NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY IN GLOBAL HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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NIGERIA’S FOREIGN POLICY IN GLOBAL HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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I was scheduled to give this lecture in April 1998 but I
could not because, I was under state detention. I am happy
that I can now fulfill this rather belated engagement. It is sixteen
years ago since I earned the chair of history in a sister University
and it is thirteen years since I was appointed professor of history
in this University. I want to commend the authorities of the
University of Lagos for reviving this age-old academic tradition
in spite of the extremely difficult time in which we all live.

The study of International relations has always been
subsumed within the study of history until very recently when,
like political science, it became a separate discipline.
Nevertheless, history has remained the foundation of a
meaningful study of this important subject whose beginning was
also historically determined. Serious study of international
relations began after the First World War. The loss of millions
of men and wholesale destruction of property led to serious
soul searching as to how to prevent future conflicts on this grand
scale. The study of politics among nations was therefore
considered fundamental in avoiding another World War. The
fact that the second World War still broke out and that since
1945 we have witnessed many proxy wars that have led to the
death of millions of people does not diminish the importance
of the study of International relations. Rather than throw up
our hands in exasperation, scholars have fine-tuned their tools
of study so as to reduce to the barest minimum the volatility
and variability of such a discipline anchored on human
behaviour. One is not saying here that the role of scholars of
international relations could be decisive in the matters of war
and peace because cynics might ask, "how much injection of
available knowledge in the field did Adolph Hitler or Joseph
Stalin factor into their foreign policies in the inter war years?"
To many of the authoritarian and totalitarian exponents of
politics of power relations in this century diplomacy was only
seen as a holding operation before countries were ready to unleash, with all its ferocity, destructive and offensive power of the state. Treaties amounted to nothing but *chiffon de papier* and indeed and in truth wars were politics by other means. Coming nearer home to what extent has the available knowledge of the imperatives of Nigeria's foreign policy influenced and affected recent operation of Nigeria's foreign policy? This kind of argument will miss the point of scholarship and search for knowledge for knowledge's sake. The utility of this kind of academic enquiry would then depend on the calibre of political leadership and the prevailing factors of international politics and domestic concern of the period. Today, as a result of experience and documentation of international norms and diplomatic practice, certain ground rules have been established which while not totally preventing outbreaks of wars, have however, reduced them and / or mitigated their serious consequences.

I have been involved in the study of Diplomatic history and international relations since 1970 when I completed my doctoral dissertation on Nigeria in the first world war, a dissertation which the Longman group later published as a book in 1979, in London. Since then I have been involved in writing and in seminars which I believe must have had an impact on the formulation and execution of our foreign policy. In 1976, I wrote a rather prescient book on our relations with Equatorial Guinea. Some of my recommendations formed the basis of our policy towards that country which I had the privilege of helping to pursue during the Babangida years. Thanks to the invitation from the federal government of Nigeria, I as an academic had the chance of translating theory into practice and I believe we discharged our duties and took care of national interest. As a former ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Germany (1991-95), I further had an opportunity of being involved in the foreign policy of this country and my experience during my mission will form the basis of a future book.
The academic discipline of history provides a serious scholar, the broadest knowledge available to mankind. A historian must necessarily be aware of whatever revolutionary advances in the arts, philosophy, medicine, engineering and the sciences that have left their impact on man and his environment. In fact, all knowledge is historical. Man logically builds on the achievements of those who have toiled in the same field in the past. Progress in all fields of human endeavour takes knowledge and experience of the past as points of departure in the constant search for truth and knowledge. The study of history is such a vast area of academic pursuit that it is humanly impossible to master the entire field. What a historian does is to specialise and to embrace a philosophy that would guide him or her in his or her studies. Historical knowledge is so fundamentally important that no society can make progress without it. One must know from where one is coming in order to know where one is going is a popular wise saying.

One of the early historians of civilization, the French man, Francois Marie Arouet Voltaire (1694-1778), in his book *The Age of Louis XIV* published in 1738 wrote that history provides

"...the comparison which a statesman or an ordinary citizen can make between the laws and customs of other countries and those of his own; this is what leads modern nations to emulate each other. The crimes and misfortunes of history cannot be too frequently pondered on, for whatever people say, it is possible to prevent both."

The same sentiment is echoed by George Santayana when he said those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

History only repeats itself if it does at all, as a result of human folly and weakness. As the Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus (C500 BC) said no two events can be absolutely similar just as one cannot jump into the same body of water in a stream twice because the universe is in constant state of flux. The positivist idea of history, which I subscribe, to claims that in
spite of the variable factors of the human element one can make predictions about the future course of events if things remain equal and firmly rooted on the knowledge of the past. It is this belief that has informed the choice of the topic of this inaugural lecture.

Knowing the past and recent development of Nigeria’s international relations, I can without arrogating to myself the special gift of prophecy forecast the dynamics of the future foreign policy of Nigeria. In any case historical periodisation is only for tidiness and scholarstic convenience.

The difference in real life between the present, the past and the future is hardly perceptible. Albert Einstein, the father of the theory of relativity, said in 1955 that the distinction between the past, the present and the future is only an illusion, however persistent. He said, “The laws of physics as we know are ‘time-symmetric,’” they run just as well backwards as forward in time. In other words, the future exists simultaneously with the past: Isaac Newton the great physicist said the future already exists and that it can be known in advance. History is, of course, not physics and I certainly would not want to reduce such a complex field as history to mathematical exactitude but even in quantum mechanics (physics) the uncertainty principle said it clearly - the more precisely one measures what, the less precisely one could measure when. The same sentiment of time past being present in time future is echoed by the poet T.S. Eliot; when he wrote, “Time present and time past are both perhaps present in time future and time future is contained in time past”.

The French philosopher Henri Bergson, who won the Nobel prize for literature in 1928 further explained the continuous evolution of historical events and the link between the past and the future when he wrote

“for our duration is not merely one instant replacing another; if it were, there would never be anything but the present - no prolonging of the past into the actual, no evolution, no concrete duration. Duration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and swells as it advances. And as the past grows
without ceasing, so there is no limit to its preservation. Memory is not a facility of putting away recollections in a drawer. ...in reality, the past is preserved by itself automatically in its entirety, probably it follows us at every instant”.

To demonstrate the fact that human experience is a historical continuum, this inaugural lecture started a few minutes ago, that is in time past, it is continuing now in time present and I will conclude it in the future. The course of human history is influenced by a confluence of physical, material and spiritual forces. The mistake Marxists made was to see historical development purely through the materialist prism.

Prediction of the future by the scientist or the historian are not totally different because these predictions may not come through because of the variability of not just human factor but even of natural phenomena. The prediction of the future by the positivist historian is surprisingly as useful as that of a natural scientist's futuristic anticipation.

