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Nigeria's Foreign Policy under Mohamed and Obasanjo: An Examination

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On the 29th of June 1976, Nigeria's head of State Lt. General O. Obasanjo enunciated the five broad foreign policy objectives which would guide the conduct of Nigeria's relations with the outside world.¹ These broad objectives were stated as:

1. the defence of Nigeria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.
2. the creation of the necessary political and economic conditions in Africa and the rest of the world which would facilitate the defence of the independence and territorial integrity of all African countries while at the same time, fostering national self-reliance and rapid economic development.
2. the promotion of equality and self-reliance in Africa and the rest of the developing world.
4. the promotion and defence of justice and respect for human dignity, especially the dignity of the Black man.
5. the defence and promotion of peace.

These objectives were to be pursued with the realisation that the centre piece of Nigeria's foreign policy is Africa. Nigeria is committed to the total liberation of all oppressed black people in Africa and indeed anywhere else in the world... and will contribute her full quota to the liberation struggle already won in Angola and Mozambique.

Before we examine the multidimensional implications of these broad objectives, which were the outcome of the first high level comprehensive review of the country's foreign policy since independence, it is appropriate to examine Nigeria's foreign policy stance since July 29, 1975 when Gowon's regime was overthrown.² At that time, there was great skepticism in some quarters as to whether what had happened was not just reminiscent of the prevailing patterns in several African countries even though it took place at the time that the general population was so greatly disillusioned with Gowon's administration.³ That skepticism was however soon jettisoned as the new government of General Mohammed embarked on the herculean task of cleaning the Augean stables which Nigeria had so blatantly become.⁴

No less than 15,000 public servants at all levels were removed in the general exercise designed to infuse a new sense of integrity and service

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into the people.⁵ Those removed included ambassadors and other junior diplomats - the hitherto all powerful implementors of the country's foreign policy.⁶ Initially though, it appeared as if no changes could be expected in the area of foreign policy since the External Affairs Commissioner conceded that Gowon's foreign policy was effective. However, it soon became clear that even this area of policy was to be scrutinised.⁷ The government stated that foreign policy would no longer be conducted simply to foster the personal aggrandizement of the head of state, but to promote and protect identifiable national interests of Nigeria and those of the people with whom Nigeria deals.⁸

The first step taken was the announcement that except in a few deserving cases, Nigeria would henceforth channel assistance to other needy states through established regional and international bodies like the African Development Bank and the Economic Commission for Africa. It was obvious also that a closer look at the country's foreign policy and its conduct in the past was necessary to have an overview of the whole area. A panel was thus set up by the government to carry out the exercise and make recommendations.⁹ But even as the high powered panel was being assembled, the country's leadership was faced with a big problem in African diplomacy which required a firm decision. That problem was posed by the aftermath of decaying Portuguese Colonialism in Africa.

A lot has been written and said (much of it uninformed) about Nigeria's role in the Angolan conflict as demonstrated by the militant stand vigorously pursued by the new leadership. Perhaps this is the proper time to set the records straight before the passage of time solidifies inaccurate history. It was not generally known that the then Brigadiers M. Mohammed, O. Obasanjo, F. Sotomi and some other officers of lesser rank were active members of the Nigerian Society of International Affairs and that they fully participated in the annual conferences held in various Nigerian University campuses¹⁰ (Not excluding the writing and presentation of conference papers). The three officers named above also held offices in the Society as Executive Members and Vice-President for the 1972/73 and 1973/74 sessions respectively.

Those who had read the account, published in a daily newspaper - *The New Nigerians*, of the April 1972 conference of the Nigerian Society of International Affairs, would have recognised the extremely strong anti-apartheid and anti-colonialist feelings which the then Brigadiers Muhammed and Obasanjo possessed.¹¹ Also Nigeria's new Chief of Army Staff and other officers of the Nigerian Army have had personal experiences of some trouble spots in Africa and are keen observers of current events. The Inspector General of Police, in his former capacity as Chief of Security, also had intimate knowledge of the liberation struggles in Africa. The crux of the matter therefore was that the new crop of Nigeria's leadership for the External Affairs Commissioner to General Mohammed, was well conversant with international affairs and therefore only required *full* and *accurate* information to make reasoned decisions in the realm of foreign

policy. Those who knew them were not in any doubt as to what that decision would be on Angola once the *full* and *accurate* facts were either made available to the leaders by the Ministry of External Affairs or obtained by them in another way.

