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Leadership Idiosyncrasies and Environmental Factors as Foreign Policy Variables: An Examination of Obasanjo's Two Tenures

ADELAJA ODUTOLA ODUKOYA & ADETOLA ODUBAJO*

Abstract

It has been established that researches on foreign policy behaviour must be subjected to three interrelated levels of analysis: the state-system level, nation-state system level, and the decision-making level. The state level concentrates on the influence of external factors on the determination of foreign policy behaviour, while the nation-state level derives its logic from conditions within the domestic milieu. But in contrast to these, the decision-making level studies foreign policy behaviour by understanding the perception of individual(s) from a vantage position as the responsible figure(s) for synchronizing the end-products of the other two levels. Whereas the other two levels operate in the realm of abstract contraptions (the international system and the nation-state), the decision-making level discusses real human beings.

With the full knowledge of the importance of the decision-making level, this article uses the extent of a leader's idiosyncrasies as its point of departure. The article examines Chief Olusegun Obasanjo's two tenures as a military Head of State and a civilian President of Nigeria. The paper argues that in spite of Obasanjo's commendable performance during the 'golden era' of Nigeria's foreign policy, the more recent occurrences are indicative of the fact that Nigeria's foreign policy pursuit is determined more by issues from the external environmental milieu than a leader's idiosyncrasies.

Introduction

THIS work concentrates on a critical variable within the complex nature of Nigeria's political milieu – the nexus of political

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leadership and foreign policy dynamics. It goes without reiteration that the position of political leadership, most especially that of Commander-in-Chief, either during military dictatorship or a civilian administration, generates attention from all quarters. Thus, the different areas of policy articulation court investigation when an individual occupies the position twice, under different dispensations.

The examination of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo's performances would cover both his tenure as military Head of State between 1976 and 1979 and his current civilian Presidency, between 1999 and 2005. However, the issues would focus on his performances in the foreign policy realm. Indeed, this is a comparative endeavour against the backdrop of perceived sterling performance during his first coming, based on the "activist" orientation of the foreign policy behaviour, vis-à-vis the "globalist" bent of his second administration's foreign policy.

The article begins with the introduction, followed by a theoretical framework upon which the analysis is based. Here, the decision-making theory is expectedly the dominant approach; however, some other approaches are engaged in the study of the personality of the decision-maker. These are the nomethic, the ideographic and the phenomenal approaches. In the final analysis, the ideographic approach captures the whole essence of the intention. Finally, the body of the paper focuses on an analytical comparison of both epochs where concrete issues are discussed before arriving at instructive conclusions.

Framework of Analysis

Literature on international politics is replete with three levels of analysis as regards inter-state relations. These, according to Spanier (1987), are: the state-system, the nation-state and the decision-making levels. Whereas, the first two levels assume the state as the responsible personae for both its actions and inactions, the decision-making level is more pragmatic by confining the attitudes of any state within the powers of decision-makers, underscoring the factor that man is the motive force of nature. This thinking prompted the development of the decision-making approach to

international politics by behavioural theorists, such as Richard Snyder, H.W. Bruck and Burton Sapin. Essentially therefore, leadership is the bedrock of any civilized society, because "without leadership people cannot even constitute a state; without it there can be no well-developed or integrated technology; and without it morale is totally useless, if indeed it can exist at all" (Palmer and Perkins, 2004: 78).

The necessity to use the decision-making approach in international relations was first appreciated by Snyder et.al (1962). In the analysis, the authors submit that an understanding of the actions of states "is concerned with studying the procedure of human decision-making through a method of isolating the individual, the process machinery and the setting through which the individual makes the decisions". This much is agreed to by Frankel (1963) where the author contends that "decision-making lies at the heart of all political actions, and, therefore, it alone provides that common focus under which we can bring together the political actors, situations and processes for purpose of analysis". Snyder et.al (op.cit) further lists some basic assumptions that are relevant to the application of the decision-making approach in the understanding of policy-making, viz:

1. All political action is undertaken by concrete human beings, and that
2. if we want to comprehend the dynamics of this action, we should be prepared to view the world not from our point of view but from the perspective of the persons responsible for taking the decision.

The foregoing analysis presumes that decision-makers operate within two worlds, that which presents their own perceptions of the world and what actually obtains in the real world- 'psychological/operational milieu', that is, a dialectical relation between reality and actuality of the decision-making ecology. It must however be noted that the level of freedom enjoyed by decision-makers is greatly determined by the system of government in place.

Decision-makers in democracies do not have as much latitude as

their counterparts in authoritarian regimes. Therefore, central to the discourse on decision-makers in authoritarian regimes, is the role of the individual at the helm of affairs – that is, in most cases, the ultimate ruler. He may have his trusted lieutenants in delicate decision-making positions, but his own preferences form the basis of decisions to be taken. Perhaps, no other assertion best describes the leader's relevance to policy-making than the following; "what matters is how the policy-makers imagine the milieu to be, not how it actually is" (Sprout and Sprout, 1969: 48-49). This much is given credence by de Rivera (1968: 165-166) where the author submits; "decisions are a product both of facts such as role, power, the situation, and the knowledge, and of the fact of the individual's personality".

Taking a cue from the submission of de Rivera (ibid.), we observe that the decisions made by the Head of State in a military dictatorship are constrained by such critical factors as, the duties of the office he occupies, the power of such office, the objective situation on ground, the institutional and class interests it represents and by the knowledge available to him. All the same, his decisions are moulded by his personality. He determines the level of decisiveness and assertiveness relevant to any decision he makes on behalf of the country.