The Study of International Relations in Historical Perspective

In the ancient world of the Middle East, between 1500 and 500 years before the birth of Christ, a common great civilization occurred and dominated the area from the Tigris - Euphrates (Babylon) to the Nile (Egypt) and beyond. The choice then was between empire and chaos - just as in nature one empire fell giving rise to another. The empires of Alexander, the Romans, Chinese and the Mogul empire in India operated not on the basis of international relations but on conquest. There could be no relation between civilization and barbarism. Even up to the 17th century in Europe the accepted concepts was that of a universal empire and not the coexistence of sovereign states. It was not until the consolidation of the French, English and Spanish national states in opposition to the universal Holy Roman Empire that the idea of the proper mode of relations between sovereign states should be began to evolve.

Two philosophers, Jean Bodin (C1530-1596) and Hugo Grotius (Huig Van Gruit) (1583-1645) were the first two people
to properly articulate the underlying philosophy that should guide the relations among nations. This is not to forget that before them Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) had something profound to say about interstate relations even though tangentially. This Italian diplomat and writer, the son of a prosperous Florentine lawyer, had in one of his books *Il Principe* written in 1513 but published in 1532 said that a prince even in his foreign relations need not be bound by the covenants entered to solemnly by him. He was also not bound by promises made as long as he concentrate on the end in view since the end would justify whatever means he adopted for political and territorial aggrandisement of his state. Machiavelli is not usually known for his contribution to the evolution of politics among nations but his amoral ideas have no doubt influenced politicians since the 15th century.

Jean Bodin was a lawyer and an attorney to King Henry III of France. Writing against the background of Machiavellian philosophy, he insisted that the sovereign has an obligation to keep faith in treaties and alliances and should not for political expediency repudiate treaties solemnly entered into if the international system were not to dissolve into anarchy. This identified need for restraining absolute sovereign in their international dealings influenced Hugo Grotius, fifty years later, to carry forward the philosophy of Jean Bodin. Hugo Grotius was an international jurist, born in the Netherlands and practised law in the Hague and held at various times diplomatic positions on behalf of the French and Dutch governments. He was finally appointed ambassador to France by the Swedish government. In his book *De Jure belli et pacis* (1625) he advocated that sovereign states should coexist in amity and peace with one another through the restraints of international law and existing norms that govern relations among states. His importance in the history of jurisprudence rests not on constitutional law but upon his conception of a law regulating the relations between sovereign states.

The practical urgency of the problem in the 17th century laid in the chaos associated with the rejection of the universalism
of the Roman Empire and the Catholic Church and the wars of
religion which followed the counter reformation. The wars of
religion brought to international relations the intrinsic bitterness
of religious hatred and afforded the colour of good conscience
to the most barefaced schemes of dynastic aggrandisement.

Coupled with this was the economic imperative which led
the western European nations along the road of expansion,
colonisation, commercial aggrandisement and the exploitation
of newly discovered territories. Hugo Grotius claimed there was
an immutable law of nature which governed relations between
sovereign and subject and one government and the other. This
law of nature was the fundamental basis of the civil law of every
nation and this civil law was reflected in the laws binding every
nation. The originality of this classical idea of natural law which
had been discussed by Plato (C427-347BC), Aristotle (384-
322BC), the stoics and Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43BC), was
that Grotius believed that the same intrinsic principles are
fundamental to the behaviour of states in their relations with
one and the other. One of the most significant contributions of
Hugo Grotius was his elucidation of the concept of extra
territoriality, otherwise known as diplomatic immunity which
was originated by the French jurist Pierre Ayraut (1536-1601).
This concept was further developed by Samuel von Pufendorf
(1632-1694), and by the 18th century the idea of diplomatic
immunity had taken firm root and this concept of immunity
was formally consolidated by the Vienna Convention of 1961.
The idea that what binds human beings together on an individual
basis can be transposed to relations between nations can be
seen also in David Hume’s (1711-1776) *A Treatise of Human
Nature* when he wrote, describing the basis of human relations
and collaboration in founding civilized societies.

“I observe, that it will be, for my interest to leave another
in the possession of his goods provided he will act in
the same manner with regard to me. He is sensible of
a like interest in the regulation of his conduct. When
this common sense of interest is mutually expressed,
and is known to both, it produces a suitable resolution
and behaviour. And this may properly enough be called a convention or agreement betwixt us, though without the interposition of a promise since the actions of each of us have a reference to those of the other, and are performed upon the supposition that something is to be performed by the other part... repeated experiences of the inconveniences of transgressing... assures us still more that the sense of interest has become common to all our fellows, and gives us a confidence of the future regularity of their conduct: and it is only on the expectation of this that our moderation and abstinence are founded."

It is this logic of rule, governing not only individual behaviour but state behaviour that underpins the working of international relations. The evolution of the modern concept of international politics could be said to have begun in 1648 with the end of the thirty years war which was concluded by the Treaty of Westphalia. In spite of this recognition of sovereignty of states in the European system, it did not stop the outbreak of wars. A philosopher such as Geog Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) who was to rise to the prestigious position of professor of philosophy at the University of Berlin argued in one of his books the Philosophy of Right that in the march of human history, dialectical clashes between nations advanced the course of human civilization. Nationalists, particularly in the divided German and Italian states quickly embraced this new philosophy which saw nothing wrong in wars, especially those arising from the quest for national Risorgimento. Coinciding with the rise of Hegelianism was the unification of Germany and Italy, a development that was to radically revolutionise international relations.

Since the emergence of nation states like France and England as major players in the game of international politics there has been a move towards two trends in international relations. The first trend was the idea that a State's policy should be dominated by what it considers its national interest. It does not really matter whether this national interest is maintained by
diplomacy, deception, duplicity or war. This concept of *raison d'état* dominated the thinking and action of Armand Jean du Plessis, Cardinal de Richelieu (1585-1642). He was chief minister of France from 1624 to 1642. Being a Prince of the Church one would have expected that he would champion the cause of the Holy Roman Empire and the Universal Catholic church. Richelieu came into office in 1624 when the Habsburg Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II was attempting to revive Catholic universality, stamp out Protestantism and establish imperial control over the princes of, particularly the German speaking states and statelets of central Europe. What did Richelieu do? Under him, *raison d'état* replaced the medieval concept of universal moral values as the operating principles of French policy. By the time of the thirty years war (1618-1648) each of the principal powers of Europe namely Denmark, Sweden and France reduced Central Europe into human waste and by the time the war ended the German population of Central Europe was reduced by a third.

During the course of this struggle Richelieu was able to expand the territories of France eastwards to encompass what later became the disputed provinces of Lorraine and Alsace. Few statesmen can claim a greater impact on history than this man. Richelieu was the father of the modern state system. Absolute devotion to the promotion of a state’s national interest, through the example of what Richelieu accomplished for France became the dominant theory and practice of international relations. The success of this policy of *raison d'état* elicited another trend of balance of power politics in order to ensure that France did not impose an absolute hegemony on Europe. These two ideas, which started as facts of life and later as a system of international relations were to dominate the international system for the next one hundred years.

