

Re-Engineering Nigeria's Foreign Policy in the Post-Military Era: Olusegun Obasanjo's  
Presidency and Nigeria's African Foreign Policy

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**Abstract**

This article explores Nigeria's current foreign policy under the Fourth Republic (May 1999- ). It investigates the gamut of events surrounding Nigeria's foreign policy-making and practice since independence (1960) and how this compares with the Obasanjo (1999-2007) administration's efforts at foreign policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria's recently hard-won recognition in the international system after 16 years of military authoritarianism. The paper argues that the Obasanjo administration was a success given the range of domestic and international issues that the administration was able to address. The article supports this by focusing on the main issues in the life of the administration, including Africa's security management, Africa's economic development, and the launching of NEPAD among others.

**Keywords:** Nigeria's Foreign Policy, Nigeria's African Foreign Policy, Nigeria's Fourth Republic, Olusegun Obasanjo, Military Rule, Democracy.

*Under General Abacha, foreign policy was crudely mishandled. Records show that Nigeria was like a country without a foreign minister and a foreign policy during that period (Okpokpo, cited in Ilofuan, 2007, p.53).*

*The governments of Generals Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha, in particular, plunged the country into a pariah status, starting with the June 12, 1993 question. They personalised the Nigerian state... the most populous state in Africa was ostracized... It became a country with leprosy (Ilofuan, 2007, p. 53).*

*...no matter how the Obasanjo-led administration's foreign policy record is examined, his ability to successfully launder and restore the hitherto bastardised image of the country will forever be remembered (Ilofuan, 2007, p. 53).*

The year 1960 is very important in Africa's political history, and it is widely regarded as *annus mirabilis*, a miraculous year, for more than 15 African countries gained their political independence in that year. Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, became a sovereign state on 1 October, 1960, and in the same year, it gained membership of the United Nations (UN) and the Commonwealth (Aluko, 1981, p. 1; Olusanya, 1986). At independence, Nigeria's foreign policy actions were determined by its colonial orientations.<sup>1</sup> During the first few years of political independence, Nigeria's external relations were dominated by its relationship with Britain, its former colonial master, in particular, and the other Commonwealth countries. Things changed in the early 1970s due to the country's newfound wealth from oil exportation. The new economic and financial wherewithal expanded Nigeria's horizons abroad as the country became *primus inter pares*—first among equals—in intra-African international relations and the continent's leading and respected voice in international affairs, especially within multilateral institutions. From the struggles against the apartheid regime in South Africa to Angola's independence in 1975, through Africa's severance of diplomatic relations with Israel in 1973, Nigeria has been at the forefront. Writing on Nigeria's foreign policy, Professor Olajide Aluko, using Joseph Frankel's phraseology, contends that Nigeria became "a regional power in black Africa." This is because, Aluko (1981, p. 1) continued:

[Nigeria's] opinions are sought by many of the great powers on matters that are of concern to Africa. While it is true that [Nigeria] is heavily dependent on the great powers, especially the Western countries, for... trade, investments, and technology, [Nigeria] has been able to use [its] large internal market opportunities and foreign investments, especially in the oil industry, to influence [the] conduct [of others] on African issues.

It is disheartening that Nigeria's influential status in African affairs of the 1970s faltered with the overthrow of the civilian administration of Alhaji Shehu Shagari (1979-1983) by the Major General Muhammadu Buhari-led junta in December 1983 and the authoritarian nature of governance of the Buhari regime.<sup>2</sup> Military authoritarianism reached its zenith with General Sani Abacha's dictatorial rule (1993-1998). During Nigeria's military rule (1983-1999), authoritarianism replaced the rule of law; the constitution ceased to be the law of the land, and the country saw a dramatic increase in incidences of gross human rights violations. The political situation in Nigeria appeared critical with Abacha, who, following the footsteps of his immediate military predecessor, General Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993), embarked on a well-orchestrated yet ultimately fake "transition program" for his self-succession (Badmus, 2005a). As a result of

these volatile political-military situations, Nigeria became isolated from the comity of civilized states and acquired the unenviable status of a pariah state. The conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy at that time was crudely mishandled, as Okpokpo and Ilofuan rightly argue in the first two epigraphs of this paper. The death of Abacha in office on 8 June 1998 paved the way for General Abdulsalami Abubakar to become the new military ruler, who, although a military man, understood that authoritarian leadership was not in the best interest of the country. The new regime quickly recognized the problems that beset the country, which Abubakar Abdulsalami took concrete steps to address, by, among other things, implementing an actual transition program that eventually led to the country's Fourth Republic, in May 1999.

The rebirth of democracy in Nigeria was highly welcome both by Nigerian citizens and friends of Nigeria, as it provided an opportunity for the country to repair its image and put Nigeria on a new path of socio-economic development and global recognition and acceptance. The expectations of Nigerians on democracy and its positive impacts on Nigeria's foreign relations were based on the fact that liberal ideals are, in the post-Cold War international system, the principal yardsticks by which to measure whether a government is responsible and accountable. That is, democracy and respect for human rights have become core values; achievement of both serve as a means by which to assess whether or not a government is responsible since it is believed that democratic leadership and the protection of citizens are catalysts for achieving socio-economic development. Therefore, it is important for any country wishing to maintain cordial relations with the external world in the post-Cold War international environment to accept the dictates of this global reality.

For nearly two decades, Nigeria has once again been governed by civilian authority. Thus, a period of 18 years offers a credible time-frame for a meaningful assessment of Nigeria's international relations under civilian rule. This paper explores the imperatives of democracy and good governance in the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy, especially in African affairs. The paper seeks to explore how democratic rule has helped the country in salvaging its image and promoting its foreign policy objectives, especially as it relates to Africa. The paper analyzes these issues vis-à-vis Nigeria's foreign policy achievements in African affairs during the Olusegun Obasanjo-led administration. Toward this end, the article focuses on some main issues in the life of the Obasanjo administration such as the launching of New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD); Africa's security management; promotion of democracy and good governance in Africa; restoring Nigeria's battered image and regaining the country's status as a leader in intra-Africa international relations, among others.

### **Explaining Nigeria's Foreign Policy**

Foreign policy is conducted because no country is an island to itself. As Holsti (1995, p. 250) stated, foreign policy's "purposes and actions...are designed to sustain or alter a current object, condition, or practice in the external environment [and guide] the search for security, welfare, autonomy, and prestige." The nature and direction of foreign policy undertaken by any nation normally "arises primarily from domestic needs." Therefore, there is a symbolic relationship between foreign and domestic policies of a state since the two operate along a continuum. The close linkages between domestic and foreign policies of a state are important, and, as Jaemahn (1989, p. 16) contends, neither one can be worked out entirely apart from the other. The domain of the latter encompasses the international environment. The domestic policies of state are important to the events at the global level, and a well and clearly formulated foreign policy can

be a not only a catalyst for development but also a vehicle for addressing socio-economic challenges confronting a state, especially for developing countries like Nigeria. However, poor formulation and implementation of foreign policy can have dire consequences for a country at the domestic level.