Furthermore, de Rivera (ibid.) gives direction on how we can study or measure a personality as regards his bearing on decision-making. The author presents three approaches, viz; "the *nomethic approach*, which begins with a classification of interest and imposes this interest on all persons in order to classify them; the *ideographic approach*, which begins with individuals and attempts to objectively describe their individuality; and the *phenomenal approach*, which attempts to understand individuals subjectively in terms of processes which all men have in common". Without any pretensions, the nomethic and phenomenal approaches cannot do justice to the analysis of the subject matter in this enterprise; our focal point is, therefore, the ideographic approach. This is because, it "attempts to deal with the individuality of a person by beginning with the individual, having him produce a number of responses, and then examining the pattern of these responses within the individual" (de Rivera, ibid: 181).

The nomethic approach is overly broad; as such the source of interest pursued is usually hidden under vague abstractions. Moreover, there is a conflict of distinction between individual or group interest and the national interest in the decision-making process. These overlapping interests become more ambiguous in a society given the existence of crosscutting associations, and the distorted nature of class formation in a dependent state like Nigeria. In contrast, the ideographic approach exposes the source of the decision and the exact interest being pursued. For the phenomenal approach, there are glaring difficulties in accounting for, and measuring psychological factors which motivate policy positions in foreign policy analysis. It further becomes inadequate with the existence of other relevant variables other than subjective factors that condition foreign policy direction and in fact even individual policy actors for subjective decisions.

More importantly, the ideographic approach allows the researcher the leeway to study the object without necessarily obtaining the 'self-descriptive' and 'projective' data. In essence, observational data would be suitable for this kind of analysis, more so, when one considers the fact that the approach is akin to writing a case history on the individual being studied, because, "one starts with the individual, describes his life as a series of responses, examines the pattern, and classifies" (de Rivera, ibid: 182). Finally, the ideographic approach is useful for analysis by attempting to provide the essence of our subject, "by its reflection in an objective mirror of his behaviour" (de Rivera, ibid: 183). To cap it all, the understanding of the personality of the leader enjoys paramount importance in the analysis of the decision-making process of any form of government.

Nigeria's Foreign Policy under General Olusegun Obasanjo: 1976-1979

The decision-making process is very critical to the survival of any government. Basically, the process comes in two forms; the institutionalized structure and the loose/flexible structure. For the former, the personal predilections of the Head, either a President or Prime Minister is not usually emphatically apparent because of

the existence of substantive checks and balances provided by the other arms of government. Moreover, the citizenry is equally guaranteed some form of contribution in governance. Hence, the institutionalized decision-making machineries in democracies do not readily allow for the overt display of a leader's personal preferences in vital decisions. In contrast, the latter allows for an overbearing influence of the Head if he so chooses, in policy-making activities of government; either domestic or foreign.

Essentially, one of the hallmarks of an authoritarian regime is the lack of institutionalized checks and balances on the decisions and actions of the leaders, consequent upon the arrogation of both executive and legislative powers to the Head and his trusted henchmen. As such, they are never really magnanimous enough to consider different shades of opinion outside of their 'kitchen cabinets', composed of their appointed lieutenants. It is therefore pertinent to recognize the importance of the leader in the analysis of foreign policy articulation, more especially in a military dictatorship.

The salience of the decision-maker's role in foreign policy formulation is eloquently captured in Spanier (1987: 22-47), where the author employs "the three levels of analysis for a framework for the study of international politics". While the state-system level and the nation-state level are seen as "largely abstract" units, the decision-making level is real and defines the utilities of the assumptions inherent in the other levels. For, as the author contends, "analysis on the decision-making level permits these assumptions to be checked out in specific circumstances and allows one to see what other objectives states had in mind that more accurately account for their behaviour" (Spanier, *op.cit*: 40). These objectives can be defined by the perception, value-preferences, training, morals, understanding, interests, etc., of the Head.

To say the coup that heralded the coming to power of the Mohammed/Obasanjo administration was greeted with much enthusiasm in the country is to state the obvious. The citizenry had become disenchanted with the governance technique of the Gowon regime and had been made wary by the vacillation of

government in organizing a successful transition to civil rule programme; a new administration under any guise was, therefore, most welcome. The new administration seized the opportunity and embarked upon populist domestic programmes that further endeared it to the discerning public. Among such official policies was the interest placed on a return to civil rule, and an apparent commitment to pursue it to a logical conclusion. Second, there was the public service purge which was accepted as a welcome development by the masses.

Foreign policy matters were equally given their deserved enthusiasm, and the Nigerian populace decided to give overwhelming support to a government that embraced the desire to positively project the image of the country by ostensibly defending the cause of Africa and that of the 'Blackman' the world over. Arguably, at no other time in the history of the country was the fifth principle of Nigeria's foreign policy – "Africa is the cornerstone and nerve-centre of Nigeria's foreign policy" enunciated more than in this period. In Garba's (1987: 34) words, "for the first time, Nigeria took a highly principled stand on the issue of central concern to African nations". A critical assessment of the actions of government in this era would suggest that the buoyant economy occasioned by the 'oil boom' allowed the leverage for an activist foreign policy.