Even when Napoleon upset the working of the balance of power during his conquests in Europe he was eventually brought down by a coalition of forces in which Great Britain played a dominant role. This again introduced another theme into European politics in which even though separated from
Europe by the English Channel, Britain’s national interest moved her to intervene in Continental European politics to ensure that no one single country dominated the affairs of Europe. After the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte the peace of Europe was maintained through the contrivance of balance of power politics and Europe acting in concert to maintain peace and to ensure legitimacy of European regimes and institutions.

The architect of this policy of Concert of Europe was the cosmopolitan Austrian Chancellor Prince Clemens Wenzel Lothar Metternich (1773 - 1859) who was committed to maintaining the status quo in Europe and stamping out the spirit of nationalism which was antithetical to the interest of the ramshackle Austro-Hungarian Empire of several nationalities. This policy worked hand in hand with the traditional policy of national interest. The British foreign secretary and later prime minister, Henry John Temple, Third Viscount Palmerston (1784 - 1865) articulated this policy when on becoming foreign secretary in 1830, a position which he was to hold for years until becoming prime minister himself, he said,

“When people ask me... for what is called a policy, the only answer is that we mean to do what may seem to be best upon each occasion as it arises, making the interests of our country one’s guiding principle.”

“We have no eternal allies and no permanent enemies,” said Palmerston, “Our interests are eternal and those interests it is our duty to follow.”

The policy of raison d’état coupled with the policy of concert of Europe was built around a shifting coalescence of interests of Britain and Austria. For almost half a century this policy worked until the wars of German unification and Italian Risorgimento introduced the potent force of nationalism, which had remained dormant since the French revolution. The emergence of Count Camillo Benso di Cavour (1810 - 1861) and Prince Otto Edvard Leopold Von Bismarck (1815 - 1898) led to the modification of an old idea of national interest. This modification came in the form of a policy of realpolitik in international affairs.
By this is meant accepting the world as one finds it and making the best use of the situation. The ideal world is utopian and can only be found in the realm of ideas, but the political world is dominated by struggle and national interest. The aim of nations was acceptably the avoidance of wars and the preservation of peace, preferably through diplomacy, but when all other options failed, war in the words of Karl Von Clausewitz (1780 - 1831) was politics by other means. This idea of realpolitik became the dominant idea of international relations until the eve of the first world war.

This concept was not confined to Europe, as the earlier ideas were. It began to influence even American and Japanese politics. Theodore Roosevelt (1858 - 1919) who became the 26th president of the United States in 1901 and remained in office until 1909 was closer to European practitioners of the politics of realpolitik than any American politician of his age. He was as much an imperialist as Robert Arthur Talbot Gascoigne Cecil, 3rd Marquess of Salisbury (1830 - 1903) who with Bismarck and Jules Francois Camille Ferry (1832 - 1903) were responsible for the European partition of Africa and South East Asia as well as the intervention in China to carve out spheres of influence.

Theodore Roosevelt not only fought against the Spanish government in Cuba before becoming president and in fact rode into the White House as a war hero. He in fact, parroting Bismarck’s comment, said,

“If I must choose between a policy of blood and iron and one of milk and water.... I am for the policy of blood and iron. It is better not only for the nation but in the long run for the world”.

American diplomacy had always been characterised by an idealism based on isolationism and non-intervention in the politics of Europe for fear of European entanglements. This policy had been an article of faith since the presidency of James Monroe (1758 - 1831), the fifth president of the United States. Theodore Roosevelt brought into American foreign policy the tradition of realism which would continue to struggle with the
The outcome of the politics of balance of power and realpolitik was the first world war which for the first time involved practically the whole world in what began essentially as a European conflict but which eventually ended as a world cataclysm and conflict. In ending the war, the traditional American idealism was brought into play when president Thomas Woodrow Wilson (1856 - 1924), 28th president of the United States (1913 - 1921), enunciated the famous Fourteen point programme. Chief among these programmes were the ideas of open covenants openly entered into, self-determination for all peoples and the idea of international government as seen in the League of Nations. American idealism was supported by Soviet socialism since the collapse of Tsarist Russia in 1917. In this way, for purely ideological reasons, the principle of self-determination enunciated by President Woodrow Wilson was supported by Soviet Russia as a way of removing the cause of wars which socialists generally saw as the struggle for market and raw materials among the industrialized countries of Europe.

There was a campaign against previous diplomatic practice characterized by secret treaties that eventually led to the first world war.

Apart from the idealism of President Wilson for ‘open covenants’ and the ideological opposition to secret deals by Soviet Russia, there arose in England particularly within the labour party a “Committee for democratic control” of foreign policy. But the tradition of secrecy surrounding diplomacy was so strong that things continued as before until the greater cataclysm of the second world war of 1939 - 1945. These revolutionary ideas had no chance of surviving in a world still dominated by Europeans who were married to their age-old ideas of territorial conquests, and aggrandisements, reparations and politics of national interests. The idealism of Woodrow Wilson was stopped in its track by the politics of bitterness and revenge of the French Statesman George Benjamin Clemenceau.
(1841 - 1929) and the traditional British politics of maintaining a balance of power in Europe as seen in the Versailles peace settlement of 1919, of which the British Prime minister David Lloyd George (1863 - 1945) was one of the architects. International relations was dominated by the attempts by the post world war government of Italy and Germany to undo what was regarded as a primitive diktat imposed on the vanquished nations by the victorious powers at Versailles in 1919. The new world order which Woodrow Wilson had attempted to build never really took off because of the territorial avarice of France and Great Britain and the unchanging nature of international politics. Professor A.J.P. Taylor in his brilliant book, The Origins of the Second World War, directly linked the rise of Adolph Hitler (1889 - 1945) to the short-sightedness of the architects of the Versailles peace settlement.

In spite of America's traditional commitment to a policy of isolation, she was forced into the second world war when imperial Japan attacked the American pacific fleet at Pearl Harbour in Hawaii in 1941. Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882 - 1945), the 32nd president of the United States, brought the weight, resources and Wilsonian idealism of America against the Axis powers of Hitler's Germany, Hirohito (1901 - 1989) and Hideki Tojo's (1884 - 1948) Japan and Benito Mussolini's (1883 - 1945) Italy. The collapse of the axis powers became only a matter of time when one realises that the linchpin, at least in Europe, of the Axis powers. Germany was at the same time engaged in a life or death struggle with Soviet Russia under Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin (1879 - 1953). Eventually Germany was brought to her knees and Adolph Hitler committed suicide in 1945 rather than be captured by Russian troops. The Japanese surrendered to General Douglas MacArthur (1880 - 1964) later in the year after America exploded the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki following the successful Manhattan project led by James Robert Oppenheimer (1904 - 1967) which resulted in building the first atomic bombs.

