971, during Gowon's regime. The objective was to enable Nigeria to earn more from its petroleum products and crude oil export. Nigeria obtained 95% of its revenue from oil during the Mohammed - Obasanjo regime. The regime, just like any other Nigerian government could not have a permanent influence in the organisation because it was heavily dominated by the Arab Countries. But nevertheless, OPEC became a key organ for the promotion of Nigeria's oil interest. At this time, Nigeria's oil depended entirely on the bargaining power of OPEC in the world oil market. And it is the revenue derived from Nigeria's crude oil that enables the regime to pursue its foreign policy objects and aspirations. It further proved Nigeria as a black power and justified the leadership role of Nigeria in Africa as well as in the black world. It is important to note that Nigeria's oil revenue increased during Murtala - Obasanjo regime because of its number membership of OPEC (Akinyemi, 1980).

Oil revenue enables Nigeria to contribute more financially and materially to ECOWAS, OAU, and OAU liberation funds. Nigeria's membership of OPEC enables the country to develop internally by undertaking many development plans, and of course internal development is very important for a radical foreign policy. During Mohammed - Obasanjo regime, oil prices rose to about forty dollars per barrel, which was the highest in history at that time. Nigeria then, was producing about two million barrels per day, (Akinyemi, 1980).

Nigeria also used oil weapon to achieve her foreign policy objectives and aspiration. This was done with the solidarity and help of OPEC member countries, who mostly are third world countries. For examples in 1978, Obasanjo threatened to use oil weapon against USA and Britain because of the Zimbabwean independence (Akinyemi, 1980). During President Jimmy Carter's visit to Nigeria in 1978, he demanded for help from Obasanjo to use Nigeria's oil influence as OPEC member to reduce world oil prices which was very hard on the western block (Akinyemi, 1980).

This shows the importance attached to Nigeria by the western powers. At that time, after Saudi Arabia, Nigeria was the second highest supplier of crude oil to USA. Lastly, Nigeria made an important achievement in the

OPEC. Nigeria succeeded in influencing the organisation to ban and put embargo on oil export to apartheid South Africa (Akinyemi, 1980).

THE COMMONWEALTH ORGANISATION

Nigeria joined the Commonwealth Organisation after independence in 1960. The British monarch is recognized as the 'The symbol of the free association of its independent member nations and as such the head of the Common Wealth' (Olusanya and Akindele, 1986). The Commonwealth Organisation was an extra - attraction to the new independent states, compared to the United Nations. Commonwealth served many purposes which the United Nations could not do. Nigeria for example obtained assistance and aid after independence from the Commonwealth member countries like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand that have developed economies (Olusanya and Akindele, 1986). Nigeria used the Commonwealth in many ways to further its foreign policy objectives and aspirations. It was in the Commonwealth summit in London in 1977 and Lusaka in 1978 that Obasanjo threatened to withdraw Nigeria's membership from the Organisation, if Britain recognized the puppet Muzorewa's government in Zimbabwe (Olusanya and Akindele, 1986).

Nigeria also used the Commonwealth front and solidarity to fight against apartheid. Nigeria pressed Britain to impose economic sanctions on South Africa, because of the inhuman apartheid system. Nigeria used Commonwealth forum to pursue anti - colonial and anti-imperialist objectives. Nigeria also gains form of receiving scholarship from commonwealth universities. The country derived good relationship with other members. Nigeria gained from Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, who are the developed members of the Commonwealth. Moreover, it opened markets for Nigerian goods to all the members of the organisation (Olusanya and Akindele, 1986).

Lastly, Commonwealth during Mohammed - Obasanjo regime served as a means of popularizing Nigeria in world politics. This earns more respect for the country throughout the world. For examples, if Nigeria had withdrawn in 1978, it would have led to the breakup of the organisation, because many countries, African, would have followed the examples of Nigeria (Olusanya and Akindele, 1986).

THE UNITED NATIONS (UN)

The activities of Nigerian started in the world body in 1960 shortly after independence. Under Balewa and Gowon, Nigeria pursued a very moderate or conservative foreign policy or activities in the world body. But with the coming of Mohammed and Obasanjo regime in 1975,

there was a total change in foreign policy posture. There was changed from the moderate policy based on rhetoric to practical and action-oriented policy in the world body. Nigeria's contributions in the world body were quite impressive. For the first time in the history of Nigeria, the world recognized the importance of Nigeria in the world body.