Without mincing words, the issues that provided the opportunities of positively engraving this era in the minds of majority of Nigerians and allowed for deserved accolades bordered on the apartheid regime in South Africa, settler colonialism in the Southern-Africa sub-region and the emancipation of all African states from the vestiges of colonialism and neo-colonialism. The actions of government and the calibre of countries against which the actions were taken prompted the popular support domestically. These warranted such encouraging phrases as the 'golden era of Nigeria's foreign policy', 'dynamic foreign policy', 'revolutionary foreign policy', etc. This is not to say, however, that there were no dissenting voices against such views.

For instance, Ogwu (1986), while putting up a defence for the widely acclaimed lacklustre attitude of the Shagari government

towards foreign policy, argued that the dynamism accolade being credited to the Mohammed/Obasanjo era was warranted by issues on ground and the operating milieu, but not particularly the adroitness of the decision-makers. For Gambari (1989: 220), "... the more credible standard for evaluating a maturing nation's foreign policy should not be dynamism or the lack of it. What the more informed public in Nigeria could more usefully demand from successive governments are clearer definitions of the national interest and effective strategies for externally projecting it". In essence, government's action in the foreign policy realm should aim more at the protection of the national interest rather than a grandiose stance with little or no substance.

The first major test of the Mohammed/Obasanjo regime was the Angolan situation. The reported invasion of the Angolan territory by South Africa in order to support the Angola National Liberation Front (NLF) and the Union for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) coalition in the political imbroglio in the country necessitated Nigeria's jettisoning of its earlier-held, OAU-backed policy of support for a government of national unity. Thereafter, the Nigerian government threw its weight behind the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). The move was dramatic as it was shocking; for the country defied the subtle cajoling of the Ford administration and risked being left out in the 'cold' by 'brother' African countries.

However, the administration pursued its policy with remarkable vigour and vitality without minding whose ox might be gored. The government had eventually come of age and the tempo of activities to back its decision was profound. There was systematic lobbying of other African countries into Nigeria's camp and the rhythm of association with and assistance to liberation movements increased tremendously. Garba (op.cit.: 23) remarks that "once we accorded recognition ... an outright grant of twenty million dollars was made to the MPLA Government; military hardware from rifles to MiGs, supplies from clothing to composite rations, were sent in ever-increasing quantities". The Mohammed/Obasanjo administration indeed articulated a foreign policy objective and pursued it to a logical conclusion.

After the death of General Murtala Mohammed, his successor in office, General Olusegun Obasanjo never relented in the administration's efforts of pursuing its Afrocentric policy. The cadence of aggression against the apartheid regime in South Africa and those of settler colonialism in such places as Zambia and Zimbabwe was sustained. These activities can be captured from Aluko's (1986a: 93) amplified exposition. He opines, "first, special levies were raised under the South African Relief Agency for freedom fighters. Propaganda at home and abroad was stepped up for them through such organizations as National Committee Against Apartheid (NACAP). The freedom fighters such as the SWAPO, the ANC and the PAC were allowed to open offices in Lagos at the government expenses".

The author continues, "apart from this, following the Soweto rioting of 1976, the Obasanjo government went ahead to bring some of the leaders of that riot to Nigeria to form the South African Revolutionary Youth Council (SARYCO). Some of the young boys who were brought to Lagos were sent to various educational and military institutions in Nigeria". Nigeria's contribution was recognized and, as a result of the moral, diplomatic, financial and military assistance rendered by the country, Nigeria became an honorary member of the Frontline States.

It is imperative to emphasize that an analysis of the Mohammed/Obasanjo regime must maintain the incontrovertible nexus that existed prior to and after the death of General Mohammed. After the bloody, but unsuccessful coup that claimed the life of General Mohammed, the emergent Obasanjo leadership maintained the core of the members of the government and only made minimal political tinkering in order to reflect the complex character of the Nigerian socio-political environment. Moreover, the leadership of General Obasanjo displayed unalloyed commitment to the initial ideals of the Mohammed/Obasanjo administration. Perhaps more crucial to the analysis, is the role that General Obasanjo played as the second in command to General Mohammed during the latter's short-lived period as the Head-of-State, Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces.

Although Sotunmbi (1990: 368) does not reckon with Obasanjo as a strong force in the overall decision-making process of the Mohammed/Obasanjo regime, having not named him as a member of the "Committee of Five", he nevertheless submits that Obasanjo, in particular, as well as Theophilus Danjuma, Chief of Defence Staff, and M.D. Yusuf Inspector-General of Police, to a lesser extent, played significant roles in the decision to recognize the MPLA. To corroborate the foregoing, Garba (1987) confirms the role played by Obasanjo and Danjuma in the recognition process. Indeed, Garba's insinuation about Obasanjo's role in the policy towards Angola can be captured most vigorously in the following statement:

I had yet to fully understand where our government's Angola policy was being developed, but I could now begin to sense the nature of the process, orchestrated (I would later learn) by the Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, Brigadier Olusegun Obasanjo, working through the Political Division of the Cabinet Office.

In fact, most extant literature on Nigeria's foreign policy seem to have unanimously consented to referring to the epoch-making era of July 1975- October 1, 1979 as the Mohammed/Obasanjo era.