The introduction of this weapon of mass destruction changed international relations for all time. Politics among
nations was now dominated by serious attempt at avoidance of wars between the major powers. Although, as much as America struggled to uphold her policy of collective security through the new institution of the United Nations, traditional politics of national interests and territorial aggrandisement dominated the politics of the Soviet Union which combined traditional Tsarist policy of pan-slavisn with the politics of balance of power. America later succumbed to the politics of balance of power when it formed, in the face of Soviet constant expansion in Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to serve as a deterrence against Russia in 1948. Russia was of course driven by her national interests. Having suffered about 20 million casualties during the second world war and suffered another 20 million because of starvation and forceful collectivisation of agricultural production, she could hardly afford the idealism of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The death of Roosevelt in 1945 and the ascension to power by Harry S. Truman (1884 - 1972), 33rd president of the United States (1945 - 1953), brought more realism into American foreign policy and set in motion the so-called Truman doctrine of the policy of containment of communism, through regional military pacts and alliances in Europe, the Middle East, (Baghdad Pact) and Asia (SEATO), in which the United States and the Western alliance were determined to oppose communism, where Western interests were threatened.

The division of the world into two rival camps was made permanent by the victory of the communists in China in 1949 under Chairman Mao Ze-dong (1893 - 1976), the same year in which the Soviet Union acquired the atomic bomb. The splitting of the atom and the development of Hydrogen bombs by Russia restored the balance of power between the United States and the USSR. It was however not until 1955 that the Soviet Union developed the strategic bomber force that had the capacity to deliver nuclear bombs on American cities. From this period began the concept of balance of terror or Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) a scenario in which in the event of nuclear war there would be neither a victor nor a vanquished. J.F.
Kennedy (1917 - 1963), 35th President of the United States said in the case of that eventuality, “The living would envy the dead”. The explosion of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki shook the world to its very foundation and finally changed the way mankind previously used war as one of the options of state policy. The total destruction brought by nuclear weapons made Albert Einstein (1879 - 1995) to say that he did not know what weapons would be used in the third world war, but he was sure that sticks and stones would be used in the Fourth World war. This is to say the third world war of thermonuclear exchanges would so obliterate civilization that man would go back to the stone age. This certain suicide by humanity has never dissuaded the Russian and the Americans from contemplating the use of theatre nuclear weapons, the so-called neutron bombs that would kill man without destroying property. It is nevertheless quite clear that if and when mankind again passes the threshold of military use of nuclear weapons that would open a pandora box and would in the words of Winston Churchill (1874 - 1965) constitute the beginning of the end if not the end of the beginning.

This thought of Armageddon has remained a factor of deterrence since the beginning of the cold war and up till now. The awesomeness of the destructive force of nuclear weapons has led to the various international disarmament conventions, treaties and protocols and to the permanent meeting of the U.N. disarmament conference in Geneva for almost four decades. This is an institution which has taken on a character of its own and to which all nations including our own accredit ambassadors and diplomats. In short, an uneasy *modus vivendi* was established in the way each of the super powers related to one another.

It was in this environment of a cold war and bipolarity in world affairs that the process of decolonisation gathered momentum. America traditionally had been opposed to colonialism, with the exception of the aberrant behaviour of the conquest of Spanish territories in Cuba and the Philippines in the 1890s. America’s anti-colonialism has been demonstrated
since their intervention on the world stage from the time of James Monroe in the 1820s through the time of Woodrow Wilson to the time of F.D. Roosevelt. Their opposition to Franco-British intervention in the Suez canal in 1956, during the presidency of the 34th president of United States, Dwight David Eisenhower (1890 - 1969), was in tune with their opposition to propping up the old Empires of Britain and France. Throughout the Second World war American policy makers had left the British in no doubt that they would strenuously work for the dismantling of the old Empires. The existence of colonial empires, the Americans reasoned, contributed to the outbreak of wars. America also wanted to occupy the high moral ground in their titanic struggle with the Soviet Union. Both the United States and, ironically their foe, the Soviet Union were committed to a policy of decolonisation for different reasons. America was driven by anti-colonial idealism fundamental to the origin and evolution of the United States itself but for Soviet Russia, right from its foundation by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870 - 1924) anti-imperialism was an article of faith because Lenin believed that all wars were imperialistic wars fought for carving out the world into markets as a result of not knowing what to do with surplus production and primitive accumulation of capital in the highly industrialized countries. Whatever may be the reasons for support of the liquidation of the European Empires in Asia and Africa, the nationalist leaders of these areas exploited the situation to their countries' advantage in the traditional European fashion of power politics and national interest.

By 1947, beginning in India and ending in the 1970s the Europeans lost their colonial empires in Africa and Asia and by 1990 the remnant of colonial empires in Africa notably Namibia was freed. The biggest prize, South Africa, has been freed from institutionalized policy of racial discrimination and apartheid. She has since joined the civilized world under a non-racial majoritarian democratic regime. This happy ending could never have been achieved but for the determined effort and struggle of independent African countries joined by other progressive forces in the world notably in the Socialist countries and the
Scandinavia. The United States policy oscillated between support for justice, benign neglect and what in the Reagan years was called constructive engagement which was a euphemism for support of racist oppression in South Africa.

One can look at events during this period from reactive and active perspectives. The African saying that when two elephants fight it is the grass that suffers guided the actions of many Afro-Asian and Latin American countries at this time. The point was that no developing country wanted to be caught in the middle of the struggle for hegemony between the capitalist West and the Communist East. This was why many countries in this group embraced the policy of non-alignment. This was a policy based on self-interest. It was, of course, not a policy of neutrality in the traditional sense of steering clear at all times of political engagement.

Non-alignment meant that decision of which side to take would be based ideally on sovereign assessment and high moral principles and not on political expediency or ideological preference. This was the Theory. But in practice many of the non-aligned countries took pro-soviet positions in international politics. There were reasons for this. The stridently anti-colonial propaganda of the socialist countries was very alluring and attractive. In practical terms, the socialist countries demonstrated their support by supplying weapons and instructors for the various liberation movements particularly in Southern Africa. The socialist countries were also more prepared to offer financial and technical aid to independent African countries. The apparently great industrial strides made by the socialist countries, particularly the Soviet Union through the five-year development plan easily recommended itself to the African countries. Capitalist mode of development with emphasis on individual capital was regarded as inappropriate since indigenous individual capitalists were few and far between and the foreign capitalists were only interested in extractive industries rather than investing in consumer oriented labour intensive industries. Because the problem of youth unemployment was one of the
greatest problems that the newly independent countries had to face, they found the ‘full employment’, characteristic of the commandist and centrally planned economies attractive. The example of India’s embrace of centralized planning based on five year programme was copied by most African countries during their first decades of independence.

Furthermore, the will to be different from the brutal collectivisation of agriculture in the Soviet Union and the free-for-all land alienation by a few in western countries underpinned the economic basis of non-alignment. Non-alignment was a policy based on high moral ground. Its founders Jawaharlal Nehru (1889 - 1964) of India, Ahmed Sukarno (1901 - 1970) of Indonesia, Marshall Josip bros Tito (1892 - 1980) of Yugoslavia, Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918 - 1970) of Egypt, Kwame Nkrumah (1909 - 1972) of Ghana, cleverly assessed the international situation and decided that it would be unwise of them to allow their countries to get sucked into the life and death struggle for mastery of the world. Non-alignment gave these leaders the feeling of some relevance. Their friendship and support were courted and sought by the leaders of the West and the East.