It is not unusual to prescribe solutions to other problems which one finds from experience had worked in the past. Apart from the July/August 1975 Organisation of African Unity Summit decision to call all the independence movements in Angola to unite - a decision that the new Nigerian leadership accepted, Nigeria's experience before independence demonstrated the fact that disunity could have led to a long delay of the country's independence. Thus, Nigeria urged the three major independence movements in Angola to unite and even went out of its way to criticise the Soviet Union for aiding the MPLA and working against the O.A.U. decision.¹² The country's External Affairs Commissioner also suggested the postponement of Angola's independence by two weeks to enable the much desired unity to be achieved.

It was obvious, however, that like most other African countries, a lot of the information on the situation in Angola came from Western news agencies which were favourably disposed towards the UNITA/FNLA Coalition. MPLA's reports of South African invasion and deep penetration of Angola caused consternation in Lagos and it was therefore decided to obtain first hand information on the situation in Angola. It is reported that two separate military missions were sent to Angola one of which landed amidst the boom of anti-aircraft guns on the night of independence, November, 11, 1975.¹³ Although before their departure for Angola members of the investigating teams were not known to be favourably disposed towards the MPLA, their tour of the frontline battle areas and the report submitted established beyond doubt the massive presence of South African forces which at one point came as near as seventy five kilometres from Luanda. This was to be admitted in January, 1976 by the South African Defence Minister.¹⁴

With the incontrovertible establishment of the massive South African commitment to UNITA and FNLA, even if with the connivance of Zambia, Zaire and the United States, it was clear to Nigerian leaders that only one decision could be taken in view of their total and unconditional rejection of apartheid and of any activity casting aspersion on the dignity of the black man. It is also reported that the American Ambassador in Lagos who sought to know the views and position of Nigeria's leaders before the decision on Angola was announced, was told to the massive South African presence in Angola, although America had claimed that there was no concrete evidence to back up the allegation. He was given time to tell Dr. Kinssinger to use his position to effect the withdrawal of the South African forces. Kissinger's response was to continue treating the Angolan conflict as an issue between the two super powers and to completely ignore the Nigerian demand as irrelevant and, in any case, inconsequential.¹⁵

What followed was the announcement on November 25th of Nigeria's recognition of the MPLA government of Dr. Agostino Neto. The announcement caused a great deal of consternation in Western Europe and the Americans as it had not been expected that Nigeria could take such a radical and firm departure from the foreign policy of previous regimes which, it seemed, had been calculated not to offend anyone in the international Community, most especially in the west. The Nigerian leadership was not however contented with the symbolic diplomatic recognition accorded to Angola and so followed it up in less than a month with an outright grant of 20 million dollars and an extension of further aid and credit facilities if needed, to the tune of 100 million dollars.¹⁶ This was followed by a massive diplomatic effort in Africa to win more support for the MPLA. Although this effort was countered at the highest level by the United States and thus led to a stalemate at the extra-ordinary session of the OAU in Addis Ababa in January 1976, Nigerian leaders had demonstrated their total commitment to the liberation movement in Southern Africa and had declared that the commitment to Angola was only the beginning of the struggle.¹⁷ Perhaps this is the juncture to puncture the erroneous impression floated at the time of that OAU meeting to the effect that General Muhammed only read the speech written by his then lieutenant General Obasanjo.¹⁸ Apart from the insult in such an assertion it is proper to set the record straight especially as General Muhammed is no longer alive. Let it be said that the late General himself conceived of all the main ideas entailed in that classic speech and that General Obasanjo did not write the speech.¹⁹

The leadership's policy on Angola should be seen as a crystallisation of their strong determination not to tolerate any encroachment on free Africa's territorial integrity and their acceptance of late Nkrumah's assertion that no African country should regard its independence as complete while other parts of Africa are still under inhuman slavery. That decision did much to erase the policy of self effacement which critics claimed, had characterised previous Nigerian regimes. Although the policy earned the leadership powerful enemies abroad and treacherous ones within the country, as demonstrated by the abortive but bloody coup of February 13, 1976,²⁰ the Nigerian government does not seem to have relented in its efforts to promote the total liberation of Southern Africa. It has granted directly some \$1.6 million to Mozambique as the first instalment of Nigeria's contribution to the struggle against Ian Smith's regime in Zimbabwe.²¹ Hundreds of thousands of dollars have also been granted through the OAU Liberation Committee, the Zambian government and Mozambique for the liberation movements in Namibia and Zimbabwe. Contrary to past policy, a liberation movement, SWAPO, has now been allowed to open an office in Lagos.