The first most important decision taken by the Obasanjo regime to restate its commitment to the continuation of dealing decisively with the perceived enemies of Africa (mostly those interacting with the apartheid regime) was the taking over of the Barclays Bank by the Nigerian government in 1978. Considering the historic relationship between Nigeria and Britain, the action was most unexpected, but showed Nigeria's unacceptability of anything pro-South Africa. According to Aluko (1986b: 279), the action was taken "on the ground that the Chairman of the Barclays Bank International, London, spoke in defence of the apartheid system". The Nigerian government's action is in spite of the fact that, in principle, the British government was committed to the dismantling of apartheid and the establishment of majority rule in Southern Africa, but had preferred a gradual and peaceful process. The next and arguably the biggest opportunity to prove the

government's anti-apartheid and anti-colonial stance to the rest of the world came on 31st July, 1979 with the announcement that the Nigerian government would from 1st August 1979 take over all the assets of the British Petroleum Company (BP) in Nigeria. Although the government claimed that it "was a reaction to the British government's permission to BP to start exporting North Sea and non-embargoed oil to South Africa", it was obvious that the decision was meant to "put pressure on the British government not to recognize the Muzorewa government or lift sanctions against the regime in Rhodesia" (Aluko, 1990: 375). Expectedly, the action generated much furore and strained Anglo-Nigerian relations to great limits, but it equally presented the Nigerian government's commitment to its self-assigned role in Africa in bold relief. The action was followed with renewed vigour from the government, with the provision of great measure of moral, diplomatic and material support to the colonized and oppressed peoples of Africa.

Aside from the highly political issues, the country became a Mecca of sort for resolving issues relating to the black race. In Akinyemi's (1979) estimate, "in 1978 alone ten important dignitaries visited Nigeria, among whom were Jimmy Carter, Helmut Schmidt, Mengistu of Ethiopia, Sekou Toure of Guinea, Manley of Jamaica, the US chief of army staff, the Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Air Force and one of the Vice-Premiers of the People's Republic of China". Besides the political, the Obasanjo administration equally paid attention to other areas of international relations.

Having been regarded as the 'Giant of Africa', with a manifest destiny to pursue on the continent, the country never relented in its self-assigned role to project and protect the image of the continent in its interaction with the outside world. In the area of bilateral economic relations, the decade of the 1970s was remarkable for the country as a result of the economic boom enjoyed during the period. The economic realm was replete with trade and investment activities, while Nigeria equally became a force to reckon with in the socio-cultural arena. The country participated in cultural exchanges and international sport meets. In fact, Nigeria hosted a lavish Second Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC 77). The country was at one time or the other, both a benefactor and

beneficiary of foreign aid and assistance. As a matter of fact, the country's assistance profile (financial, technical, humanitarian, economic and military) indicates a selfless contribution to the advancement of the human race (Akinbobola, 2001: 17-37).

For a fair assessment of the foreign policy output of the Obasanjo era, it is imperative to understand the nature of variables that could have been responsible for the foreign policy decisions. In this regard, we shall take our cue from Spanier (op.cit). Thus, the external environment, the domestic environment and the decision-makers' preferences form the fulcrum of analysis.

For the external environment, this was the Cold-War era and the competition between the two ideological divides was intense. However, states in the Southern Hemisphere (in terms of developmental calculations) had taken their destinies into their own hands and had decided in principle not to be used as theatres of the Cold War entanglements. Nigeria was one of these states and therefore had to distance itself from any form of outward romance with any of the two blocs. Without pretending to be neutral on the international scene, the country sieved issues and related to each of the blocs on the basis of benefits to it, in particular, and the African continent in general. Nigeria, being a devout member of the Non-Aligned Movement, preferred relationships devoid of ideological undertones with both sides. Therefore, the country was never ambivalent in its condemnation of interference based on ideological considerations.

Furthermore, the existence of colonialism equally stretched the patience of the Nigerian authority. As such, rather than allow for the gradual process as embraced in the First Republic, the military government preferred an immediate demolition of all colonial structures. This necessitated the 'romance' with liberation struggles in Southern Africa, a far-flung area, where the immediate interest of Nigeria did not appear to be threatened.

On the domestic terrain, there appeared to have been overwhelming popular support for the government, which derived from its commitment to hand over to a civilian regime in 1979. Of

equal relevance to the analysis in respect of domestic support was the sympathy shared by majority of the people after the assassination of Murtala Mohammed by a gang of usurpers. General Mohammed had been perceived as a "revolutionary and a saviour" of the Nigerian people. He enjoyed much deference, and thus his colleagues, ably led by General Obasanjo, were inundated with the support he would have enjoyed.

Undoubtedly, and as implied earlier in this analysis, leadership idiosyncrasies appear most relevant in the determination of the foreign policy actions of the Nigerian government during this period. Kissinger (1968: 267) alludes to this much in the following words:

Whatever one's view about the degree to which choices in international affairs are 'objectively' determined, the decisions are made by individuals who will be, above all, conscious of the seeming multiplicity of options. Their understanding of the nature of their choice depends on many factors, including their experience during the rise to eminence.

General Obasanjo's rise to the proverbial eminence is fraught with detestation for colonialism and anti-imperialist machinations. He had served with the United Nations Peace-Keeping Force in the Congo, 1960-1961 and had experienced first-hand, the destructive tendencies of foreign interference in African countries. Similarly, having played the historic role of being General Officer Commanding, Third Marine Commandos Division during the Nigerian Civil War, and incidentally leading the Division to end the war and accepting the surrender of Biafran forces in January 1970, he had practically observed the not-too-impressive role of the British in the near 'dismemberment' of Nigeria. Besides the role of the British, Fawole (2000) contends that Obasanjo equally became disenchanted with the Portuguese and South Africans as a result of their ignoble support for the Biafran cause.