One of the most important achievements of Nigeria in the organisation was the election of Nigeria, for the first time in history as a member and African representative into the Security Council in 1977 (Obiozor, 1985). This achievement was a great one for Nigeria's government, because Nigerian won the election with only five out of the forty - nine African Countries that voted. Although this was not the first time a Nigeria was elected into a high post in the world body, the Mohammed - Obasanjo regime recorded a great increase in this aspect. The Security Council seat was discussed at the Libreville OAU summit in Gabon in 1977 when the member nations were deliberating on the two countries that would replace Mauritius and Republic of Benin as African representatives (Obiozor, 1985). Nigeria had made public her intention of occupying one of the posts. Nigeria went ahead to place its candidate for the Security Council. Eventually, when the election came up, in November 1977, Nigeria won the election against Republic of Niger which received most of the African votes. But at the end of the day Nigeria won the election. This shows the importance attached to Nigeria by non-African states in the world body. It was a great achievement for the country and more importantly, again Nigeria was elected as the President of the Security Council (Obiozor, 1985).

Nigeria also contributed a lot in peace keeping force, both within and outside African Continent. Although right from independence in 1960, Nigeria has been contributing to peace keeping forces, but it was intensified during the time of Mohammed and Obasanjo. For example, shortly after the breakout of hostilities between Israel and Syria, a United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) was organized and sent to the area to maintain peace in which Nigeria contributed troops for peace keeping (Obiozor, 1985). Nigeria very much participated in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in 1978 (Obiozor, 1985). The objective was the withdrawal of Israel from Southern Lebanon, the re-establishment of a Lebanese government and authority in the area as well as the restoration of peace (Garba, 1987).

Nigeria also because of its importance in the world body at this time belonged to many commissions and committees. For example, Nigeria was appointed in 1975 as a member of the Commission on Transnational Cooperation (TNC); she was also elected as a member of the Special Session on Development and International Economic Cooperation (SSDIEC) (Garba, 1987). Nigeria made use of the world body extensively to pursue her decolonization policy and anti-apartheid campaign

resolutions were sponsored against apartheid South Africa, decolonization, and Namibian independence. Nigeria was also elected as a member of U.N Commission on Namibian Independence (Garba, 1987). All these explain why Nigeria retained her chairmanship of the Anti-Apartheid Committee until apartheid was abolished in South Africa. Nigeria also gained a lot economically and financially from the world body. Nigeria gained immensely from the U.N, specialized agencies such as, World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural organisation (UNESCO), United Nations Internal children Emergency fund (UNICEF), Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), International Labour Organisation (ILO), United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) and many others (Obiozor, 1985).

NIGERIA AND THE ARAB ISRAELI CONFLICT

The Arab Israeli conflict has been an important issue in the Nigeria's foreign policy since independence. Nigerian leaders have always tried to avoid direct involvement and even comment on this issue. The Arab Israeli conflict of course is one of the issues, that is, very controversial in Nigerian people. There was never an agreement among the Nigerian people on this issue. Northern part of the country is always going against normalizing diplomatic relations with Israel; whereas the Southern part is always supporting the idea of normalizing relation with Israel. The only reason that could be attributed to this is the religious factor. The North is predominantly Muslim and supports the Palestinian cause while the South is predominantly Christian and supports Israel because of the religious ties of Christianity to the Jewish state.

From the beginning, Tafawa Balewa said that Nigeria would be neutral, but it was clear later that he was supporting the Arabs (Gray 1965; Tukur, 1965). For example, Nigeria refused to send an Ambassador to Tel Aviv even though, Israel sent ambassador to Lagos. Similar request was granted to the Arab states without problems (Gray 1965; Tukur, 1965). Gowon, just like Balewa tried to be neutral on this issue, but he too ended supporting the Arabs against the Israelis. The support given to the Biafran rebels, by the Israeli government further strained the relationship with Nigeria. Under Gowon, Nigeria broke diplomatic relations with Israel in 1973 (Bukarambe, 1986). This was over Israel occupation of Arab and Egyptian territories. Nigeria like the rest of OAU states regarded this as an invasion of Africa.

Even after the Camp David accord in 1978 between Menachem Begin and an Anwar Sadat, which normalized relations between Egypt and Israel, Nigeria refused to change its attitude towards Israel (Bukarambe, 1986). The situation did not change during the period of Mohammed and Obasanjo. Both Mohammed and

Obasanjo refused to normalize relations with Israel despite the many attempts made by the Israel government to normalize the relationship (Bukarambe, 1986). Many people had argued that, Nigeria has a lot to gain from Israeli and from the Arab, pointing at the neglect of Africa by the Arab rich countries. But the Mohammed - Obasanjo regime claimed that it did not renew diplomatic relations with Israel because of the country's cooperation with South Africa (Bukarambe, 1986).