There were however other areas of external relations to which the government had to direct its attention. The perennial issue of the protec-

tion of the interests of Nigerian nationals abroad which had soured relations with some African states in the past, was faced squarely and tackled. The inhuman treatment meted out to Nigerian migrant workers in Equatorial Guinea (Fernando Po) had received the attention of the public and previous regimes.²² Although Nigerian newspapers made various suggestions ranging from an outright but imperialistic annexation and physical takeover of the island republic to the use of the 57,000 Nigerian nationals there as a means of applying political pressure on that government, it seemed as if the Nigerian government was not prepared to take on the garb of imperialism nor to utilise for political reasons, the sufferings of thousands of Nigerians. In December, 1975 and January 1976, therefore, a massive naval and air operation was conducted to bring the Nigerians home and a gigantic agricultural venture undertaken to resettle those who returned. In so doing Nigeria was able to maintain the image of a militant and powerful state but definitely not overbearing and imperialistic.

Another area of concern for the government was the 'threatened' expulsion of thousands of Nigerian traders resident in Ghana in June 1976.²³ The prompt high level action and consultation with General Acheampong of Ghana resulted in assurances from the Ghanaian government that the enabling decree would be checked to ensure that it did not have the effect of making it impossible for thousands of Nigerians in Ghana to earn their living. This move by the Nigerian government was characteristic of the new decisive and purposive leadership which a wide segment of the Nigerian community had long called for.²⁴

Until February 1976 the relations of the new government with Britain remained cordial even though the British High Commissioner in Lagos no longer enjoyed the automatic accessibility to the head of state which had been the case since independence. The British envoy naturally did not like the new situation and was said to have done very little to hide his disdain for the Nigerian government. However, normal relations were maintained including the various attempts made by Britain to influence South Africa's withdrawal from Angola. The bloody events of February 13, 1976 and the unplanned call at the British High Commission by the leader of the abortive coup plus the continued presence of Yakubu Gowon in Britain did a lot to sour the relations between the two countries.²⁵ Although the Nigerian population called for drastic measures against British interests in Nigeria, the government was able to ride the storm and seemed to recognise the fact that NO British government could send back Gowon to Nigeria even though a simple expulsion of the dismissed general from Britain would have produced satisfactory results. It seemed, however, that the March decision to shift a considerable proportion of Nigeria's external reserves²⁶ from Sterling to other stronger international currencies was not unconnected with the government's displeasure with the British refusal to cooperate on the Gowon issue. The move, which coincided with a massive run on sterling by professional speculators did

some damage to the British currency.

On the general diplomatic front, the Nigerian government has taken steps to correct the lopsided form of non-alignment practiced by the previous regimes. Diplomatic recognition has now been accorded to North Korea and Vietnam and the country is playing a more active role in the non-aligned movement. This, however, is not to say that the government has moved leftwards since the internal fundamental restructuring of the Nigerian society necessary for that decision to stick has not been done nor is it contemplated.²⁷ Indeed, the new foreign policy specifically calls for cooperation with all countries irrespective of their ideological affiliations. "We welcome all who will cooperate with us in the rapid transfer of technology, irrespective of their political and other affiliations."²⁸ This principle was in fact being effected before it was made public. In January 1976, while Nigeria was at bitter loggerheads with the Ford administration in America over the Angolan conflict, the Nigerian leaders did not hesitate to announce the award of a long term multi million dollar telecommunication system to ITT - the giant American multinational, notorious but efficient.²⁹ By that decision, the Nigerian leaders seemed to be signalling their preparedness to deal with American companies irrespective of political disagreement with the Ford administration and possible disagreement with other American administration in future over African issues. If we take a look at the contemporary Nigerian scene, we discover a deliberate attempt to maintain this ideological balance in the country's dealings with the outside world especially in the area of technology.

After a confirmation of the 1.6 million dollar agreement with the Soviet Union to construct an iron and steel complex, other agreements involving vehicle assembly plants, oil refinery, huge liquified gas projects, all worth more than 2 billion dollars are being awarded to western firms and consortia, not to mention the massive highway and road construction still being monopolised by Western firms and costing no less than one billion dollars.³⁰ This brings us to the detailed consideration of those five broad foreign policy objectives enunciated by the Nigerian head of state on June, 29, 1976

FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES

The defence of Nigeria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity is understandably the priority objective in view of the country's experience during the thirty months civil war when it was believed that outsiders actively worked for the disintegration of the country.³¹ This broad objective, however, has wider implications as it is closely tied in with the others. In the first place, it requires the modernisation of the armed forces and their state of preparedness to ensure that any external aggression will be promptly defeated if not deterred. Nigerian leaders have publicly spoken of the need to redeploy into other sectors of society at least 100,000 of the present quarter of a million men in the armed forces.³² This is

necessary if the much needed modernisation has to take place within the armed forces. The foreign policy stance of the country, in particular on African issues, has definitely earned it a number of powerful enemies of which the most formidable on the continent is the Republic of South Africa. The country, therefore, has to develop its naval and air power. The objective should not only be to deter South Africa from attacking Nigeria but to prevent that country from attacking any other African state whose territorial integrity and political independence are presumed to be the concern of Nigeria. What is needed therefore is not just a modernised striking force at home capable of preventing direct military attack on Nigeria but a mobile capability which will enable the country bring sufficient force to bear at any particular juncture of the Southern African front.³³ For this purpose, the present fleet of six C-130 planes, costing tens of million of dollars, cannot be regarded as adequate. In the final analysis, however, the military capability of the country must be tied in with her capability to modernise a large segment of the industrial sector. This will not, it appears, be possible as long as the presently oversized (in personne¹) armed forces consume a very great proportion of the nation's resources.³⁴ The procurement of nuclear technology should aid this process of rapid economic development. Whether the political will needed to enable these crucial decisions to be taken will continue to be present is a million dollar question that we can only ask here but not provide an answer. Any consideration of a country's defence posture must necessarily take cognisance of who the real and potential enemy is. That identification depends, to a large degree, on the perception of the political leadership, the more so in developing countries where there does not yet exist a broad consensus on vital national interests.³⁵

The second objective (of creating the necessary political and economic conditions in Africa and the rest of the world which would facilitate the defence of the independence and territorial integrity of all African Countries while at the same time fostering national self-reliance and rapid economic development) is a much broader foreign policy aim as it embraces much wider concepts. This should involve a restructuring of not only the present international economic order but also a change in the political power configuration in the international community. It seems that this can only be pursued and achieved in cooperation with other countries not only in Africa but elsewhere. The refurbishing of the non-aligned movement is necessary if the movement is to retain its relevance in the post detente period. It also appears, however, that the attainment of this objective can only be a long term project since a consensus does not exist on these necessary political and economic conditions which will facilitate the defence of the independence and territorial integrity of all African countries. The fact that there are conflicting conceptions of independence among African leaders with a great number failing to differentiate between formal political independence of African states can im-

pede common efforts. Seen from another angle, one should expect that Nigeria would endeavour to persuade extra African powers to desist from making moves inimical to the interests of African countries. Perhaps with time, Nigeria will be one of the states the super powers must consult before making important decisions on Africa. The other half of this second broad objective, that of fostering national self-reliance and rapid economic development, dovetails into the third objective. It is needless to emphasise the point that the failure to achieve rapid economic development in several third world countries has been one of the major factors leading to polity instability.³⁷

The third objective involves the promotion of equality and self-reliance in Africa and the rest of the developing world. This is a laudable objective but it must be realised that self-reliance has different interpretations as the Chinese discovered in the early sixties.³⁸ If it means a call on every African state to rely solely on its own internal resources for rapid economic development then it can be said straight away that this will not and cannot be acceptable to many African countries who still rely to a great extent on foreign aid. Some still have donations to their annual budgets from outside sources before such budgets become viable. If self-reliance implies each state relying heavily on its own resources while at the same time obtaining external aid from all the ideological camps (a la Tanzania) then a sizeable number of African and third world countries are prepared to abide by it. Again, if self-reliance implies a closed shop involving only the developing world, then the great poor majority within this group will insist that the relatively richer states should place their human, material and financial resources at the disposal of the less well off so that the economic development of the whole region can move up in unison. This position also presents difficulties. There is no evidence, however, that the Nigerian statement means any of the above interpretations of self reliance. From public pronouncements and the presaging of self-reliance, with equality, it seems obvious that what Nigeria intends is a situation where every country relies heavily on its own internal resources while at the same time deriving great benefit from regional development and financing bodies like the African Development Bank and the U.N. Economic Commission for Africa into which presumably, the relatively well to do states would contribute a great part of the resources. Hence the decision in 1975 to set up a Nigeria Trust Fund of some \$80 million within the African Development Bank.³⁹ It should be easier in this way for African states to preserve their dignity and sense of equality. It is doubtful, however, whether developing countries will content themselves with the relatively meagre resources which the regional bodies have to disburse. Recourse to international bodies like the United Nations agencies is also presumably included in this interpretation of self-reliance. It does not appear, however, that the statement completely rules out bilateral aid grants to a number of countries in Africa even though such must be few indeed and the demands

reasonable. A request of a hundred million dollars at this juncture will probably do more to embarrass Nigeria which has an unfortunate and incorrect reputation for being a rich country.⁴⁰