Garba's (op.cit) submission aptly describes General Obasanjo:

As for Obasanjo, he had strong anti-colonial credentials. In 1974 he had written a thesis at the Royal College of

Defence Studies contrasting the paucity of British economic assistance to Nigeria with what the British were gaining from Nigeria economically. His courageous and decisive approach to asserting Nigeria's interest over foreign convenience had dramatically emerged in May 1975, when, as Federal Commissioner for Works, he forcibly took over a building occupied by the U.S. Embassy.

The author states further:

Neither Mohammed nor Obasanjo was a foreign policy neophyte. In their previous appointments as Commissioners in the Gowon government, they had been exposed to international issues". At about the same period, "as a foundation member of the Nigerian Society of International Affairs (NSIA) in the early 1970s, he had further sharpened his ideas on international affairs by attending conferences and workshops organized by the society" (Fawole, 2000: 27).

Hence, Garba concludes, "it was no surprise that such men wanted a change from Nigerian foreign policy as practised in the Gowon government, in which they participated".

During his tenure as military Head of State, General Obasanjo cut the picture of a bold and assertive personality. He traversed the global landscape with sheer confidence and gusto. He probably perceived the international system as a theatre of war, where he commanded the African assault against the interlopers from the developed world. By nature, he "comes across as an informed individual who believes very much in the validity of his own argument and is often unwilling to concede defeat" (Fawole, 2000: 26).

This is a character trait that made him lead other African states in the quest for real political emancipation, which was different from the seeming compromising stance of the 1960s and early 1970s. He appeared more like a revolutionary – displaying the virtues of calculated determination and a messiah with a mission. The mission was the freedom of 'brother' African countries; hence his government transcended the realm of rhetoric – matching words with action. He overtly sponsored agitations against imperialists' designs and thus left no nation in doubt of the avowed commitment

to the perceived noble causes he pursued. Indeed, it was a case of 'putting the money, where the mouth is'.

These actions were eloquently manifested in the way and manner that the government, at will, defied the instructions of foreign powers, notably Washington and London, on happenstances on the African continent. The Head of State "was such a master of his own policies that the two soldiers who served as his foreign ministers were reduced to emissaries" (Fawole, *ibid.*). However, aside from other factors, the lack of an institutionalized decision-making process made most of the actions possible – being a military commandist regime, the leadership idiosyncrasies as a factor had an overbearing influence on the determination of Nigeria's foreign policy articulation.

President Olusegun Obasanjo's Foreign Policy: Continuity and Change

On May 29, 1999, approximately twenty years after achieving the enviable record of being the first African military leader to voluntarily hand over power to a democratic government, General Olusegun Obasanjo (rtd), returned to government as the second Executive President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, having contested and won election for the coveted position on the platform of the People's Democratic Party (PDP).

Any attempt to understand the focus and dynamics of the foreign policy of the civilian administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo must necessarily be situated within the rubric of the historical trajectory and political economy which conditioned the democratization process under which he returned to power. This becomes pertinent, given the fact that Obasanjo in retirement once wondered what General Yakubu Gowon (rtd.), who led the nation between July 1966 and July 1975, "forgot in power", when the latter was rumoured to be interested in the nation's leadership during the truncated Third Republic.

The basic fact that underscores the return of Obasanjo to the pinnacle of power in Nigeria was the political dislocation and misalignment in the country, that is, the crisis of power. This finds

expression in the monopolization of power by the military under a northern oligarchy and intra-elite crises for power within the context of a deteriorating economy, human rights violations and the pauperization of the people. The military not only ruled the nation without popular consent, their rule evidenced the marginalization of the major constituencies of the nation. This situation was further compounded by the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential elections, an action which seriously threatened the precarious foundation of the Nigerian State.

The annulment of the June 12 presidential elections believed to have been won by Chief M.K.O. Abiola, a southwestern Nigeria Yoruba, was "the final straw that broke the camel's back". Babangida's annulment of the election that was adjudged by both local and international observers as the freest and fairest in the country's history, confirmed the belief that has gained currency in the country that the north would do everything to hang – on to power and ensure that other parts of the country are excluded from governance. This event led to the rebirth of civil society activism and popular mobilization for the termination of military rule and the institutionalization of democracy.

It was the robust struggle for democracy and justice championed by the civil society that was an outflow of this crisis of power, which led to the re-emergence of President Olusegun Obasanjo, who incidentally was one of the several victims of the power play that ensued in the context of hegemonic politics by the military in the process of hanging on to power at all cost. The nation's international reputation and goodwill built over the decades were the major victims of this political desperation and the domestic tyranny that ensued. Obasanjo thus came straight from his prison custody to assume the leadership of Nigeria for an historic second time; this time as a civilian President with executive power. Interestingly, his election was at the behest of the Northern oligarchy who believed he can "protect northern interests" under a condition of compensatory transfer of power to the south-west following the injustices of the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election.

Given the pariah status of the nation on account of the political

debauchery of both Generals Babangida and Abacha administrations, the nation's critical debt profile and economic crisis which were seriously militating against developmental efforts, and the continued marginalization of the country in the context of the unfolding globalization paradigm, foreign policy and international relations, are two important challenges that confronted the Obasanjo government at inception. While Obasanjo confronted these issues without any fundamental difference from the extant foreign policy orientation of the country since independence, fundamental compromises are also noticeable.