Within the context of Nigeria's 57 years of political independence, it is possible to outline the objectives, principles, and basic underpinnings of Nigeria's foreign policy. The principal objective of Nigeria's foreign policy has been to promote and protect the country's national interests in its inter-state relations. The indexes of these national interests, as enunciated by successive governments since independence are (i) the defense of the country's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, (ii) the restoration of human dignity to black men and women all over the world, particularly the eradication of colonialism and white minority rule in Africa, (iii) the creation of the relevant and viable political and economic conditions in Africa and the rest of the world, (iv) the promotion and improvement of the economic well-being of the Nigerian citizens, and (v) the promotion of world peace and justice (Obiozor, 1994, pp. 159-165; Ogwu, 1986, p. 9; Olusanya & Akindele, 1986, pp. 2-3). Some of these objectives are not realistic and are also mere window-dressing especially for a less developed country like Nigeria. The cost involved in achieving some of these objectives make them simply impracticable and they should be confined to the domain of wishful thinking (see Vogt, 1990, p. 94). Olajide Aluko (1979, cited in Ogwu, 1986, p. 10) stated that "...most of [Nigeria's objectives] are not realizable and therefore, cannot provide a rational and realistic basis for the country's external behavior." Similarly, the eradication of colonialism and apartheid have become irrelevant since Africans have assumed the mantle of leadership in the Southern African sub-region, especially in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and the Lusophone states of Angola and Mozambique. As such, the objective regarding the "eradication of colonialism" ought to be revised within the formal foreign policy objectives of Nigeria to reflect the contemporary objective of eradicating the institutionalized remnants of colonial rule (Badmus, 2005b, pp. 87-92; Vogt, 1990).

As for Nigeria's foreign policy principles, the first is the principle of non-alignment in the international system. Today, this appears to be an embattled principle. Non-alignment rejects formal military alliance with, and habitual political support for, either of the East-West Cold War power blocs. What we establish at the very outset is that although Nigeria professes non-alignment in the articulation of its foreign policy, its colonial history and stance on many international issues, especially during the First Republic (1960-1966), point to the contrary. Prior to the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970), Nigeria followed the lines of Britain, its former colonial master.<sup>3</sup> During the Nigerian civil war, however, Britain rejected Nigeria's request for military assistance and the purchase of arms and ammunitions in its war efforts against the Biafra secessionists. Nigeria's bitter experiences with the West (especially Britain) compelled the Nigerian government to look towards the countries of the East, especially the defunct USSR for military support. In the current international system, the principle of non-alignment has become an anachronism. It is little wonder that the G7 has shifted its focus to economic and development problems that have become major impediments to socio-economic emancipation of Third World regions.

The second principle is the legal equality of all states. While states are equal in theory, a critical look at Nigeria's African foreign policy reveals an ambivalent position regarding such equality. If it can be argued that Nigeria's participation in the campaign for the independence of Angola and Zimbabwe was provided in terms of diplomatic and financial support for the liberation movements in these colonial territories before their independence, the same cannot be

said about its interventions in the Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars in the 1990s as we shall see in details later. This question of the equality of states pertains directly to the third principle, which is that of non-interference in international affairs. Fourth, Nigeria is committed to multilateralism, as it sought international cooperation as a participant in peacekeeping operations. Nigeria's presence is felt in the area of preventive diplomacy in the post-independence years. Multilateralism underscores Nigeria's membership within international organizations. Last is the principle that sees Africa as the cornerstone of Nigeria's foreign policy. Nigeria's African foreign policy was evident in the forming of the Organization of African Unity (the OAU, now the African Union or the AU), and it remains so under the new pan-African institution, the AU as well as in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Sesay and Owoeye (1993, p. 201) asserted that Nigeria's African policy has remained the same over years despite regime changes. The centrality of Africa in Nigeria's foreign policy is important to the extent that this commitment to Afro-centric policy was enshrined in Section 19 of the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

### **Nigeria's Foreign Policy Shortly Before May 1999: Authoritarianism versus Global Ostracism**

As we mentioned earlier, Nigeria was, for many years, under military rule (between 1966-1979, and 1983-1999), and this has had considerable impact on the conduct of its foreign policy and external relations.<sup>4</sup> Military rule negatively impacted Nigeria's with respect to its credibility and battered its image at the global level. Under military authoritarianism, decision-making in Nigeria's foreign policy was unidirectional, as it was often conducted by executive fiat, with the head of state situated at the center of foreign policy formulation and implementation alongside his foreign affairs minister. In a military regime, the head of state is the embodiment of decision making, and the command structures of the military do not accommodate dissenting voices within its hierarchy. What the head of state says is final and becomes the law. The absence of a counterweight like the National Assembly (or Parliament) in civilian rule, combined with the psychological traits and idiosyncrasies of the military dictators leaves little room for multilateralism. Indeed, during Nigeria's period of authoritarian rule, its "foreign policy" "smack[ed] of obscenity, obstinacy, and obstreperousness" (Omotola & Saliu, 2003, p. 2). The decision-making in the formulation and implementation of Nigeria's foreign policy was the prerogative of the military head of state, and most "policy" simply reflected his personal worldview. The normal channels were bypassed or ignored; thus, foreign policy formulation and implementation become personalized by the head of state. Fawole (2004) puts it succinctly:

Perhaps one of the bad and unenviable legacies of military rule in the area of external relations [was the] personali[z]ation of policy-making by the maximum rulers. This was due to the absence of effective mechanisms for policy making, the arrogation of excessive powers to the military ruler, the deliberate subversion or marginali[z]ation of existing foreign policy-making institutions and structures such as the foreign service, the federal executive council, the research institutes and policy think tanks. The consequence was that foreign policy making was still *ad hoc* and far less routi[ni]z[ed] [even] after forty years of independence. (p. 5)