The fourth objective, that of the promotion and defence of justice and respect for human dignity especially the dignity of the black man, is amplified by the further statement that Nigeria is committed to the total liberation of all oppressed black people in Africa and indeed anywhere else in the world. This objective, as it stands, is potentially the most controversial of the five policy guidelines, since its full implementation will bring Nigeria into conflict with very many countries in the world. Before we examine possible conflict situations, it is necessary to point out that justice has so many meanings anyone of which a country may choose at any time. Thus, while most Africans advocated and accepted the deterrent revolutionary justice meted out to mercenaries in Angola who had participated in the killing of innocent Angolans, the British and American governments, understandably, did not accept this administration of justice.⁴¹ In the same way, while these two countries approved the Israeli operations in Uganda which left innocent Ugandans dead, most African states regarded it as unjustifiable brutality. On another plane, the revolutionary justice meted out by the Chinese government after the Communist take over in October 1949 was criticised as unjust in the United States while it was whole heartedly supported by other socialist states who viewed it as a retribution for the decades of rape, murders and oppression which the landlord class had perpetrated on the defenceless peasantry. Apart from this disagreement over the proper definition of justice and respect for human dignity, there is the non-interference in the internal affairs of nations clause which is to be found in the charters of international organisations. In effect, since Nigeria is committed to the Charters of the OAU and the UN, there is the opinion that it cannot openly question events in other countries even when such events are against human dignity and constitute oppression. Thus, it was not easy for African governments to comment on the harsh treatment of black Americans in some parts of the United States in the early sixties, or on the treatment of dissidents in the Soviet Union, not to mention some brutalities taking place in some African countries. We can assume that the fight against the most obvious and deliberate governmental racial oppression which presently manifests itself within the Republic of South Africa and Namibia will continue, whether this consideration for the dignity of the blackman is extended to the treatment meted out to some citizens of African Countries is what we have to watch. It can be argued, of course, that Nigeria has to first of all ensure respect for justice and human dignity within its own frontiers before it can, in good conscience, comment on the events in other countries. This applies similarly to other African states and may be one reason why they have not been critical of events in one another's domains. There is no doubt at all that Nigeria's continued commitment to the total liberation of the African continent will

make the country's policies unpopular in the western world but there is also the possibility of diplomatic conflict with some African states as demonstrated by the hostility of Morocco over Nigeria's support of national self determination for the people of former Spanish Sahara.

The fifth objective, the defence and promotion of world peace, most probably ranks as one of the foreign policy objectives of so many states in the world to warrant any close attention here, in so far as it is understood that the defence of justice may sometimes breach the peace of the *status quo*. Nigeria does not presently have the wherewithal to ensure world peace but it can at least promote mutual understanding among nations and so lessen the chances of war breaking out as well as being prepared to assign its forces for peace keeping operations in other parts of the world.

CRITICISMS OF THE OBJECTIVES

The international arena is, however, dynamic and like other governments, the Nigerian government has had to respond to the changing events and to interpret the basic objectives of the country's foreign policy in the light of the changing environment. Consequently some segments of Nigerian society have been critical of the way of country's foreign policy is being interpreted and conducted.⁴³ The criticisms have been multidimensional and the government has periodically tried to answer the critics and to explain its position on specific issues.⁴⁴ In a pluralistic society like Nigeria, where debate takes place in the open, disagreement over foreign policy issues is to be expected.

The first criticism that has been made is that the country's foreign policy seemed to have deviated drastically from the militant and progressive stand taken in support of the MPLA in Angola and that there has been a move back towards the western camp. This criticism has been much more pronounced and vociferous since the advent of the Carter administration in the United States in January 1977. One major reason why this criticism has been strong is the fact that articulate opinion tended to attach too much weight to the Angola policy of the government and to see it as presaging a general anti-imperialist onslaught in foreign policy. No attention was paid to the fact that internally, no basic structural socio-economic reforms were being carried out to coincide with the policy on Angola and, in the absence of such fundamental changes in the power configuration within the country, a general militancy in foreign policy other than the accepted anti-apartheid position, should not have been expected from a policy making machinery that is still essentially cautious and conservative and a public opinion that could be manipulated by interested parties to protest against the 'wasting' of scarce public funds in foreign adventures or tilting towards 'communism.' One example of this government sensitivity to the precarious nature of public opinion was the setting up of the Southern Africa Relief Fund based on voluntary contributions from individuals and organisations all over the country rather than being solely based on government funds.