The Northern group supports these arguments, but the Southern group condemned it, saying that many western countries led by the U.S.A, Britain, Japan, Western Germany, France, and Canada have links with South Africa (Bukarambe, 1986). This made the argument of Nigerian government hypocritical. It shows that the Northern group are having their way on this issue. In 1977 Israel made another attempt at renewing diplomatic relations with Nigeria, through the meeting of Joseph Garba, Nigeria's External Affairs Commissioner and Yigal Allon the then Foreign Minister of Israel in New York (Garba, 1987). In their meeting Garba stressed the fact that Israel has military and economic ties with the racist regime in South Africa, and more over Israel showed its closeness to South Africa by allowing Prime Minister John Vorster to visit Israel. Yigal Allon also described Nigeria as 'a very important Africa country which held the key to the solution to Israel and Black African estrangement (Garba, 1987). The state of Israel believed that if Nigeria resumed diplomatic relations with Israel majority of the African countries would follow suit. But Garba insisted that Israel must stop her collaboration with South Africa and 'to show positive signs of movement towards a resolution of the Middle East crises and to the question of home lands for the Palestine people' (Garba, 1987). But to be sincere, since the western block has economic, military, and diplomatic ties with South Africa Nigeria too should have end relations with them. Nigeria should realize that the Arabs are just using African countries to satisfy their own Interest. The Arabs also have their first allegiance to the Arab league. This can be seen in the writing of Late Colonel Gamal Abdul Nasser that 'The first circle in which we must resolve is the Arab Circle' (Abdul Nassar, 1959). Arab countries have no concern for Africa unless when they need Africa for something. For example, when the Arab members of OPEC increased oil prices, it affected poor African countries more than the western powers it was meant for. The special arrangement made to reduce prices for African countries was not implemented (Bukarambe, 1986). It is important to know that no Arab Leader came to the Black African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in Lagos in 1977. Also, no Arab representative attended the First Extra Ordinary Council of Ministers of the OAU in Kinshasa, Zaire in December where intra African economic corporations and problems were discussed (Garba, 1979: 83).

In terms of financial assistance, the Arabs just made promises without results. Aid is only given to the Arab Muslim countries, in North Africa, and not through Africa Development Bank (ADB) but through Arab Bank and other Arab and Muslim Institutions (Bukarambe, 1986). Apart from Algeria and Libya no Arab country in and outside Africa had contributed anything to the OAU liberation fund to help independence of Angola, Zimbabwe and to fight apartheid in South Africa (Bukarambe, 1986). There is little or no trading activities between Nigerian, Africa, and Arab world in general. From 1975 some Arab countries like Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE) started to trade with South Africa in gold and diamond (Bukarambe, 1986). Many of them violated the oil embargo by selling crude oil to South Africa. In 1974 Jordan sold military equipment, including centurion tanks and missiles to South Africa (Osia, 1981).

Despite all this, Nigeria continued to support the Arabs against the Jewish state and Nigeria also refused to renew diplomatic ties with Israel. But Israel never relented in its effort to renew ties with Nigeria. Although there were no diplomatic ties between Nigeria and Israel, there was a strong economic and commercial tie (Bukarambe, 1986). Israel has more than forty companies in Nigeria. By 1985 Nigeria owed Solel Boneh, the largest Israeli constructing company in Nigeria, 120 million pounds sterling, and about 2,000 Israeli's are residing in Nigeria, the largest in Black Africa (Bukarambe, 1986). Nigeria is also the largest trading partner of Israel in Africa including Egypt which has diplomatic ties with the Jewish states. Nigerian's trade with Israel is more than the whole of Nigeria's trade with the Arab countries combined (Bukarambe, 1986). For example, Nigeria has always voted against Israel in the UNO and other international forums. Nigeria even supported the U.N. Resolution of November 1976 that 'Zionism is a form of racism and radical discrimination' (Obiozor, 1980).