At the domestic level, the authoritarian nature of military rule in Nigeria had dire consequences on the political-economic base of Nigeria's foreign policy. The Nigerian economy

was mismanaged, and contracted rather than expanded. The economy was also plagued by rampant and endemic corruption in both private and public sectors. Nigeria's military regimes embarked on wholesale looting of the public treasury, which worsened the socio-economic situations of the country with accompanied low standards of living of many Nigerians. It has been alleged that more than \$12.2 billion in oil revenue disappeared during the Babangida regime, while under the succeeding Abacha regime, between \$1 and \$3 billion was personally stolen (Badmus, 2009a; Human Rights Watch, 2007). In addition, the implementation of the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) by the Babangida's administration worsened the socio-economic conditions of the majority of the population, as many Nigerians were living in absolute poverty. The underdeveloped nature of the Nigerian economy, the hardships brought about by the implementation of SAP, together with the inequitable state policies in the distributions of national wealth caused a flare up in ethno-religious conflicts in different parts of the country (especially in such major cities as Lagos and Ibadan in Southwest Nigeria, and Enugun and Calabar in the Eastern part of the country), as the masses (the unemployed youth in particular) became willing tools in the hands of the political elites, who opposed military rule. At this point, the domestic base of Nigeria's foreign policy was weak and fragile, and political-security was at risk, particularly with the annulment by the Babangida regime of presidential elections of 12 June 1993 (popularly known in Nigeria simply as "June 12"), an action that was condemned worldwide. Public outrage and condemnation of the annulled elections forced Babangida out of power in August 1993. Because Babangida was in haste to hand over power, he appointed an Interim National Government (ING) that was comprised of unelected civilians under the leadership of Chief Ernest Shonekan, a Yoruba technocrat from Southwest Nigeria. With the ING in place, Babangida stepped aside. As expected, the ING was overwhelmed by deteriorating socio-economic situations, and an increasing spate of political-military unrest. The ING was inundated with domestic problems, and the interim administration lacked the necessary leverage to articulate a vibrant and goal-oriented foreign policy for the country (Badmus, 2009b).

The interim government's piece-meal initiatives were invidious in a heated polity. During this period, Nigeria was at the verge of disintegration as a result of the volatile political-military situations of the country. The Abacha-led junta seized power in November 1993, (only 82 days after the ING was inaugurated). Abacha was the most senior officer in the Nigerian army at that time and also defense minister in the interim administration. The new military leader, General Sani Abacha, constituted his decision-making organ, the Provisional Ruling Council (PCR). As events unfolded, the Abacha regime became authoritarian, committing human rights abuses on an unprecedented scale. Extra-judicial killings and murders became rather commonplace (Fawole, 2003). The 1994 death of four prominent Ogoni men (known as the "Ogoni four")<sup>5</sup> at a political meeting in the country's Niger Delta region—a crime that was subsequently pinned on nonviolent activist Ken Saro-Wiwa,<sup>6</sup> who was executed by the Abacha regime—was a case in point. The killings of Saro-Wiwa and his colleagues led to widespread condemnations of the regime and resulted in Nigeria's suspension from the Commonwealth of Nations for over three years. Expectedly, the international community imposed economic sanctions on Nigeria that further worsened the socio-economic conditions of average Nigerians and shifted the domestic base of Nigeria's foreign policy. The military-political situation of the country was so fragile that Nigerians witnessed bomb explosions and assassinations of political figures that opposed military rule. These assassinations were later traced to the junta, although the military government pointed accusing fingers to the opposition, especially the National Democratic

Coalition (NADECO). The assassination of Pa Alfred Rewane, a NADECO chieftain, the murder of Alhaja Kudirat Abiola, wife of Moshood Abiola (a wealthy business mogul and the presumed winner of the annulled June 12 presidential elections) were further evidence of state-sponsored terrorism in the country. Instead of adopting a conciliatory approach to mend relationships or any options involving “subtle diplomacy” through persuasion (Omotola & Saliu, 2003: 3), or what Osita Agbu (1999, pp. 148-149) refers to as “a pragmatic liberal diplomatic approach,” or even adopting and implementing policy options that would make Nigeria's foreign policy acceptable within the norms of international community, the Abacha government, as is characteristic of tyrannical rule, became confrontational, arrogant, defiant, and, above all, turned a deaf ear to all entreaties. The hawkish approach of the regime at that point in time is also reflective of the idiosyncrasies of the then decision makers in Nigeria's foreign policy. Thus, Nigeria's foreign policy in the time following the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election was far less stable than what exists now. It was low in quality and ostensibly *ad hoc* in character with no predictable direction. By and large, the period characterized the nadir of Nigeria in international institutions. Nigeria not only became the target of criticism by its traditional western allies, owing to its poor human rights records, it also became an economic outcast from the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and creditors clubs, with the attendant result being a derelict state of the domestic economy. One Nigerian newspaper, *The Guardian*, captured the Nigeria situation under Abacha aptly:

[T]he post-June 12 [1993] period bears that hallmark of a near-chaotic approach to foreign dealings. Nigeria's ‘enemies’ have multiplied, embarrassingly, on the international plane. Our powerful voice has been muffled, [which] further alienate[s] us from the comity of worthy friends. (Cited in Saliu, 2000, p. 49)

These were Nigeria's domestic and external realities when Abacha died in office in June 1998 and General Abdulsalami Abubakar assumed leadership of the country. Faced with domestic and international pressures, the Abubakar administration embarked on a fence-mending mission with the most important countries of the world and reconciled with opposition groups in Nigeria. He subsequently cancelled the Abacha transition program and came up with his own sincere program for returning the country to civil rule. As part of Abubakar's transition program, new political parties were registered, elections were held, and in May 1999, the military finally left the political arena for the new civilian administration of the Nigerian Fourth Republic.

### **The New Context of Nigeria's Foreign Policy**

Professor F. S. Northedge (1968, p. 15) asserts that the foreign policy of a country is “a product of environmental factors—both internal and external to it.” Therefore, the environment of policy formulation is pertinent in order to have assertive foreign policy that will be able to achieve the country's national interests. In foreign policy studies, both the domestic and external environments play a role. There is a relationship between the two environments, as events at the domestic level often determine and shape foreign policy, while the events at the external, global level affect and/or determine events at the domestic environment of the country. In this section, we examine these environments of foreign policy formulation and implementation and explore how the new democracy has brought positive changes in the foreign policy formulation and conduct of Nigeria's external relations.