The government has also been criticised for even partially approving the Anglo-American proposals put forward in 1977 for the solution of the conflict in Zimbabwe. It was accused of not realising that the proposals could not lead to genuine independence for Zimbabwe and that consequently only a puppet government can emerge on that basis. The government has been variously called upon to support all out war against racism in Southern Africa not excluding the dispatch of Nigerian soldiers. The government has openly defended its policy of conditional approval of the positive aspects of the Anglo-American proposals while continuing approval of the positive aspects of the Anglo-American proposals while continuing to give multidimensional aid to the Patriotic front based in Mozambique and Zambia and also trying to effect concrete unity within the leadership of the front. It has also been pointed out that the frontline African states of Zambia, Tanzania, Mozambique, Botswana and Angola have the same policy position as Nigeria and that if the Patriotic front had been strong enough to drive out the Smith regime from Zimbabwe, there would have been no need for the Anglo-American proposals.⁴⁵ The government's position has also been based on the contention that international politics is dynamic and that the advent of a new administration in Washington with a relatively more enlightened posture to African issues required a more flexible response from Nigeria away from that position predicated on the antagonism of previous American administrations to the genuine interests of Africa.

The Nigerian government has also contended that by signing bilateral agreements with Romania, Poland, United States, France, Britain, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, for the training of thousands of Nigerian students in their institutions of technology, - a departure from the previous position which was more heavily inclined towards the west -, it has demonstrated its commitment to an even handed foreign policy which places Nigerian and African interests first.

It is pertinent to point out, however, that only few articulate analysts have made immanent criticisms of the country's foreign policy. Some others have basically questioned the content of the policy as well as the right of a western trained elite to determine what the country's national interests are.⁴⁵ To the latter, the government has simply pointed out that foreign policy formulation in every country is invariably the function of the elite even though attempts are made, as the Nigeria government has been doing, to obtain the views of several segments of the country. In the final analysis, the government must bear responsibility for the policy pursued.

Another set of criticisms centered around Nigeria's position on the conflict in the Horn of Africa. Critics of the government accused it of not coming out openly in support of Ethiopia that was the victim of aggression from Somalia in clear violation of the O.A.U. principle of inviolability of frontiers inherited at independence. Critics also pointed out that even though the late Emperor of Ethiopia was chairman of the

O.A.U. reconciliation committee on the Nigerian civil war, he did not fail to speak out very strongly in favour of Nigeria's territorial integrity.⁴⁷ The government was also accused of taking an active mediatory role on behalf of the United States only at the juncture when Ethiopian forces and their Cuban allies were poised for a massive role back of the invading Somali forces. The External Affairs Commissioner's reported derogatory remarks on the presence of Cuban troops in Ethiopia was seen as proof of an essentially Pro-American position on the conflict in the Horn of Africa.⁴⁸

The government response was that its position on the principle of inviolability of frontiers inherited at independence is unambiguous and is in support of Ethiopia's territorial integrity but that as the chairman of the O.A.U. mediation Commission, Nigeria would not openly condemn Somali invasion of Ethiopia and this should not be taken to mean a return to subservience to the West as critics were making it appear. To underscore this government position, the Nigerian government pointedly refused to mention the presence of Cuban troops in Ethiopia in the joint communique issued at the end of President Carter's visit to Lagos in April 1978.⁴⁹ Nigeria's position as expressed by her Ambassador to the United Nations is that independent sovereign states of Africa have the right to invite whatever forces they like to help maintain their territorial integrity.⁵⁰ The Nigerian government in 1964 had pointedly approved the American-Belgian military intervention in the Congo at the invitation of the then Prime Minister - Moise Tshombe. Subsequent Nigerian governments did not condemn the presence of French troops in Senegal, Mauritania, Chad and Jibout, Moroccan and Egyptian forces in Zaire, and could therefore not be expected to depart from that all known position. Indeed the Nigerian government had to go out of its way to state categorically that President Carter's visit to Lagos had not affected Nigeria's even handed position on foreign policy whose conerstone remained Africa.⁵¹

The last set of criticisms involved the decision of the Nigerian government in 1977 to borrow one billion dollars from a consortium of western financial institutions to augment the country's gigantic development efforts. This was seen as drawing the country further into the western camp since such aid was not sought from the east. The government's reply was that the east did not have any comparable financial institutions from where Nigeria could borrow and what is more, the socialist countries have also utilised such western credit facilities to the tune of some forty billion dollars.⁵² Moreover, virtually all OPEC countries except Libya, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have made use of such borrowing to help in their massive development efforts and Nigeria therefore is not doing anything extraordinary by obtaining development loans from western financial institutions.