In reality all the great events of the 20th century have been resolved without the input of the non-aligned nations. We can recall, for example, the Berlin blockade of 1948, the Hungarian rebellion of 1956, the Berlin air lift of 1961 and, most importantly, the Cuban crisis of 1962. For the first time, since the advent of nuclear weapons, the United States and Soviet Russia faced each other over the America’s blockade of Cuba over Soviet Russia’s missiles in Cuba. The world stood at standstill until Soviet Russia’s premier Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev (1894 - 1971) blinked, when he realised his policy of adventurism and brinkmanship, left the young president John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1917 - 1963) no alternative than to risk nuclear war. Other events in which the non-aligned nations were marginal, include the spring revolution of Czechoslovakia of 1968, the resolution of the Vietnam war, the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, the coming down of the Berlin
wall, the collapse of communism in Russia itself, the
disintegration of Yugoslavia, and the collapse of the apartheid
regime in South Africa. In terms of *Realpolitik* the non-aligned
movement has been rather tangential in the politics of the
modern world.

**NIGERIA'S PLACE IN THE SUN**

Right from independence in 1960, Nigeria's foreign policy
has been determined by several factors. Being the most
populous black country in the world compelled her to shoulder
wittingly or unwittingly the leadership of the black world. This
led to Nigeria's feeling that she had a responsibility far beyond
her borders. Some might say beyond her means. Even though
Nigeria moved in a measured pace, there was no doubt that
the political leadership of the first Republic realised that the
country had a legitimate claim to leadership and also that black
people in Africa and the diaspora looked up to Nigeria.
Although, in practice, the Republic of Ghana under Dr Kwame
Nkrumah (1909 - 1972) painted Nigeria as an inactive giant
with feet of clay, yet Nigeria was not found wanting when
defending the interests of Africans still under colonial domination
or in confronting France when that country was determined to
continue with the deadly injurious policy of testing nuclear
bombs in the Sahara against the wishes of African peoples.

The internal political dynamics also contributed to the
manner in which Nigeria behaved in the foreign arena. As a
federation of contending political persuasions, consensual
position on foreign policy was the rule rather than the exception.
With the exception of the policy towards Israel which reflected
the religious dichotomy between the North and the South, there
was hardly any area of foreign policy in which the political parties
differed.

The three political parties, the Northern Peoples Congress
(NPC). The Action Group (AG), the National Council of
Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) were all pro-western in their
orientation and capitalist in their economic thinking and action.
It was not until disillusionment set in, shortly after independence,
that the opposition party the Action Group began to manifest radical socialist and pro-soviet policies.

The foreign policy of any country at any given time is intricately related to its domestic politics. In fact one cannot really separate foreign and domestic politics. It therefore follows that a country's national power has direct relevance to its foreign policy. In Nigeria since independence, one can itemise some elements of our national power. The country is big and relatively populous containing about a quarter of Africa's population south of the Sahara. This population although backward because of the level of illiteracy constituted a big market for foreign investment. The size of the country and our population have given us a strategic advantage in the sense that we cannot be easily overrun. The location in the middle Atlantic astride major trade route means that friendship with Nigeria was desirable. Nigeria's agricultural potential was great and it had strategic minerals such as coal, iron, columbite, petroleum, uranium and gas. The educated middle class on which a democratic regime could be built was considerably sizeable. The only drawbacks were lack of political direction and cohesion. The country also had a fundamental flaw since it suffered from fissiparous ethnic pulls in different directions. This inherent weakness was later to manifest in the fratricidal civil war between 1967 and 1970. There have been various attempts made through constitutional device to tackle the ethnic fission apparent in the country but there has been more acting than action with the result that the situation has continued to deteriorate thus casting a shadow on the future of the country itself.

Perhaps at no other time was this uncertain future more glaring than at the time of the Nigerian civil war. The war called into question the debate on Nigerian national interest. This question of *raison d'etat* obviously centred first of all on maintaining national unity and taking all appropriate measures to prevent the territorial disintegration of Nigeria. This was the ultimate national interest. But national interest cannot be taken in isolation. The need for the national interest also needed to
be identified. This, of course, should be the happiness and prosperity of Nigerians people. This can only be assured through correct political and economic policies. Nigeria is blessed with tremendous natural and human resources which should be harnessed for economic development and progress. If this was not being done one had to look into the political framework or policies militating against this. Identified as possible factors against the national interest were/are the rampant corruption and the ethnic political aggrandisement in which certain groups against national interest have seized power and are manipulating it for group interest as opposed to national interest. In the battle between group and national interest, those in power seemed to be prepared to sacrifice the national interest for private and group interest. Events which led to the civil war graphically illustrated this point and provided international intervention to complicate the already serious national problems.

During the civil war the Soviet Union supported the Federal government right from the onset of the conflict. Russia’s ally Egypt for reasons arising from being an Islamic country and a surrogate of the Soviet Union sent pilots to fly Soviet supplied MIG fighters on the Federal side. With Soviet Russia on the side of Nigeria the United States under President Richard Milhous Nixon (1913-1994), 37th president of the United States, reacted in cold war reflex action by opposing the Federal side covertly.

But for British pressure the cold war would have drawn America openly into the conflict. For their own strategic reasons South Africa, Rhodesia, Portugal, France, Israel were on the side of the Biafran rebellion. France had always seen Nigeria as a competitor for influence in West Africa. France also did not forget the diplomatic slight of Nigeria’s expulsion of her Ambassador over the French testing of atomic bombs in the Sahara. General Charles Andre Joseph Maria de Gaulle (1890-1970), the President of the French Republic, for his own curious reasons had a phobia for the English speaking world and was not averse to cutting down to size the influence of the
Anglophone Commonwealth. South Africa obviously saw an opportunity to harm Nigeria, which since 1960 had championed the Anti-apartheid cause in the United Nations and in Africa. Rhodesia and Portugal were fighting for their political lives because removing Nigeria from the liberation movements supporters would ease the tension in their territories. Harold Wilson (1916-1994) the British prime minister, in spite of anti-Nigerian public opinion in England, was able to bring the British government behind Nigeria. These were distant countries, although their long technological arm could reach Nigeria at this time, but Nigeria was also concerned about the action of her neighbours, namely Equatorial Guinea in the South, Benin in the West, Niger in the North, Chad in the North East and the Cameroons in the East. Niger, Chad and the Cameroons were the only ones that were steadfast in their support for Nigeria. This was because Chad and Niger were economically dependent on Nigeria and were also culturally related to Nigeria while the political leadership in the Cameroons shared a community of interest with the political leadership in Nigeria. The French were able to manipulate Benin and Equatorial Guinea ostensibly for humanitarian reasons, but apparently in logistic and offensive support for Biafra.