As noted earlier, Nigeria was confronted with harsh domestic and external environments in the formulation and conduct of its foreign policy under military rule. This is due to both

internal and international opposition to the authoritarian rule of the government of the day. With the advent of civil rule, the domestic environment of policy formulation witnessed a complete transformation, as due process is now followed, while such institutions as the presidency, National Assembly (which is made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate), federal ministries, federal executive council, foreign service, and research institutes such as the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Parastatals, among others have their roles in the conduct of foreign policy as articulated in the constitution. The president runs the country on a daily basis, and foreign policy is his domain. In his capacity as the president and commander-in-chief of the armed forces, he is the principal actor in both domestic and foreign policies formulation. The president sets the foreign policy agenda in line with his visions and party's manifesto; this is in accordance with the dynamics of international politics. However, the president is not the only actor in foreign policy making and implementation, for he is assisted by a number of ministries and parastatals (Fawole, 2004, pp. 12-13).

Unlike the situation during military rule, under civilian administration, the power of the president are not absolute. It is subject to constitutional checks of the National Assembly. For example, the president is empowered to appoint ambassadors and high commissioners, but he must seek the approval of the National Assembly (Section 171 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria). The National Assembly also exercises control over the ratification and renunciation of international agreements and treaties negotiated and signed by the president, his ministers, or envoys on behalf of the Nigerian state (Sections 11 and 12). Such agreements/treaties can only enter into force after they have been ratified and passed into law as an Act of the National Assembly, among others. Another area in which the National Assembly exercises control is finance. The executive arm of government must request and receive the National Assembly's approval before any money can be made available for spending, even in matters relating to foreign and defense policies. Sections 59 and 80-82 of the constitution state that before any money can be withdrawn from the Consolidation Revenue Fund of the Federation for any purpose, it must be approved by the Nigerian National Assembly. The National Assembly's power and control over finance and government spending can easily abet or hold back the chief executive's ability and capability to conduct foreign policy. Informed public opinion (such as civil society organizations, mass media, and organized labor) is now, to a large extent, in support of the civilian administration, unlike the situation under the preceding military regimes. The favorable domestic environment of policy formulation is boosted by the personality and psychological factor. This idiosyncratic variable<sup>7</sup> should not be overlooked, for it has an overbearing influence on the conduct of Nigeria's foreign relations. The personality and psychology of a leader (the chief executive officer in particular) determines the policies formulated. Therefore, the policies of the government are reflective of the leader's worldview and his personal traits; how he sees and defines the situation are function of his psychology. As an erstwhile Nigeria's External Affairs Minister, Professor Bolaji Akinyemi poignantly puts it: "The constitutional provisions form the skeleton: they are the bare bones. It is the personality of people running the system that puts the flesh on the skeleton, giving us the recogni[z]able form" (Akinyemi, n.d.). Under the civilian administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the president was (and he is still, after leaving office) a man of international clout and respect who brought some degree of respect to the Nigerian state and presidency in particular. As a former military ruler of Nigeria (1976-1979), Obasanjo voluntarily handed over power to a civilian administration in 1979, and since then, he has been at the forefront of the struggles to



democratize Africa's political environment. In this respect, Omotola and Saliu (2003) argue that Obasanjo came in as president with impressive, if not intimidating credentials. This, according to Omotola and Saliu, directly contrasts the inexperience of Abacha. Obasanjo's impressive credentials were supported by the personality of his foreign affairs ministers. Of particular importance is that of Foreign Affairs Minister Alhaji Sule Lamido, who displayed a high level of maturity, skills, dexterity, and good mastery of the job (Omotola & Saliu, 2003). Thus, the democratization of the hitherto militarized and constricted political space has brought unquantifiable improvement to the domestic base of Nigeria's foreign policy formulation and implementation.

At the global level, the transfer of power in Nigeria from military rule to civilian authority in May 1999 ended the pariah status of the country, and Nigeria was welcomed back into the comity of civilized nations, as it conducted its external relations according to the accepted norms of international society. This singular event witnessed the relaxation of strained international relations between Nigeria and the outside world, especially western countries, and subsequently, the major powers/industrialized nations lifted political-economic and military sanctions that had been imposed on Nigeria. The international skepticism of Nigeria became a thing of the past.

### **Re-Engineering Nigeria's Foreign Policy: May 1999-May 2007**

When we speak of re-engineering Nigeria's foreign policy, we have in mind the repairing of the damage and international disrepute that the military regimes and authoritarianism caused Nigeria in the comity of nations. It is not an exaggeration to say that while the diplomacy of the Abubakar regime was mainly focused on reconciliation both at home and abroad, especially with the industrialized countries in the West, which espouse democratic ideas and ideals, the succeeding Obasanjo's shuttle diplomacy was even more vigorous. This was due to the newfound democratic fervor. Nigeria's foreign policy under Chief Olusegun Obasanjo was a continuation of that initiated under Abubakar, for Obasanjo's civilian administration continued the reconciliation agenda/program of Abubakar's military (but not totalitarian) regime. Although President Obasanjo gained a reputation for traveling extensively (and was indeed called the "traveling president,")<sup>8</sup> in fact, modern diplomacy requires a leader that gives an international window of opportunities to allow his country to have new political and economic views and opportunities by reaching out to world leaders. The groundwork for these opportunities can be laid through shuttle and political, as well as summit diplomacy. Because of its past experiences with military rule, Nigeria under a democratic dispensation (especially under Chief Obasanjo) was in dire need of repositioning itself, through its foreign policy implementation, to become a respected state in the world. We now turn to our discussion on the Obasanjo presidency specifically, and Nigeria's foreign policy under Obasanjo with reference to Africa. But before we examine this, it is pertinent, first, to look at the methods adopted by the civilian administration at the domestic level—*i.e.*, the administration's economic policy and diplomacy—in order to have a vibrant and articulate foreign policy.

A major policy that the Obasanjo government implemented to revamp the national economy, boost productivity, and increase social amenities as well as roll back poverty was the implementation of economic reform agenda via the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). Explaining the importance of NEEDS to the Nigerian public, Obasanjo stated that "the on-going reform agenda that has been packaged as the NEEDS is our

grand strategy to reposition Nigeria for stability, growth, development and prosperity for all.”<sup>9</sup> President Obasanjo’s belief in this reform agenda can be heard in his words:

Once the reform agenda at the federal level is effectively complemented by initiatives at the state and local levels in the State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS) and Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS) respectively, we can begin to see unbounded and unprecedented development in all sectors and improvement in our lives.<sup>10</sup>