As Ogunsanwo (1986: 56) perceptively submits:

The principle and objectives guiding a country's foreign policy hardly change from one administration to the other – at least in so far as the basic and fundamental national interests are concerned – unless there is a revolutionary change of regime in such a way as to affect the basic definition of national interests. Even where new groups come to power, the facts of geographical propinquity, natural resources endowment, internal economic, bureaucratic, and social configuration of power, as well as the imponderables of the international environment, combine to dictate the extent to which major deviations and fundamental shifts in foreign policy are possible and how long such major shifts can be maintained. There can, of course, be drastic change in style and in orientation but, it is very difficult, without affecting drastic revolutionary changes internally, to alter the basic national interests of a country.

From the above position, it is obvious that there is a sort of continuity and change as regards a country's foreign policy posture irrespective of regime type. While changes are possible, especially in style and form, the substantive basis of a nation's foreign policy is largely immutable except under fundamental social changes, which is not the situation at hand in the Nigerian condition under focus.

Foreign policy, properly understood, is a mix of internal and external variables, with the personality of the leader as the

intervening variable in the process of foreign policy articulation, formulation and implementation. This finds concurrence in Northedge's (1968:15) position that "foreign policy is the interplay between the outside and the inside". This tallies with Frankel (ibid.) and Herman, et.al (1987) averment that the realms of foreign policy are: the domestic, external and psychological.

In discussing the domestic context of Nigeria's foreign policy under President Olusegun Obasanjo, the institutional transformation of democratic governance is highly germane, just as the serious economic crisis in which the country is engulfed. However, it must be stated that there has been a great measure of over-amplification of the implications of democratic governance on Obasanjo's foreign policy posture. The peculiar character of the democratic order in the country is being taken for granted.

First, it is generally agreed that the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, being a refurbishment of the Abacha's Constitution of 1995 which was to be operated by Abacha himself, is, to a very large extent, a highly authoritarian constitution which puts up the President as a Leviathan Monarch. In this wise, the Nigerian President is as powerful as any military Head of State in the country's history. And, given the military antecedence of Obasanjo, his self-opinionated characteristic and versatility in foreign policy, he has made maximal use of this constitutional ambiguity.

Second, the inexperience of most of the members of the National Assembly in the area of foreign policy formulation and implementation, coupled with the underdevelopment of the legislative arms of government and the refusal to adequately empower them in terms of logistics and support staff, has been seriously exploited to advantage by President Obasanjo. Furthermore, the situation has been worsened by the lack of legislative traditions to rely on, leading to the pre-eminence of the President in the foreign policy domain.

The National Assembly has consequently had a very negligible contribution to the nation's foreign policy-making beyond the fulfilment of its constitutional role in Section 12 of the 1999

Constitution which says: "No treaty between the Federal Government and any other country shall have the force of law except to the extent to which the National Assembly has enacted any such treaty into law". For instance, when the government granted some loans to Ghana, it was without the knowledge or approval of the National Assembly. Also, most of the foreign trips that have become the defining character of this regime's foreign policy rarely have members of the National Assembly in the President's entourage. The frosty relationship between the two arms of government during the first term of the administration could partly explain this trend.

On the Nigeria-Cameroon crisis over the Bakassi Peninsula, there was no official briefing of the National Assembly by the President. It took the unfavourable decision of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Nigeria for the National Assembly, through a motion by Senator Alex Kadiri demanding for the particulars of the judgment, to be involved in such serious foreign affairs issues that border on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Nigerian nation. The involvement of the National Assembly in foreign policy matters under Obasanjo's presidency belies the fact that out of the sixty-eight items in the Exclusive Legislative list, twenty-eight are concerned with external affairs.

The other legs of the domestic dimension to the foreign policy thrust are public opinion and the economy. While President Obasanjo has not deemed it necessary to mobilize public opinion in support of his foreign policy, the economic predicament of the average Nigerian, which has worsened under Obasanjo's leadership, has contributed to further reduce the usual lack of concern for foreign policy issues. The President has continued to ignore the sentiments of both the National Assembly and the Nigerian people on the political asylum granted former President Charles Taylor of Liberia in Nigeria. Beyond this, the crisis in the domestic economy has turned out to be the singular informing logic of the foreign policy of the Obasanjo presidency. This underlines the fact of the closing gaps in the traditional divides between domestic and foreign policy, especially within the context of increased globalization and its implication for borderless economies. It also speaks volumes of the

centrality of the Executive, particularly the President to foreign policy articulation and implementation.

The above finds concurrence with Fawole (2000:26) who posits:

Foreign policy is arguably the province of the head of government whose views and visions determine the direction and tenor of external relations. The personality, perceptions and orientation of the leader are important factors in the conduct of foreign policy, especially in developing societies where policy-making has not yet been routinized, where institutions of the state and civil society are not yet strong enough to bridle the impetuosity of leaders and in societies where the energies of the vast majority of the people are tied up with bread and butter issues and other mundane/ existential preoccupations.

Given the dominance and personal approach to the issue of foreign policy in Nigeria under Obasanjo's presidency, a very apt way to describe his administration's foreign policy thrust since 29th May, 1999, is foreign policy entrepreneurship, anchored on personal marketing strategy and economic diplomacy. This is to underscore the aggressive marketing of the Nigerian brand globally. This marketing is informed by the position of President Obasanjo at the 2nd Nigerian Investment Summit in London, that "personal contact is the best way to market a product, and that is Nigeria". His background as an internationally respected statesman, a member of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group, as well as his practical knowledge on foreign policy issues, global network and goodwill, informed this preference. It is equally a measure of the confidence the President has in his own salesmanship ability as against those of his ministers of foreign affairs and other supporting officials in the country's Foreign Affairs Ministry both locally and internationally.