Later, the Mohammed and Obasanjo regime particularly after the death of Mohammed, decided to be a bit neutral about the issue. Obasanjo realized that to get the support of western capitalist countries against apartheid South Africa, Nigeria needs to reduce her support for the Arabs (Ojo, 1980). This could be seen at the United Nations Economic and Social Council Conference held in Abidjan in 1978. Nigeria withdrew her earlier support for the notion that 'Zionism is a form of racism' and tended to 'destabilise the UN system and to demobilize our effort against racism' (Ojo, 1980). Nigeria with the backing of Ivory Coast and other African countries did not allow the Arab representatives at the conference to pass anti-Israel resolutions. Obasanjo also refused the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) under Yasser Arafat to open an office in Lagos in 1978 (Ojo, 1980). But unfortunately, all these did not pave way for renewal of diplomatic relations with Israel.

NIGERIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE EASTERN AND WESTERN BLOCS

This part of the work examines Nigeria's relations with the western and eastern blocs. Here, trade and economic relations with the western and eastern blocs were analysed. The military relationship with the two ideological blocs was discussed. Right from the time of independence, Nigerian government under Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, declared Nigeria as non-aligned in her foreign policy. That is, the country did not belong to any of the two ideological camps, capitalism, and communism. When General Yakubu Gowon also came to power, he too re-established Nigeria's commitment to the non-aligned movement. But these two leaders did not pursue the policy of non-alignment to the core. They were only non-aligned by speech and rhetoric. Their economies were perpetually tied to the western capitalist Economic system. When Mohammed and Obasanjo came in the case was not all that different, except the disagreement on Angola, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and decolonisation in general.

At this time, more than 70% of Nigeria's external trade and Economic activities was tied to the western bloc (Akinyemi, 1979). Many even believe that the issue of Angola, Zimbabwe, and decolonization in Africa including Apartheid would even bring Nigeria and Soviet Union as well as the eastern bloc closer, both politically and economically (Akinyemi, 1979). But the case was not so, Nigeria was not ready to go communist in Nigeria's relations with the western bloc. This can be seen by the state visit by the American president Jimmy Carter, the first of its kind by any American President. Nigeria during the time of Mohammed and Obasanjo sent Nigerian students to study in western bloc rather than eastern bloc (Akinyemi, 1979).

It is important to note that the western government USA particularly has no permanent policy toward Africa. According to Henry Kissinger, the American Secretary of State, when Joe Garba and Leslie Harryman, Nigeria's permanent representative to UN him, Garba accused 'America of not having a policy towards Africa' (Garba, 1987). Kissinger replied, 'You are right we don't have a policy on Africa, we would like to have one, what do you think the policy should be' (Garba, 1987). The election of Jimmy Carter as the new American President and his appointment of equally liberal people of the Democratic Party, such as Cyrus Vance and Andrew Young as Secretary of States and United States Permanent Representatives to the U.N. changed the US attitude towards Nigeria and Africa in general (Garba, 1987).

In case of the Soviet Union, the relationship with Nigeria was little above that of their predecessors. The Mohammed - Obasanjo regime for sure was not a communist government, and moreover, they did not preach socialist ideology. Many believed that the issue of Angola, Zimbabwe and South Africa would make Nigeria

to move much closer to the communist bloc. But that was not the case, the relationship of Nigeria and the Eastern bloc and Soviet Union particularly was not encouraging and also the unconcerned attitude of the then Soviet Foreign minister, Andrew Gromyko to African affairs was a hindrance (Aluko, 1981). Also, during the 1975 - 1979 period, no Soviet Senior official visited Nigeria despite the fact that Joe Garba visited Moscow in 1979 and Major General Shehu Musa Yar'adua, the deputy to Obasanjo led a presidential delegation to Moscow in 1979 because of the Ajaokuta Steel Complex, (Garba, 1987). But it is important to note that Nigeria and the Union of Soviets Socialist Republic (USSR) agreed even if not verbally about the actions taken by Nigeria over the issues of Angola, Zimbabwe, apartheid, and decolonization in Africa. The Soviet Union as well as the Eastern bloc always voted with Nigeria and Africa on these issues, (Garba, 1987).

Nigeria during Mohammed-Obasanjo regime did not have any major divergence from the western bloc to the eastern bloc. In case of economic relations, there was a remarkable improvement in trade links with the west. Although there were such links with the eastern bloc, but they were very insignificant. In fact, Akinyemi was right to describe Nigeria's foreign policy under Mohammed and Obasanjo as 'political non-alignment and economic alignment' (Akinyemi, 1969).