The fact that the Nigerian government’s economic diplomacy was aimed at revamping and revitalizing the domestic economy shows that there is a nexus between national and international economies and also an intrinsic link between the two in Nigeria’s foreign policy. The thrust of the administration’s domestic economy policy was economic liberalization. The policy was geared towards opening the Nigerian market by attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) through a key feature of the economic policy: privatization. Privatization means the partial or total withdrawal of government equity from some sectors of the economy that were hitherto under the firm control of the government. The establishment of the Bureau of Private Enterprise (BPE), one of the most important (perhaps, the principal) instrument for the realization of this policy agenda was commendable, as it showed the administration’s determination to revamp the ailing and contracted Nigerian economy. However, the Obasanjo regime’s withdrawal of subsidies from the downstream sector triggered socio-economic unrest. The attendant result of Obasanjo’s deregulation and market-oriented policies initially engendered a spiral of inflation, with negative consequences on the purchasing power of Nigerians—in spite of the stated objectives of NEEDS. Even within the ruling party (the People’s Democratic Party or PDP), the government’s economic policy was subjected to an avalanche of criticism contrary to the government’s self-praised and acclaimed economic success. For example, the former Attorney General and Minister of Justice in the Second Republic (1979-1983), and a PDP chieftain, Chief Richard Akinjide lamented the low standards of living of the average Nigerian. The eminent lawyer asserted that “Up till now, not less than 70% of Nigerians are living below poverty level. Yet we have never in the history of Nigeria produced as much wealth as we produce now. Our foreign reserve is now above \$30 billion” (*The Punch Newspaper*, Lagos, 11 September 2005). Akinjide’s position is corroborated by Ploch (2007, p. 9) who said:

Nigeria has the second largest economy in Africa and generates over \$47 billion a year in oil and gas revenue, and yet many of its people are among the continent’s poorest. According to USAID, 70% of Nigerians live on less than \$1 per day, and the average life expectancy is only 47 years...The country ranks 159 of 177 countries on [the] UN Development Programme’s (UNDP) Human Development Index. The US State Department attributes Nigeria’s lack of social and economic development to decades of unaccountable rule.

Despite these criticisms and some difficulties encountered by the Obasanjo administration, we assert that the market-oriented policies did yield and that since Obasanjo left office in May 2007, the policies have been yielding handsome dividends that have not yet been reflected in the socio-economic well-being of the majority of Nigerians. The main reason for this is due to corruption, looting of the country’s treasury, and the ongoing mismanagement of the economy by other political leaders. For example, the former Minister of Petroleum Resources under President Goodluck Jonathan, Deziani Alison-Madueke, is presently being investigated by the government,

and more than \$100 billion has been recovered from her; this is in addition to her properties that have been seized by the present Buhari administration.

There is no arguing that government alone cannot reduce the level of unemployment. Privatization will unequivocally translate into the absorption of a significant number of the unemployed population, especially youths. Yet at the same time, the government should not overlook the fact that economic liberalization is a double-edged sword and can have negative effects on foreign policy options. For example, excessive liberalization and dependency on foreign capital for economic development will undoubtedly make Nigeria over-dependent on the West, thus weakening the domestic foundation necessary for a radical approach to foreign policy, as was the case of the nationalization of the British assets (British Petroleum or BP and Barclays Bank) in Nigeria during the Obasanjo military regime of the 1970s. It is important to realize that with the economic situation in Nigeria, a radical posture in foreign policy against the West would have been counterproductive and to a large extent suicidal at a time when Nigeria was pleading for economic support.

Another aspect of the Obasanjo economic diplomacy is the issue of debt pardoning for Africa and Nigeria in particular. In many international fora, Obasanjo emphasized the linkages between and among developing nations' debts and the toll of debts on the African economy. Nigeria's economic diplomacy bore fruit in 2006 with the cancellation of 60% debt Nigeria owed the Paris Club when Nigeria's Finance Minister, Okonjo-Iweala, helped by the US Treasury Department, persuaded the Paris Club to forgive \$18 billion of Nigeria's foreign debt (Herskovits, 2007)

### **The Obasanjo Presidency and Nigeria's African Foreign Policy: Balance Sheet and Critiques**

In this section, we examine the balance sheet of Nigeria's foreign policy and external relations under Obasanjo. Nigerian diplomacy under Chief Obasanjo can be viewed from two perspectives: the first is the domestic policy, which serves as a springboard for international policy. In fact, the correlation between domestic and foreign policies allows us to have a better understanding of Nigeria's foreign policy in this era of democracy with concomitant positive effects that bear on Nigeria's diplomacy. The performance of the Obasanjo administration in Nigeria's international relations can be analyzed at three levels: the West African sub-region, the continental (Africa) level, and the global arena. The administration employed shuttle diplomacy to conduct its foreign policy and promote Nigeria's image at the external environment. This way, the administration pursued Nigeria's foreign policy objectives, and the president's face-to-face diplomacy with other world leaders helped Obasanjo become known as a globe trotter president in Nigeria, for in the annals of Nigeria's foreign policy implementation and external relations, no president has ever traveled abroad like President Obasanjo. The scope of this paper focuses on the African (West Africa inclusive) dimension of these achievements in Nigeria's external relations, particularly as it relates to regional security management, socio-economic development, among other issues.

### **The West African sub-region: Regional security management and economic development**

At the inception of Nigeria's Fourth Republic in 1999, the West African political-military environments were volatile, with pockets of armed conflict and political violence in neighboring

countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, and Côte d'Ivoire to mention but a few. This situation, together with the adverse socio-economic conditions of the sub-region, provided the new civilian Obasanjo administration in Nigeria the opportunities to launch itself, prove to the world that Nigeria was still relevant in the scheme of things in West Africa, and also to showcase Nigeria's African foreign policy. Some of the achievements of Nigeria's West African policy are examined in this section.