Obasanjo's foreign policy entrepreneurship is anchored on four levels: attraction of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI); securing the forgiveness of Nigeria's debt; return of Abacha's loots; and return of the country to global reckoning. A consistent thread that links all these preoccupations is the favour and accommodation for

Nigeria within the context of a globalizing world order. This paradigmatic shift of orientation shows a part of Obasanjo which was not hitherto known. His personal drive for global reckoning which started with his failed attempt at clinching the position of United Nations Secretary-General in the mid-1980s is still a burning passion.

While Obasanjo's effort at returning Nigeria to global reckoning has succeeded, the same cannot be said of his economic diplomacy. Although he recently secured debt "forgiveness" for Nigeria, opinions are divided concerning the propriety of the deal under which an economy in crisis, with serious unemployment, underemployment, energy crisis, low capacity utilization and general backwardness, is made to pay US \$ 12 billion in one fell swoop! An explanation for this could be found in the frustration that has hitherto accompanied Obasanjo's campaign for debt forgiveness and the serious criticisms at the domestic level. Against this background, it is not impossible that the government accepted the unwholesome conditions for the debt cancellation as a face-saving device.

With good management, a purposeful and committed leadership who can galvanize the energies of the people, the US \$ 12 billion which Nigeria paid for the cancellation of her debt is enough to turn the nation around and also liquidate her debt in the not-too-distant future. It must not also be forgotten that both Obasanjo and his Western friends had to act very fast on the Nigerian debt issue against the radical posture of the House of Representatives, especially the Hon. Bugaje - led Foreign Affairs Committee, which had started calling for debt repudiation.

The efforts to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) have been a total failure. The increasing corruption within the nation's polity despite the Federal Government-led war against corruption, coupled with infrastructural decay, insecurity of lives and properties, difficulties in the enforcement of contracts and protection of property rights, high cost of doing business, and, not the least bureaucratic red-tapism, all of which have been left unaddressed, have made foreign investors wary of bringing their

funds to the country. Another angle to the paucity of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is that, within the context of the regime of "casino capitalism" promoted by globalization, investments are more in speculation of foreign currencies and stocks rather than production. In addition to this, the trio of the United States of America, Japan and the European Union are both the greatest investors and the largest recipients of FDI globally. This underscores the fact that imperialism has no friends, but interests, and explains the weakness of the economic diplomacy as a foreign policy thrust of the Obasanjo administration.

Economic diplomacy evidences the metamorphosis of Obasanjo's world outlook as reflected in the foreign policy posture of his presidency. This new orientation is an uncritical subservience to imperialism and all that it entails within the context of globalization. In this wise, Obasanjo's foreign policy has facilitated the continued dependency of Nigeria on foreign capital. As Ogwu and Olukoshi (2002: 25) rightly conclude:

It is clear that economic diplomacy is hardly meant to promote self-reliant development nor does it have room for independent, pan-Africanist, "radical" foreign policy action or economic nationalism at home, elements which featured in Nigeria's foreign policy during the oil boom years even within its brand pro-Western orientation.

As Ogwu and Olukoshi (2002:26) further argue, the real issue in economic diplomacy "is the fact that it signals the abandonment by the state of any - political or economic - activism that might be construed by the leading Western countries as obstructive of their goals." We agree with the scholars that this subservience to the imperialist dictates by the Washington consensus and leading Western nations cannot promote domestic economic and social justice. This is because, the logic of dependent development is the dynamics of engendering development at the centre and underdevelopment at the peripheral nations that are subject to it.

We are tempted to argue that the activism of Nigeria's foreign policy during the military government of Obasanjo might not be unconnected with the fact of the Cold War, which provided a

kind of shield for Nigeria's radicalism as the two superpowers were all looking for converts to their sides. Quite a lot of room still exists for an activist foreign policy thrust, especially for a country with the resources, population and international clout like Nigeria, and given the inelegant international division of labour and the inequalities it engenders between the North and the South, especially African countries.

While the dogged commitment of President Obasanjo for the return of the Abacha loot is highly commendable and has achieved remarkable success, it is not clear how much has so far been recovered and to what public use they are being put. What is certain, however, is that it has not meaningfully impacted on the condition of living of the average Nigerian.

In the same vein, we are at a loss with the logic that gives the impression that Abacha was the only Nigerian Head of State who was corrupt. Is this not vendetta in the guise of foreign policy and national interest? Especially given the fact that it was Abacha that jailed Obasanjo on spurious charges of planning a coup! Apart from Obasanjo's refusal despite public outcries to probe the case of the misappropriation of US\$12 billion Gulf Oil windfall involving General Ibrahim Babangida (rtd.); one of Obasanjo's benefactors on his way to the Presidency, discovered by Pius Okigbo, nothing has been said also by Obasanjo concerning the depletion of the nation's external reserve in less than a year of the General Abdulsalam Abubakar's leadership of the country. All these monies are working for the development of imperialist economies while Nigeria was made to pay spurious debts and suffer the pains of economic backwardness and political ineptitude.