Outside Nigeria’s immediate neighbourhood, the Ivory Coast, Zambia, Tanzania and the historic republic of Haiti recognised the independence of Biafra. The case of Ivory Coast is significant. It is the country that is totally in the French orbit and which up till today has never deferred to Nigeria’s interest in international affairs: In fact the Ivory Coast has always found it convenient to be antagonistic to every Nigerian move in this region. It is obvious to one that the hand may be that of Esau but the voice is that of Jacob. Zambia and Tanzania were no doubt carried away with sympathy for the underdog and respect for Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe (1904-1996), the former Nigerian President who was then roving envoy for Biafra.

The civil war was a period of baptism of sorts for Nigeria. The country moved swiftly from over dependence on the West to a balanced relationship with the Soviet Union and the Eastern
block. It is significant that the end of the war saw Soviet Russia’s involvement in the economy of Nigeria particularly in the building of the never ending Ajaokuta Steel complex. The relative prosperity which marked the end of the civil war in Nigeria owing largely to the high sale price of crude petroleum provided the resources with which Nigeria embarked upon forward looking even if adventurous foreign policy. Nigeria instigated the founding of ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) in the hope of supplanting or reducing the influence of French inspired economic union of French West African states. Nigeria also began to aggressively support the various liberation movements in southern Africa and in Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde Island. Nigeria also started to show interest in the black diaspora especially in the Caribbean.

General Yakubu Gowon, the Head of State, in fact, visited the Caribbean countries as the second African leader after Emperor Haile Selasie (1891-1975) of Ethiopia to ever visit the area. In all these, we can see Nigeria beginning to identify her national interest. Integration of West Africa as a strong economic union would not only provide market for Nigerian goods, it would also reduce French influence in the region. Support for the liberation movements made sense, since the derogation of the humanity of any African or black man on the account of his or her colour reduced the humanity of the Nigerian. This has been a recurring theme in Nigeria’s foreign policy since 1960 when Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa addressed the United Nations General Assembly to declare that Nigeria would not be uninterested in the fate of all black men everywhere.

Nigeria can justifiably be proud of her achievement in the area of decolonisation in Africa and the liquidation of the policy of apartheid. Nigerian leaders must always be conscious of their responsibility not only to Nigerians but to the wider black world. We need to make a success of this republic so that blacks all over the world can have a shining example of what is possible and positive. The current situation of a state of political flux and economic underdevelopment is not something attractive
to black people who are looking for a model country to provide them a psychological boost in a racially divided world.

Nigeria’s foreign policy has over the years demonstrated more continuity than change. We have, however, been able to identify certain actions with certain regimes since 1960. This is, of course, natural because foreign policy do certainly reflect the personality of individual leaders. In the case of Nigeria, Sir Abubakar’s regime was characterised by caution and conservatism but not inaction. His government was respected as a senior member of the Commonwealth and whenever Nigeria spoke it was listened to with respect. Sir Abubakar’s opposition to apartheid was a contributory factor to the expulsion of South Africa from the Commonwealth in 1961. He single-handedly defended Africa against French atomic explosion in the Sahara in the 1960s. His government was also involved in founding the organisation of African Unity which in spite of its limited and conservative agenda provided a forum for Africa to act in concert in defending its peoples interest. The Nigerian government of the first republic convened the first Commonwealth Heads of governments conference outside London in Lagos in December 1965 to deal with the Ian Smith’s unilateral declaration of Independence (U.D.I.) In Rhodesia. Perhaps it was the preoccupation with this international problem that made the government to neglect its internal security problems to its own undoing. Shortly after the successful conference, the government was overthrown in a coup d’etat by soldiers.

The success of this regime in its foreign policy is not generally known but with the privilege of hindsight we can now see that the country made considerable progress in achieving its carefully designed goals.

Ability to keep Nigeria together during the Gowon years needed the diplomatic ingenuity of foreign policy managers at the time. We have already highlighted the policy of economic integration, aggressive decolonisation, identification of the black diaspora as an arena of our foreign policy as being largely due to the Gowon regime. The Murtala Mohammed / Olusegun
Obasanjo regime carried forward the policy of decolonisation by its support for the M.P.L.A. regime in Angola and the provision of arms and material for intensification of the wars of liberation in Southern Africa. The use of Nigeria’s economic power as a leverage against British interests in the case of nationalisation by Obasanjo of British Petroleum over the disagreement on Rhodesia for the first time showed that Nigeria had come of age. There is no doubt that the threat of further action in the economic area convinced the British government that Africa was no longer to be taken for granted. This facilitated the coming to power of the blacks in Zimbabwe. Since that time Nigeria’s voice has been listened to carefully in the process of decolonisation and removal of apartheid in South Africa. In and out of office General Obasanjo, whether as head of state of Nigeria, or member of the Commonwealth’s eminent persons group, played a role in Namibia’s independence and in the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa.

Nigeria under President Shehu Shagari was pre-occupied with consolidation of democracy at home, but did not balk in sending Nigeria’s troops as part of O.A.U. peacekeeping force to Chad. This disastrous intervention does not vitiate the fact that Nigeria demonstrated farsightedness and ability to project power outside its immediate neighbourhood and national territory. This was to be carried to its logical conclusion when General Ibrahim Babangida intervened in the civil war in Liberia. This has been a costly intervention in manpower and money. The winding down of this operation by the Abacha regime and its recent intervention in Sierra Leone raise fundamental questions of what Nigeria’s national interests in the West African region are. Do we see the region in the way America sees the Americas or are we trying to keep chaos as far away from our borders as possible? Whatever we are doing, we must ensure that our home front does not disintegrate while we are pursuing a policy of glory and Pax Nigeriana abroad.

In his book *The End of History and the Last Man*, Francis Fukuyama has in detail argued that no country can develop without embracing free market economy and also political
liberalism. Essential to this is democracy. In a World dominated by the victory of America after the protracted cold war, it has become obvious that the Western Way of market determined economic management as against the old fashioned dirigiste centralised economic planning is the way out of our economic backwardness. Economic development must also be anchored on democracy. This is why it is in our interest to embrace the tenets of democracy, transparency, rule of law and accountability not because we want to please the international community but because that is what is right for our people. We cannot isolate ourselves from the rest of civilized world and embrace an alliance with pariah states for temporary political succour. We must go back to reason and align our foreign policy with our national interest of rapid economic development within the shortest time possible.