Nigeria's post-military foreign policy focus in Sierra Leone under Obasanjo was characterized by continuity.<sup>11</sup> And, by continuity we mean the continuing and reinforcing of the peace initiatives undertaken by the Abubakar regime (Badmus & Ogunmola, 2003; Ogunmola & Badmus, 2006). The resolution-seeking nature of Nigeria's external relations with President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah of Sierra Leone was noticeable under General Abubakar. Abubakar's military administration even attempted to withdraw Nigeria's troops from Sierra Leone because the constitution of Nigeria specified that intervention in foreign conflict was to be limited to peacekeeping operations.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Nigeria's ongoing military intervention in Sierra Leone's conflict, launched by General Abacha—when he sent the Nigerian troops to reverse a coup in Freetown, Sierra Leone—was not only costly in financial terms but also led to the death of many Nigerian soldiers (Berman & Sams, 2000: 124). It was apparent to subsequent Nigerian policy makers that the ideal way out of the political-military problem in Sierra Leone was a peaceful resolution of the civil war. Without doubt, the Nigeria-led ECOWAS<sup>13</sup> peace operation in Sierra Leone, to which Nigeria had contributed a majority of troops and funds, was the force that guaranteed the survival of the civilian government in Sierra Leone. The Obasanjo administration continued and consolidated policy laid down in Sierra Leone by the Abubakar regime by prioritizing a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The ECOWAS's military intervention and its diplomatic efforts, coupled with that of the international community were remarkable and successful when, on 7 July 1999, the ECOWAS leaders, officials of the UN, and others met with the warring parties in Togo and signed the much publicized Lomé Peace Accord, which formed the basis of peace in Sierra Leone. (The implementation of the accord was not unproblematic due to lack of sincerity of the rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) to respect the signed agreement. With the deployment of a UN peace operation—the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL)—the stage was set for Nigeria to completely pull its troops out of Sierra Leone.) However, Nigeria's withdrawal was only symbolic, as Nigerian contingent in the ECOMOG soldiers were re-hatted and became the advanced elements of UNAMSIL. The Chief of Defense Staff of Sierra Leone was Nigerian Brigadier-General Maxwell Khobe, and a respected Nigerian diplomat, Chief Olu Adeniji, was appointed both the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Sierra Leone and UNAMSIL Head of Mission. In fact, Abuja reiterated its position through Nigeria's Chief of Army Staff, General Victor Malu, saying, "We don't want to leave when the UN is not ready and by so doing give the rebels a chance to threaten the capital" (Victor Malu, cited in *The Guardian*, 17 February 2000). The presence of UNAMSIL did not stop Nigeria making its presence felt in Sierra Leone until peace returned, and it also gave a positive sign to Nigeria's friends and the international community that the country was fully back into the comity of nations, as subsequent events in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia proved.

On 19 September 2002, Côte d'Ivoire descended into civil conflict. The conflict added to the volatility of the West African security environment of the 1990s. Côte d'Ivoire, once a haven of political stability and beacon of economic growth and prosperity in West Africa, was engulfed in conflict as a result of the mismanagement of the political legacies of the first Ivorian president,

Félix Houphouët-Boigny, amid economic contraction where a new social construct, that is the doctrine of *Ivoirité*, took center stage of socio-political unrest that led, inexorably, to the Ivorian civil war.<sup>14</sup> Nigeria, basking in the glow of its rediscovered political strength, actively involved itself in the diplomatic efforts within Côte d'Ivoire that resulted in the signing of various ceasefire and peace agreements by the belligerents. Nigeria was a member of the ECOWAS's Contact Group on Côte d'Ivoire that was set up to mediate peace.

Nigeria's foreign policy in intra-African international relations during the Obasanjo administration reached its zenith when the Nigerian president became the African Union (AU) Chairman. Obasanjo used his new position and status to influence the course of negotiations in the Ivorian conflict in order to achieve lasting peace in that country. Nigeria was present at the signing of all the agreements, whether under the auspices of ECOWAS, the AU, or the UN. Nigeria was at the forefront of the quest to find lasting peace in Côte d'Ivoire even after the end of Obasanjo's chairmanship of the AU, since Nigeria was a member of the AU-mandated International Working Group (IWG) to facilitate negotiations and implementation of the various agreements by the parties to the conflict. Several meetings were organized purposely to move the peace process forward. Nigeria was also a key player in the establishment of the ECOWAS Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (ECOMICI), which created buffer zones between the rebels that controlled north of the country and the government forces that occupied the southern part of Côte d'Ivoire (Badmus, 2015a; Ogunmola, 2013).

In the Ivorian crisis, Nigeria adopted a new diplomatic and political strategy that actually paid off. This innovation was a radical departure from peace enforcement that Nigeria undertook in the first Liberian civil war (1989-1996)—which saw President Samuel Doe out of power during ECOMOG I operation in Liberia—and its military intervention in Sierra Leone, especially when General Sani Abacha was Nigeria's leader. These two operations were condemned at home by the informed public opinion, which did not see any objective rationale in Nigeria's interventions.

The second civil war in Liberia (1999-2003) pitted the government of Charles Taylor against two rebel movements, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) in the north, with the support of Guinea, and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) in the south (Reno, 2007, p.77). From the outset of the war, President Obasanjo adopted a peaceful approach to the resolution of the conflict through the Nigerian government working in concert with ECOWAS, the AU, and the UN, instead of undertaking a dangerous peace enforcement operation. The zenith of this international cooperation with other leaders paid off when, on 11 August 2003, Charles Taylor relinquished power and departed Liberia for and lived in exile in Nigeria. Taylor's exit as Liberia's president was "not because LURD had overthrown him. Instead, he accepted a bargain with an International Contact Group that included US, British, and French officials that if he left Monrovia, he would not be prosecuted before a war crimes tribunal in Sierra Leone" (Reno, 2007, p. 79).

With Charles Taylor out of power, prospects for peace and reconciliation in the West-African sub-region (particularly in Liberia) were enhanced with the deployment of the Nigeria-led ECOWAS peace mission (the ECOWAS Mission in Liberia or ECOMIL) with the assistance of the US and the UN in August 2003 (Cook, 2005, p.1). Nigeria shouldered numerous responsibilities in conceptualizing and operationalizing ECOMIL. ECOMIL was commanded by a Nigerian General, Festus Okonkwo (Ross, 2005, p.61). The UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) later replaced ECOMIL. The belligerents and 18 political parties signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in August 2003, which led to the establishment of a National

Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) (Cook 2005, p.2). The concerted efforts of the international community paved the way not only for the presidential elections in 2005, won by Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, but also for a post-war reconstruction in Liberia (Badmus, 2015b).

Following the death of Togo's President Gnassingbé Eyadema in February 2005, a constitutional crisis ensued over the appointment of his son, Faure Eyadema, as acting president by the Togolese military. Doubtless, the actions of and move by the military were flagrant violations of Togo's 1992 Constitution, which vested the power of acting president upon the speaker of the national assembly. The decision to appoint Eyadema's son was condemned by ECOWAS, the AU, the UN, and the broader international community. The AU and ECOWAS, under the chairmanships of President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and President Mamadou Tandja of Niger and other international organizations were resolute on maintaining the legality and legitimacy of protocol in filling the vacant post of the Togolese president. Their mediation efforts were successful, for Faure Eyadema stepped down on 26 February 2005, and sanctions that had been imposed on Togo were lifted (Ebeku, 2005, p. 6). Moreover, an interim speaker of the national assembly was elected to serve as the acting president of Togo. These efforts paved the way for the conduct of a new presidential election. Nigeria was very influential owing to its incumbency of the AU chairmanship. The Togolese main protagonists met with President Obasanjo in Abuja as well as in Lomé on many occasions during the search for workable political solutions. Eventually, Faure Eyadema, the flagbearer of the *Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais* (RPT), defeated the presidential candidate of the *Union des Forces du Changement* (UFC), Emmanuel Akitani Bob, to emerge as a democratically elected president during the 24 April 2005 election—though the election was marred with irregularities, and the opposition parties declared the election a sham. On 19 May 2005, Nigeria hosted a meeting of the AU leaders in Abuja. One of the main purposes of this meeting was to consolidate the fragile peace and promote reconciliation in Togo (African Union, 2005, p. 4). In a nutshell, the conduct of the presidential election in Togo was a victory of legality over illegality and an achievement for Nigeria's foreign policy under President Obasanjo.