One point to note is that this Nigerian government has responded so vigorously and so often to comments and criticisms of its foreign policy to the extent that the dialogue does in fact influence the conduct of foreign policy by government functionaries.

FOOTNOTES

1. See full text of General Obasanjo's speech in the "Daily Sketch," July 1, 1976 page 5.
2. While attending the 1975 summit meeting of the Organisation of African Unity in Kampala, Uganda, Gowon's regime was overthrown on July 29, nine years after he was brought to power in 1966.
3. There was a widespread fatalistic feeling that no one could do anything about Nigeria and that the new leadership would soon join the prevailing moral decadence.
4. By July, 29, 1975 corruption had eaten so deep into the whole fabric of society and was slowly but surely leading to the economic strangulation of the country. The main port was choked up with cement ordered earlier on in a series of scandalous deals.
5. The criteria for mass removal varied from doubtful integrity, divided interest, old age, declining productivity, embezzlement, general inefficiency, to conduct unbecoming of a holder of high office in a higher educational institution. Doubt was expressed however as to whether the massive exercise achieved the desired attitudinal change.
6. The country's ambassadors to the United Nations, United States, Britain, Turkey, Equatorial Guinea, Italy, Saudi Arabia and the boss of the Ministry of External Affairs were retired compulsorily in the exercise. Diplomats of lesser rank were also affected by the purging of the Angean stables.
7. Allegations were made in the press that Gowon's grand overseas tours were designed to divert attention from the troubles at home. This could not however be said of all the tours some of which improved Nigeria's image abroad.
8. There were public demands that Nigeria should always make public any grant made to a developing country to prevent such funds ending up in the private pockets of leaders and not having any impact of the common people.
9. The setting up of this panel and its composition was kept secret nor has its report been made public other than the five broad objectives enunciated by the head of state in his June 29, 1976 speech.
10. The membership of the Nigerian Society of International Affairs is drawn from the social sciences in the universities from the armed forces, the press and enlightened elements within the business community. The General Editor of the Society was appointed by the new government as Director General of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs.
11. In a discussion of the paper presented by Brigadier Obasanjo, Brigadier Muhammed urged the despatch of Nigerian troops to fight alongside the liberations arguing fervently that all obstacles in the way of achieving success be wiped out.
12. See for example Colonel Garba's statement in Kampala, Uganda at the beginning of November 1975 calling for the postponement of Angola's independence for two weeks.
13. See a paper titled Efficiency in the Conduct of Nigerian Foreign Relations by O. Ogunbadejo, presented at a symposium on productivity and efficiency in the public service at the University of Ife, July 5-7 1976.
14. This was also confirmed by Antonio Neto, Vice President of the African Association for Political Science at the second bi-annual conference of the association held in University of Lagos April 4-8, 1976.
15. Dr. Kissinger no doubt underestimated the determination of the Nigerian leaders to back up their words with positive action and Nigeria's signalling