In recent times, particularly during the Babangida regime the matter of economic development dominated Nigeria’s foreign policy. A careful analysis of Nigeria’s internal problems showed that lack of economic growth had impacted negatively on our politics and ethnic relations in the face of competition for scarce white collar jobs. Our economic regression and depression have had telling effect on our social welfare, education, internal security and Nigeria’s power position within the international system. It was in this circumstance that the government decided to let its foreign policy reflect this concern for domestic economic development. Realising that a strong economy at home would bring respect abroad, Nigeria with prodding from the Bretton Woods institutions, the IMF and the World Bank, decided to restructure her economy and to allow the market to determine the rate of exchange of our national currency as well as market prices generally. It was a very difficult decision because public opinion was against this policy of structural adjustment which virtually wiped out the middle class of our country. The people accepted the pain with the promise of a better future. Successful stories of the economic miracles of South Korea, Thailand, Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore were held before us. It was in these circumstances
that Nigeria decided to put the weight of her foreign policy behind her economic development under the policy rubric of economic diplomacy. Nigeria, therefore, embarked on South-South cooperation and intensification of economic contact with China, South East Asia, India, Korea, Brazil and Argentina. Ministerial delegations were sent to virtually everywhere in the investing world to drum up support for the Nigerian economy. There was considerable success as can be seen in trade with Jamaica, Brazil and Argentina. Members of the organised private sector were encouraged to be involved in opening up opportunities through their co option as members of official trade and foreign affairs delegations to several countries. It was not only South-South trade that was promoted, Nigeria’s traditional allies in the West were encouraged to invest in Nigeria through our policy of deregulation.

A trade and investment department in the Foreign office was created to help foreign investors with appropriate information on how to set up industries without going through hitherto complicated bureaucratic process. This department was charged with the responsibility of packaging information that was widely circulated through our embassies to appropriate chambers of commerce and industries overseas.

The government also created the Corporate Affairs Commission so that incorporation of companies could be done in one office instead of going to several offices to secure signatories before simple incorporation of companies could be effected. The indigenisation decree which barred foreign interests from certain category of business was abrogated. The process of facilitating easy repatriation of dividends and profits which finally culminated in the recent abrogation of the Foreign Exchange decree was put in place. Wherever Nigeria found a forum, whether in the Non-aligned conferences, the O.A.U., ECOWAS.

The Commonwealth and the U.N. economic concern and preoccupation dominated our declarations and speeches. Starting from the Non-Aligned Conference in Nicosia and Belgrade in 1988, Nigeria prevailed on members to address
the issue of economic development rather than getting bogged down in the old cap of railing against imperialism! The question of the debt overhang was then weighing down Nigeria in particular and Africa as a whole. It was during this period that Nigeria suggested the establishment of the Group of fifteen (G15) a group of developing medium income countries in Africa and Asia to properly articulate the economic priorities of the developing world. The United Nations was also prevailed upon to declare the 1990’s African development decade. This was backed up by the Programme for African Economic Reconstruction and development.

Nigeria received support from most of our creditors at least in term of debt rescheduling and occasional grants specifically for diseases eradication, protection of the rain forest and programmes of bio-diversity. There was always the promise of debt write-offs provided we continue to deregulate and to transit from military rule to democracy. These are conditions which I am afraid we may eventually fulfill when we would have wasted the good will of the rest of the world and the carrots attached to it would no longer be on offer.

Nigeria in the 1990’s realised that with the demise of apartheid in view and with the rest of the world moving in the direction of closer economic integration as seen in the example of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Area) consisting of Mexico, U.S.A. and Canada, Nigeria began to move Africa in the direction of Continental free trade area. It was the belief of the government that a continental market of 800 million people would enjoy economy of scale for local producers and as well as serve as an attractive market for foreign investors. It was decided that the regional economic organisation should be strengthened as a building blocks for eventual Continental Union. The Abuja Charter of 1992 incorporating the plans towards economic union in Africa was signed and it then replaced the moribund Lagos plan of action of the 1970s which had remained largely unimplemented. Whether the Abuja Charter would suffer the same fate is a moot question.
Many of the policies put in place did not yield commensurate economic dividends because of some reasons, chief of which was our internal political difficulties of inability to institute a democratic regime and embrace a democratic culture. The second reason was that Eastern Europe was just opening up its market after the collapse of communism. This area of the world had a developed infrastructure and was nearer the sources of investible capital from which Nigeria was expecting investment. The owners of this capital were more interested in the security of their capital and for strategic reasons of security in making the lives of Eastern Europeans just freed from Communism better. At the time we were opening up, Latin America was doing the same, so also was China and South East Asia. Nigeria and Africa could just not compete, the obstacles were just simply overwhelming. The challenge then is that we must not be wearied by trying but we must learn to depend more on our own effort in future. This effort would take the form of political conformity with the rest of the world as well as husbanding our own resources and diversifying our economy particularly from over dependence on export of hydrocarbons whose use may be threatened in future because of human kind’s concern for the environment.

Our recent foreign policy endeavours under General Sanni Abacha amount to a mixed grill. We have been successful at considerable cost to our psyche and exchequer in helping to stabilise the political situation in our region through imposing an uneasy peace in Liberia and Sierra Leone. But this has been at the expense of the well being of our people who have suffered untold economic deprivation and loss of their fundamental human rights. The general insecurity of the Abacha regime has been exploited by various peoples to settle petty personal disputes while hiding under the rubric of protecting national interest and security. The result of our violating of our people’s rights has been the ostracisation of Nigeria from civilized society and the international community. This then drove us into the warm embrace of other pariah states and China while we abandoned our traditional and trading partners in the West.
with consequent serious economic decline. The demise of Nigeria’s erstwhile ruler constituted a *deus ex machina* for this country and has opened a window of opportunity for carefully assessing the future of our foreign relations as well as graphically underscoring the fact that one cannot really separate foreign and domestic policies.

The coming to power of General Abdulsalami Abubakar as Head of State and his determined effort to take Nigeria back to the International Community through freeing several detainees and prisoners from Abacha’s gulag constitutes a *denouement* of the impasse in which we have been in recent times. His effort has been reciprocated particularly by the International Community through the visits of the European Union (EU) and American delegations and Chief Emeka Anyaoku and Kofi Annan, Secretary-Generals respectively of the Anglophone Commonwealth and the United Nations. Ministers from the United States, Canada, the European Union have also visited Nigeria. Our Head of State, General Abdulsalami Abubakar has visited South Africa twice in recent times, firstly to see Mandela and secondly to attend the non-aligned conference. Thus, by this singular step, Nigeria re-entered fully the international system where she might belong. As a mark of Nigeria’s total acceptance in the International Community, our Head of State has made successful and highly rewarding visits to Great Britain, France, the United States and the U.N. where he again committed himself to democratisation of the country. Never in the history of our nation has the international community showed this kind of interest and concern for our domestic political situation.

Presumably, the international community correctly embarked on this preventive diplomacy in order to avoid a situation of civil disturbance if not outright civil war which would have upset the political equilibrium of not only the West African sub-region but the world at large. It is now left to us to get our act together and not misuse the international good will which may not be on offer for ever. Happily enough, all Nigerians realise that the country is at a cross road and that with the spirit
of compromise and international understanding Nigeria will be able to make a new beginning in both its domestic politics and external relations. The prize is big, and since Nigeria wants to play a big role in the comity of nations she cannot afford to fail. But just as the international community has opened up to Nigeria because of the perceived thaw in our relations with the outside world, the situation can relapse to what it was hitherto if we renege on our promises and commitment on democratisation transparency and good governance. The ball is now in our court and we should not give room for internal and international forces to sabotage our march to relevance, acceptability and normalcy.