Trade and economic relations

Nigeria's economic and trade relations with the western and eastern bloc during Mohammed and Obasanjo were one sided. It was a fact, that despite some political misunderstanding between Nigeria and western bloc they continue to be Nigeria's largest trading partner. Although trade and economic relations with the eastern bloc expanded, this was very little and insignificant compared to that of the west. In this period, Britain also ceased to be largest trading partner of Nigeria and was replaced by USA (Aluko, 1981). Nigeria also diversified her foreign reserves, but not all from the Britain pound sterling to other currencies. But even this diversification was done within the Western Capitalist economic system (Aluko, 1981). This affected the value of the pound sterling, which was already weak as of 1978; the US was buying about 60% of Nigeria's crude oil, making her the highest trading partner of Nigeria in the world (Aluko, 1981).

Nigeria during this period, witnessed what S. Olofin called the 'Ultra import blazed taste in Nigeria's external trade relations' (Olofin, 1980). It was during this period that demand for foreign goods, western goods particularly rose. Canned food, processed food, poultry, dairy products, beer etc were imported indiscriminately (Olofin, 1980). Nigerians regarded the local products as inferior to the imported ones. The investment of western countries in Nigeria was worth more than \$5.5 billion

naira during that period. But the investment of the eastern bloc in the same period was not up to \$1 billion (Olofin, 1980). The total export and import trade of Nigeria was highly dominated by western bloc. For example, from 1975 to 1979 western bloc, including Western European countries, USA, Canada, Japan represented 81.08% of Nigeria's total export trade, compared with the Eastern bloc including Soviet Union and Cuba who represented only 0.54%, in the same period. In the period of 1975 to 1979, Nigeria's total import from the western block was 87.9%, whereas Eastern bloc represented only 2.4% (Olusanya and Akindele, 1986). This shows clearly the economic and trade relations of Nigeria as highly in favour of the western power.

In fact, the trade between Nigerian and Eastern bloc including the Soviet Union was very small. But despite this, one cannot say there was no trade or any form of economic cooperation. For example, in June 1976 an agreement was signed between Nigeria and Soviet Union for the construction of Iron and Steel Complex at Ajaokuta in Kwara State (Olusanya and Akindele, 1986). It is the largest of its kind in Africa. This contract was given to Tiajpromoxport (TPE) of Soviet Union (Olusanya and Akindele, 1986). The Soviet Union also constructed two oil pipelines for the nation's wide range distribution of crude oil. In case of other countries of eastern Europe such as Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, East Germany, Romania, and Hungary, there was very little trade and economic relation with Nigeria, compared with countries like France, Britain, Japan, Italy, Spain and Canada all in western block (Olusanya and Akindele, 1986). This one-sided affair of Nigeria's external trade and economic activities could be attributed to the capitalist orientation of Nigerians in general and the influence of Britain as the former colonial master in the country. Moreover, Nigeria's major export commodity, which is crude oil, is not all that needed by the eastern bloc, because USSR was the highest crude oil producer in the world at that time (Bank of the North Annual Diary, 1988).

Lastly, one can see that, during the period of 1975 to 1979, economic activities and trade between Nigeria and western block were good, despite some policy differences because of Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, South Africa, and decolonisation in Africa. However, relations continue to be stagnant with the eastern communist bloc even with the cooperation with regards to decolonisation.

MILITARY RELATIONS

During the time of Mohammed-Obasanjo regime, there was no military alliance of any kind with any of the two military groupings. That is the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) formed by the western powers and the Warsaw Pact formed as counterbalance to the NATO

by the eastern powers. Only Balewa signed the unpopular Anglo-Nigerian defence pact of 1960 - 1962, which was later cancelled because, majority of Nigeria protested against it (Gray, 1965; Tukur, 1965). Apart from this, we cannot say that Nigeria did not have any sort of military deal with NATO and Warsaw Pact. During the time of Mohammed and Obasanjo the countries in NATO supplied more than 90 percent of Nigeria's military weapons and hardware. For example, Britain continued to be the largest arm supplier of Nigeria. Nigeria also continued to send her officers for training to British military schools such as Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, Royal Staff College Camberley, British Defense Academy Shrivenham, and many others in Canada and USA (Ofoagbu, 1979).