Despite its commitment to peaceful resolutions of sub-regional conflicts, the Nigerian government under Chief Obasanjo took time to address the socio-economic problems that beset West Africa. One of the main founders of ECOWAS in 1975, Nigeria has historically played a leadership role in the activities of the organization since its inception. Abuja provides a conducive environment for the institution to function since it hosts its Secretariat (now known as the ECOWAS Commission) in Abuja. Nigeria finances most of the institution's activities, and it also pays about half of the institution's annual budget (Fawole, 2004). Thus, in pursuance of its commitment to the goals of economic integration and development, Fawole (2004, p. 45) writes, "The Obasanjo government established a separate Ministry of Cooperation and National Integration in Africa with a cabinet rank minister in charge. This is with a view to pursuing inherited commitments to the development of West Africa and economic integration in Africa through the African Economic Community, whose treaty was signed in Abuja in 1991."

### **The rest of Africa: Leadership role conceptions, security management and socio-economic development**

It is important to state that Nigeria's post-military foreign policy performs creditably in African affairs, especially in the areas of conflict resolution and management, and economic development. During the Obasanjo administration, Nigeria was at the forefront at all meetings,

conferences, and negotiations that resulted in the transformation of the OAU into the AU, as well as the launching of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In the area of peaceful resolution of conflict, Obasanjo's Nigeria was also at the forefront, with particular examples being its efforts in strengthening the political impasse in São Tomé e Príncipe and the Sudan's Darfur conflict, among others. The assessment of these achievements constitutes our main task in this sub-section.

The global transformation and many problems confronting Africa at the end of the Cold War necessitated the transformation of the OAU into a new, improved and proactive pan-African institution and became, in 2002, the African Union, (AU). Nigeria showed strong commitment to the realization of the establishment of the institution, particularly during its transition phase. Thus, Nigeria was one of the principal forces behind the establishment of the AU. The AU was officially launched at the meeting of African heads of state and government held in Durban, South Africa on 9 July 2002. The transformation of the OAU into AU enjoyed Nigeria's support and the commitment of President Obasanjo.

Nigeria's commitment to African affairs was also evident during the launching of NEPAD, which was the initiative of Presidents Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal, Abdulazeez Bouteflika of Algeria, and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria. The Nigerian president provided the impetus and the much-needed leadership that served as a boost to the Africa's initiative of having a new, home-grown, rather than externally imposed, economic blueprint for African development. The NEPAD document's aims at supporting Africa's development through Africa's own efforts, in partnership with the advanced countries of the world (see Kempe, 2002 for details). The NEPAD initiative received financial support from the advanced countries, especially the G8. Obasanjo's Nigeria also supported the African initiative financially. Obasanjo, during his leadership of Nigeria, was a member of NEPAD Steering Committee, and a Nigerian diplomat, Ambassador Aluko Olokun became the Head of NEPAD Implementation Committee. This is a clear indication of Nigeria's assertive foreign policy achievement in African Affairs.

When Major Fernando Pereira-led coup d'état in São Tomé e Príncipe on 16 July 2003, it presented yet another opportunity for Nigeria to exert its influence in conflict resolution in Africa. What reinforced the Nigerian government's position to be more involved in resolving the political crisis is that President Fradique de Menzes of São Tomé e Príncipe was in Nigeria attending the 6th Reverend Leon Sullivan Summit at the time of the coup, while his foreign affairs minister, "Nando" Rita, was attending an international meeting of the Community Lusophone Countries (CPLP) in Portugal. As expected, the reactions of the international community were negative and hostile towards the junta. Nigeria responded to the coup by supporting the AU resolution to ostracize the junta. The Nigerian government's position is understandable, particularly given the fact that President de Menzes was the guest of Obasanjo at the time of the coup. The Nigerian president, working together with other African leaders within the context of the AU, did not foreclose the possibility of using military force to reinstate de Menzes (Porto, 2003, pp. 34-35). However, São Tomé e Príncipe ultimately returned to constitutional order in response to intense pressure from the international community. President Obasanjo accompanied the reinstated President de Menzes to his country. Obasanjo's position was also premised on Nigeria's national interest. This is because, as Porto (2003) stated:

It relates to the process of bidding for São Tomé's nine deep-sea oil blocs in the Joint Development Zone (JDZ), where Nigeria has 60% revenue sharing

interest. The amount that will accrue to Nigeria from the ongoing bidding is estimated by sources close to Obasanjo at \$162 million. (p. 35)

The conflict in the Sudan's Darfur region<sup>15</sup> posed challenges to the Nigeria's African foreign policy. The start of the war can be traced to the February 2003 rebellion championed by the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) demanding greater political representation in Khartoum and an end to decades of marginalization; the rebellion provoked a military response from the Khartoum-based government and *Janjaweed*.<sup>16</sup> The atrocities committed against civilians by the protagonists and the North/South war between Khartoum and the Sudan's People Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) worsened the security situation in Darfur, inducing complex emergencies. The developments saw the AU peacemaking efforts go into top gear; this was with the strong backing of Nigeria. President Obasanjo, the AU chairman, became a major force in finding peaceful solutions to the conflict. With the support of Nigeria, Idris Derby's Chad negotiated a peace agreement between Khartoum and the SPM/A on 3 September, 2003. This served as the basis for the Inter-Sudanese Internal Dialogue (ISID), hosted by Chad. The ISID led the belligerents to sign the Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement on Darfur Conflict (HCA) on 8 April 2004 and at the same time to adopt a Protocol on the Establishment of Humanitarian Assistance for Darfur. All these efforts received the support of the Nigerian government. Furthermore, Obasanjo, in his capacity as the AU chairman, was in Sudan (and in Darfur in particular) on many occasions to dialogue with the belligerents. Abuja hosted the much-publicized Abuja Peace Talks. In the area of peacekeeping, Nigeria was the main troops contributing country (TCC) to the AU-mandated African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS). AMIS was mandated to monitor and observe compliance with the HCA and other future agreements, abetting the confidence building process and providing a secure and enabling environment for the deliverance of humanitarian assistance and the return of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees to their home (Badmus, 2015).