Consistent with our earlier claim of continuity in the foreign policy postures of nations despite regime change, the Obasanjo presidency has remained faithful to an Afrocentric foreign policy position. However, Obasanjo's African concern is embedded within overriding 'globalist' tendencies. This can be seen in the fact that the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) initiative is largely dependent on external funding, just as the Economic Community of West Africa Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which

hitherto was a Nigerian initiative, lately became dependent on UN funding support. This, though, is not entirely unwelcome.

More importantly, rather than mobilize African debtor nations to use the strength of their numbers and the volume of their debt to fight for debt repudiation or cancellation, Obasanjo chose the global begging option, a situation many people believe dehumanizes and cheapens the African people. Obasanjo has fallen victim of what George (1992) describes as "Financial Low Intensity Conflict", a new kind of war better adapted to the late twentieth century than traditional forms of warfare like invasion and occupation". This has enabled the North to manipulate the political economy of African nations. Debt, as George (ibid) further notes, makes debtors timid and creditors bold. The foreign policy posture since the return of President Obasanjo to power in 1999 confirms this assertion.

The above position, however is without prejudice to the commendable achievements of Obasanjo in bringing an end to the Liberian crisis, making peace in Sierra Leone, returning Sao Tome and Principe (2003), and Guinea Bissau (2004) to democratic governance, and brokering peace in Sudan through the Darfur Peace Talks. Other commendable achievements of the Obasanjo government which cannot be ignored are: the leading role in the formation of the African Union (AU) to replace the Organization of African Unity (OAU) the declaration of 2000 as a year of Peace, Security and Solidarity in Africa, collaboration with Presidents Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, and Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal for the establishment of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), grant of political asylum to former President Charles Taylor of Liberia (at least to the extent of engendering peace in Liberia and successfully returning the country to civil rule), amongst many other African-oriented initiatives.

The worrisome thing, however, was that, rather than the domestic setting providing the impetus for Nigeria's foreign policy, it is the international setting, paradoxically, that conditions Nigeria's domestic policies. This is exemplified by the economic reform of the government, especially the National Economic Empowerment

Development Strategy (NEEDS) which is a domesticated version of the neo-liberal ideology of state regression from governance and social provisioning. The privatization of state-owned enterprises has increased the penetration of foreign capital in Nigeria, as well as deepened the nation's dependency.

The result is the increased domestic conflicts, especially in the Niger Delta, where the government has allied with foreign capital against the Nigerian people for the protection of its rents from imperialist capital. The policies of President Obasanjo which subject the Nigerian people to poverty, unemployment/underdevelopment, diseases and squalor violate the aphorism that the citizens' welfare is the end of governance", just as "a strong economic foundation and a happy and contented people provide a sound basis for effective pursuit of foreign policy" (Olusanya, 1988). Obasanjo's feeble reactions to the presence of American warships in the Bight of Benin, and the royal treatment accorded Asari Dokubo, leader of the militant Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), who was invited to Abuja for ceasefire negotiation on account of America's trepidation of happenings in the Niger Delta and the threat this posed to her strategic interests and the safety of her citizens, are further evidence of Obasanjo's deference to imperialist dictates.

Conclusion

We have situated the contextual underpinning of a nation's foreign policy formulation and implementation. We have also demonstrated how the domestic and the external variables shaped the foreign policies of the two Obasanjo administrations. Contrary to popular opinions, we have argued that there were no significant differences in the nature and essence of the two regimes under which the two Obasanjo foreign policies took place. In other words, our position is that what we have in the Fourth Republic is akin to a form of democratic authoritarianism under which the President is constitutionally very powerful and a kind of Leviathan Monarch. The institutional backwardness and inexperience of members of the National Assembly, coupled with the disempowerment of the masses, gave the President the latitude to dominate and determine the nation's foreign policy direction under the civilian dispensation

as was the case under the military interregnum of 1976-1979.

More importantly, we have raised a serious question mark as to the "radicalism" and "activism" of the first Obasanjo administration's foreign policy, given his transformation as a 'globalist' despite the fact that such posture is inimical to the development and progress of Nigeria, nay Africa. The failure to achieve domestic peace in the country despite the President's rising profile on the African continent as a man of peace might not be unconnected with inherent contradictions between the domestic political economy and foreign policy. More importantly is, the fact that Obasanjo is more of a *foreign affairs president*; hence his inability to transcend these contradictions.

We are in agreement with Asobie's (2002: 109) advocacy for a "carefully designed and methodologically implemented diplomacy of economic liberation". This cannot be achieved within the context of Obasanjo's *foreign policy entrepreneurship*, given its market orientation and dependent posture. To this end, President Obasanjo needs to pay more attention to domestic variables and be wary of his uncritical association with imperialism if the development of the country and its people, including the millions of Africans who look up to Nigeria for leadership, is to be achieved.

Within the context of the unfolding unipolar globalization order, Nigeria has not provided the historical leadership for the black race which her population, size and resource entrusted on her. Obasanjo needs to be reminded that though colonialism and apartheid may be over, the neo-colonial order to which Nigeria and other African nations are subjected is even more insidious. Nigeria, given Obasanjo's credentials, should be in the forefront for the struggle of a new international economic order favourable to the developmental needs of the underprivileged sections of the world. This is a call to champion the globalization of wealth, and not the globalization of disempowerment and poverty as is currently the case for most Third World nations. Between Obasanjo's first coming and now, there has been a fundamental ideological shift of a negative dimension. The remaining months of his presidency is far enough to correct these shortcomings.

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