In 1976, before he was assassinated, General Muhammad received Major General Mora from the British Royal Staff College to help establish a military college, known as the Nigerian Army Command and Staff College, Jaji, some few kilometres from Zaria. Later, Colonel T.A. Boam led some British officers to Nigeria in late 1976 as part of the trainers in the new military institution (Ofoagbu, 1979). For the first time, military ties between Nigeria and USA increased. In 1977 the USA government sold to Nigeria seven CH - 47C military transport helicopters at 45.5 million dollars (Aluko, 1981). This is about four times the total amount of the US Military sales to Nigeria from 1960 to 1975, which amounted to 12.6 million dollars (Aluko, 1981). However, there was little of no major military transaction between Nigeria and the Warsaw Pact countries. In fact, right from independence, Nigeria has always obtained its military weapons from Britain, which is a member of the NATO. Except during the Nigerian civil war when Britain and USA refused to supply Nigeria with military weapons and equipment, which the Soviet Union supplied (Aluko, 1981).

In this case, Nigeria's defence policy was pro-west under Mohammed - Obasanjo regime. That does not mean Nigeria did not buy any military equipment from Soviet Union during the period of 1975 to 1979. Soviet Union supplied Nigeria with MIG 21 fighter jets, but this was little compared to what the western block supplied (Aluko, 1981).

CONCLUSION

This study has reemphasised the fact that Nigeria's foreign policy during the time of Mohammed and Obasanjo was a departure from the moderate and conservative system of pursuing foreign policy, to a radical and action oriented foreign policy. According to Adaora Osondu-Oti and Ifedayo Tolu 'It is through foreign policy that a nation will state its interest as well as terms and conditions of relations with other states' (Osondu-Oti and Tolu, 2016). Only Mohammed-Obasanjo administration

has done this. Although, there was much radicalism in the foreign policy, that did not actually change Nigeria's relationship permanently with the world powers. The action taken by Nigeria on liberation movements in Angola, Zimbabwe and South Africa was quite commendable and impressive. It showed Nigeria for the first time taking independent action in foreign policy. At this time Nigeria declared itself a member of the frontline state to apartheid South Africa, joining other countries like Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia, Zambia, Botswana, and Mozambique that bordered or are close to South Africa. However, it was all rhetoric because Nigeria was not capable of taking military action against South Africa. The activities of Nigeria in international organisations were an improvement over Balewa's and Gowon's administrations. In the area of Nigeria's relation with the world powers, Nigeria was obviously pro-west. The relationship with the eastern block was quite negligible compare to that of western block.

The Mohammed - Obasanjo regime had a sort of radical and militant style in the execution of foreign policy, with such emphasis on speedy response to external problems and issues arising from them. In comparison to Gowon and Balewa, Mohammed and Obasanjo were not afraid of confronting the western bloc when it was necessary. But Balewa and Gowon refused to have any confrontation with the western powers. It is a fact that Balewa's and Gowon's governments were more diplomatic than that of Mohammed and Obasanjo. Gowon and Balewa were very much moderate, humble, patient and always searching for compromise. But Mohammed and Obasanjo were thought to be inflexible, uncompromising, speedy, and radical. Likewise, Jaja Wachukwu, Nuhu Bammali who served Balewa and Okoi Arikpo who served Gowon as foreign ministers were just like their respective heads of state. They were always looking for a diplomatic way to solve issues. In contrast, Major General Joseph Garba, a soldier shares the same idea with Murtala and Obasanjo. In fact, many regarded him as the most undiplomatic person Nigeria has ever had as a foreign Affairs Minister. Overall, the Mohammed-Obasanjo foreign policy was far better than their predecessors because for the first time according to Ibrahim Gambari 'Foreign policy was moved out of the realm of the regime's first interest and personalized decision making into one of national debate guided by a sense of national interest' (Gambari, 1980).

The current situation of Nigeria's foreign policy is even worse than the period before Mohammed and Obasanjo's administration. Nigeria's foreign policy today seems to be in the wilderness and lark focus. The current situation of Nigeria's foreign policy requires more research by both government, non-governmental organisations, and independent scholars. For a suitable and sustainable foreign policy, Nigeria must reduce her reliance politically, military and economically on the western. Nigeria must be neutral in issues that are not directly related to her and

Africa. A good example is the Arab-Israel conflict. Propaganda and performance of the diplomatic corps missions must be improved. Internal political situations must not hinder the performance in foreign policy.

Emphasis should also be placed on action rather than rhetoric. The action must primarily be in the interest of Nigeria first and secondarily in the interest of Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa. According to Amuwo (2016) 'Nigeria's power and influence have remained largely potential, begging for focused and committed leaders to be actualized'. Nigeria must harness all its resources and utilise them to be able to archive its foreign policy aims and objectives.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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