- was not helped by the fact that the American ambassador in Lagos was not known to have agreed with Kissinger's African policy. That might have affected the weight given to his messages to Washington.
16. The Nigerian government only announced the \$20 million cash grant but did not deny the figure of a \$100 million which was announced by the Angolan Prime Minister. See for instance 'Africa Research Bulletin,' 1976 Page 3883.
 17. This open commitment led to speculations that Nigeria was about to send troops to Angola even though the government had earlier said that this should be done only if the O.A.U, so decided - another way of saying most unlikely since the OAU could not be expected to come to type of decision against all out American pressure being openly exerted.
 18. See "Africa Research Bulletin 1976" page 3933 quoting from Alan Rake in "Gemini News Services" of 17th February 1976.
 19. General Muhammed rejected the first draft of the speech, (which had been based on his original briefing) as being too weak. After mentioning additional points to be covered, a second draft was produced. It is obvious that General Obasanjo with so many important responsibilities could not have taken upon himself the task of writing that speech.
 20. On Friday the 13th of February 1976, General Muhammed was assassinated in a bloody but abortive coup planned to wipe out the military leadership and a considerable number of civilians. One of the reasons given was that Nigeria was going communist!!
 21. The grant followed the closure of the Mozambique frontiers with Zimbabwe and the full implementation of sanctions by the government of Mozambique. Nigeria also contributed to the Commonwealth Fund for Mozambique.
 22. The best that the Gowon administration did was to renegotiate the agreements under which Nigerian workers were going to Fernando Po to work so as to introduce better conditions of service. The problem was of course more fundamental than that. Francis Nguema, the Equatorial Guinea President, was so confident that Gowon would not act that he got away with so many murders of Nigerian workers.
 23. The 1969 expulsion of Nigerians from Ghana under Kofi Busia's administration strained relations between the two countries especially as Nigeria was still battling with the difficulty of the civil war.
 24. The Nigerian delegation was led by the Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, Brigadier Yar'Adua.
 25. Gowon had been implicated in the abortive coup by some officers who confessed to having had discussions with him in London. One of them, said to be Lt. Colonel Tense, visited London a number of times under the pretext of going for medical treatment.
 26. Nigeria's external reserves at that time stood at N3 billion.
 27. The Nigerian government stated categorically on a number of occasions that it would not impose the ideology of socialism on the people. The ideological leanings of the country would have to be decided when there is a return to civilian rule.
 28. This is part of General Obasanjo's speech of April 29, 1976 referred to earlier.
 29. The two phases of the project - installation and transfer of requisite technology is supposed to last for a period of fifteen years.
 30. A very great part of the over \$45 billion 3rd National Development Plan is to be implemented through contract awards made to Western firms and consortia.
 31. From July, 197 to January 14, 1970, Nigeria was plunged into a Civil war fought to keep the country together.
 32. The figure of 208,000 in the IISS publication "The Military Balance 1975-

- 1976 would seem to be on the low side.
33. This is so much needed if the hope placed in Nigeria by the frontline states of Mozambique, Zambia and Botswana, is not to be dashed.
 34. Defence expenditure for the 1967-77 financial year was \$1,327.1 million 80% of which was for personal emoluments. The figure for the 1975-76 financial year was \$1,786 million.
 35. The sudden and sharp reversal of foreign policies following changes in the leadership of several African states confirms the lack of a broad states confirms the lack of a broad consensus on what national interests are.
 36. The concept of neocolonialism is one rejected by some African leaders like Houphouet Boigny who considers it irrelevant.
 37. It is not being claimed here that failure to achieve rapid economic growth will always result in instability and coups but it is one of the major contributing factors.
 38. See the discussion of this in my book; *China's Policy in Africa 1958-1971*, Cambridge University Press July 1974.
 39. Detailed agreement on the modality of operation of this fund was concluded in April 1976 between Nigerian officials and the African Development Bank.
 40. During the extraordinary session of the OAU in January 1976, a Zambian diplomat complained to a veritable Nigerian Journalist of Nigeria's unfavourable consideration of a Zambian request for a \$100 million to tie the country over the period of copper depression.
 41. Four mercenaries were executed in July 1976 in Angola after they had been found guilty in a well publicised trial during which they were defended by lawyers.
 42. Tanzania jointly sponsored a resolution in the Security Council of the United Nations condemning the Israeli action and demanding compensation for damage done and for the families of those killed.
 43. See for instance Yusufu Bala Usman in *New Nigerian*, March 10 and 11 1978 pages 5 & 7; Chuba Okadigbo in *New Nigerian*, December 29, 1977 and February 4, 1978; Mohammed Haruna in *New Nigerian*, January 31st, 1978.
 44. See the External Affairs Commissioner's addresses to students of the University of Ibadan in December 1977 and Ahmadu Bello University on February 11, 1978. Reports in the Daily Times and New Nigerian on the 11th and 17th February, 1978.
 45. The Nigerian government in January 1978 brought the leaders of the Patriotic Front to Lagos in an attempt to affect real unity between them. See also answers given by the External Affairs Commission on television in Lagos on March 23, 1978.
 46. See Dr. Amechi Uchegbu in 'New Nigerian' March 16, 1978 pages 5 and 6.
 47. See Dr. Olajide A. Luko's unpublished February lecture delivered at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Lagos in 1978.
 48. See Yusufu Bala Usman's article 'The Return to Subsistence' in *New Nigerian*, March 10, 1978.
 49. See the full text of the Communique in *New Nigerian*, April 4, 1978.
 50. Ambassador Harriman's comment was reported in the Daily Times of Monday April 3, 1978.
 51. External Affairs Commissioner's brief of foreign diplomats on the outcome of President Carter's visit, April 4, 1978 at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs.
 52. External Affairs Commissioner's address to University Students in Zaria, February 11, 1978. op cit.