In spite of Abuja and the international community's efforts to bring peace to Darfur, the protagonists' indifference to the peacekeeping efforts further worsened the security situation of the region. In addition to the fact that Nigeria was the leading troops contributor to AMIS and also the leading TCC to the succeeding AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), which, was deployed in 2007, Nigeria has also provided substantial financial and humanitarian assistance as part of its commitment in bringing peace to Africa (Badmus, 2015). Although the war is still ongoing, the efforts of the Obasanjo's led administration will forever be remembered. This is a clear case of Nigeria's commitment to Africa as the center-piece of its foreign policy. International interventions in Darfur have reduced the scale of killings and relatively improved the security of the region.

It is undeniable that the Obasanjo administration achieved considerable gains in his conducting of Nigeria's foreign policy during the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century (just as he did during his time as a military ruler of Nigeria in the 1970s). This position is corroborated by Ilofuan's earlier statement in the third epigraph of this paper. However, Obasanjo had his limitations, especially with respect to his approaches to foreign policy implementation. His shortcomings in foreign policy implementation have brought an avalanche of acerbic criticism against the administration. President Obasanjo is, to some extent, reputed for conducting Nigeria's external relations without following due processes. Sometimes, a number of institutions and structures that are constitutionally empowered to have inputs either directly or indirectly in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy were bypassed and, at best,



ignored. Some Foreign Affairs Ministers under Obasanjo only existed in name and played subordinate roles, for the president was his own Foreign Affairs Minister, for example. The National Assembly complained on a number of occasions, accusing Obasanjo of acting on foreign policy issues without proper consultations with the Nigerian law makers. Therefore, it is not a surprise that some Nigerians saw/see the president's conduct as being anti-democratic.

### Conclusion

This paper has examined the formulation and conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy under the Fourth Republic and how it has departed from what it used to be under military rule. The paper has established that Nigeria's foreign policy under the civilian administration of Chief Obasanjo was successful going by a number of domestic and international issues it was able to resolve, especially in Africa, namely, Africa's security management through peacemaking and peacekeeping operations, Africa's economic development through the transformation of the OAU into the AU, and the launching of NEPAD among others.

In spite of these policy achievements, the paper has also established that for this solid and articulate foreign policy of the civilian administration to be sustainable, it must, of necessity, be rooted in strong domestic structures. In this regard, the economic diplomacy of the government, especially its privatization and liberalization policies, and war against corruption and graft, among other agendas, must be pursued with more vigor. Although the succeeding Umar Yar'Adua (2007-2010) and Goodluck Jonathan's (2010-2015) governments embarked on their own economic agendas (the so-called Seven Points Agenda, and the Transformation Agenda, respectively) meant to continue the revitalization and sustainability of the Nigerian economy, it must be realized that it is only when a country has a solid economic base, together with favorable socio-cultural and stable civil-military relations within the context of democratic rule that its foreign policy can be assertive in order to achieve its interests at the global level. From all indications, this is the foreign policy thrust of the new civilian administration of President Muhammadu Buhari (May 2015- ).

At this time, Nigeria needs to re-examine its national interests and foreign policy objectives. Nigeria's foreign policy objectives must be realistic, for some of the current interests that are being pursued by the government such as the restoration of human dignity to black men and women all over the world, are at best, anachronistic and unrealizable, and should be regarded as wishful thinking. This is a grandiose goal that lacks grounding in Nigeria's economic reality. All said, Obasanjo's foreign policy record was a success story; the onus is now on President Muhammadu Buhari to continue the good work of President Obasanjo.

### Notes

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<sup>1</sup>Literature on the impacts of colonial legacies on Nigeria's foreign policy is extensive. See Akinyemi, 1989.

<sup>2</sup>Nigeria was under the military governments of General Yakubu Gowon (1966-1975) and Generals Murtala Muhammed/Olusegun Obasanjo (1975-1979). These regimes, despite the fact that they were military in nature, to some extent, ruled Nigeria in accordance with the norms of international behavior.

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<sup>3</sup>In the colonial world, African states were aligned with either of the Cold War divide, and one could easily distinguish the sphere of foreign or economic policy (Leslie & Weinstein, 1977, pp. 283-286).

<sup>4</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of Nigeria's foreign policy under military rule, see Fawole 2003.

<sup>5</sup>The murder of four regional chiefs in Ogoniland, home to Nigeria's ethnic minority Ogoni people, occurred during the height of tensions surrounding government efforts to impose a military presence in the area and resume crude oil extraction. The region's chiefs and leading activists had been criticizing the government for failing to protect the region from environmental devastation at the hands of the petroleum industry.

<sup>6</sup>Ken Saro-Wiwa, Nigerian writer, television producer, and environmental activist, was also president of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), a nonviolent movement protesting the environmental degradation of the Ogoni region's land and waters. The arrest, persecution, and subsequent execution of Saro-Wiwa (and eight other Ogoni leaders) by the Abacha regime provoked international outrage.

<sup>7</sup> On the influence of the idiosyncratic variable, see Roseneau, 1966.

<sup>8</sup> Akindele, 2003, reported that between May 1999 and Mid-August 2002, Obasanjo made 113 oversea trips, spending 340 days outside Nigeria.

<sup>9</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.nigeriaworld.com/./100404.htm> (accessed, 17 November 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> On Sierra Leone's civil war and international interventions, see Badmus and Ogunmola, 2009, Ogunmola and Badmus, 2006, Ogunmola 2013.

<sup>12</sup>The potential pullout of Nigeria's troops from Sierra Leone, as was contemplated by the Abubakar's regime, alarmed the international community, for it was thought that such a withdrawal would pose a threat to sub-regional security, prompting the international community to commit more funds and logistics to the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) (Berman & Sams, 2000, p. 126).

<sup>13</sup>Founded in 1975, The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a union of 15 West African states that was originally established to promote economic integration and "collective self-sufficiency" in the region; eventually, the objective of ECOWAS broadened in scope to include regional peacekeeping and the fostering of a collective regional security.

<sup>14</sup>The authors have done extensive work on the civil war in Côte d'Ivoire. See Badmus, 2009c, Badmus 2015a, Ogunmola, 2007. Ogunmola, 2013, and Ogunmola and Badmus, 2005.

<sup>15</sup> For background studies on Darfur conflict, see Badmus, 2008, 2011; De Waal (ed.), 2007.

<sup>16</sup> The *Janjaweed* are the Arab militias fighting in Darfur alongside the Khartoum-based regime.

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