What then is to be done to avoid complete marginalisation and a possible second partition of Africa in the face of failure of policy which is causing the rest of the world considerable concern. This concern arises not out of altruism but because of constant break down of law and order in Africa and attendant immigration of refugees from this continent to other parts of the world. In recent times, we have seen the phenomenon of disappearing states like Somalia and Liberia not to mention Rwanda and Burundi even Nigeria is being described by such an important news medium as The America's *Washington Post* as a “failed state” when a state is branded a “rogue state” or a “failed state” such a state is a fair game for adventurist imperialistic powers.

Nigeria must first of all confront her domestic problem. The fundamental problem here is military dictatorship. We must transit from this to democracy. Democracy is not just the question of holding periodic elections, important as this is, it means developing a democratic culture underpinned by the rule of law. We must build an egalitarian society with careers being opened to talents. It should be possible for any Nigerian of talent to rise to any position that these talents entitle him. The present politically expedient policy of federal character which has been misused should yield place to open competition. This is the only way by which the sense of patriotism will be fostered. There is at present a feeling in some parts of the country that
this republic is not based on equality of its citizens. Such feeling would have to be assuaged through practical power sharing mechanism. The alternative to building a united country is too ghastly to be contemplated.

We must face the question of the economy squarely. Almost forty years after independence we still operate a dependent economy based on export of raw materials and industries of import substitution. We must reverse this process by building industries, particularly agro-based industries in which we have comparative advantage. Our country certainly can support huge textile and garments industries based on local production of cotton. This is also an industry which the current regime of the World Trade organisation favours for developing countries. The so-called tiger economies of South East Asia, China and India virtually dominate the textile and garments industry of the world. We ought to be able to challenge these countries because of our cheap labour. We should be able to compete with Israel and the United States in providing the world properly packaged tropical fruits. We should cut our tastes for unnecessary luxury goods and use what we can produce. We need to open our market to investments from the outside world. One hopes present policies in this regard would be determinedly pursued. The economy is the key to respect in the international system and we must do everything to develop our economy. There is no strategy of economic development better than those that have been tried and that have worked in the western liberal democracies. Any attempt to graft economic development on an authoritarian regime will fail. The erstwhile example of the success of the tiger economies as a justification for this is no longer relevant following the recent troubles in the economy of South East Asia. Perhaps we need to look at the example of Botswana where honest and liberal government and proper management of national resources and patrimony has led to development which is at par with any of the so-called tiger economies without the political authoritarianism of those regimes.
Nigeria must attempt at being the Japan of Africa, a symbol which will forever shatter the image of failure associated with the black man. Once we have the economic foundation at home we must integrate our economy with that of ECOWAS. The present structure of ECOWAS need to be looked into because it is not working. It is too formalistic and it is not felt by the citizens of the ECOWAS region. We need to develop a common ECOWAS currency and this is why one would like to suggest that Nigeria should break down the ‘Berlin Wall’ between itself and the Ivory coast, the two economies in West Africa which can provide the catalyst for a West African Monetary Union (WAMU). Nigeria also need to build appropriate and overlapping mechanism to relate to her immediate neighbours of Niger, Chad, Benin, Cameroons and Equatorial Guinea. This is necessary to guarantee peace at our borders. It is a truism in international relations that the most secure border is the undefended borders. We must raise the level of our economic and political relations with our immediate neighbours so that we can have open borders with them. One will like again to suggest the establishment of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, consisting of Benin, Nigeria, The Cameroons, Equatorial Guinea and possibly Gabon for joint development of the Gulf of Guinea and Biafra where overlapping territorial claims could lead to war. The recent commercial exploitation of crude petroleum in Equatorial Guinea calls for our attention so that there is no clash of interest over rival claims to oil fields. We should also pursue the realisation of the Abuja Charter of Economic Integration of Africa in the long haul. But we must begin from the realistic level of first taking care of Nigeria’s interest, then that of our neighbours, and then ECOWAS before burning our energy on a visionary hope of continental union. We cannot do everything in one or two generations, but let us realise that the journey of a thousand miles must begin with the first steps. Let us therefore begin at home by honestly building a country where there is equality of opportunities and where all government actions conform with justice, equity, fairness and virtue.
We must also realise that while there is equality of all states in the International system and particularly in our orbit in Africa, nevertheless some states such as South Africa, Egypt, Morocco and possibly Algeria, Kenya, Ivory Coast and Ghana require more attention from us. Whatever leadership aspirations Nigeria has would have to receive the support of these states before they can be realised. The possibility of an African seat in the Security council of the United Nations would require all the diplomatic skill our country can muster and also progress on our domestic front. Right now our chances are slim but not hopeless if we can conquer the demon of disunity and military dictatorship at home. The five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, namely: The United States, Great Britain, France, Russia and China are not likely to be vociferous in our support. The first four countries are likely to be opposed to our candidature while China could hardly stick out her neck for us because of the fear of her losing her most favoured nation’s status with the United States. South Africa with her robust economy and her experiment of racial harmony is in a better position while Egypt’s geo-political relationship with the United States gives her a better chance. It is therefore imperative for us to seek better relations and patronage in the International system. In terms of regional North/South economic relations it is in our region that something is lacking. The United States and Canada have largely had beneficial relations with Latin America and the Caribbean, Japan has been a benefactor to states in South East Asia, China and Korea. But Europe’s relation with Africa on the other hand has largely been tragic. Beginning from the slave trade to colonial domination and exploitation and the current neo-colonial relations, Europe owes Africa a debt and it is not out of place to seek some kind of reparations. The first step in this regard should be total wiping off of our debt so that Euro-African relations can begin anew on an economic tabula rasa. Success they say has many fathers and failure is an orphan. If we succeed economically we would be able to pick and choose our friends in the international community. We must take appropriate policies to cultivate the
black diaspora in Europe and the Americas particularly in Brazil and the United States as important constituencies for the operation of our foreign policy. Israel has done this with regard to the Jewish diaspora with success in her relations with the Western World. We must try and convince the black in the new world to be involved in our development. We must demonstrate the symbiosis of their aspirations and our expectations. Everybody needs a helping hand. Europe received this through the Marshall plan after the Second world war because America knew that a prostrate Europe was not in her national interest. It should not be too difficult to persuade the West particularly the United States that a prostrate Africa is not in her national interest.

But every student of diplomacy and International relations knows that when diplomacy fails, force becomes the ultimate sanction in international affairs. This is why we must develop highly mobile and efficient armed forces. This will be very expensive, but this is predicated on a strong economy as we have indicated. We need to pay special attention to the navy and the air force. This is because in the past navies have been very useful instruments of diplomacy. Naval demonstrations at the coast of potential or truculent enemies have been very effective in conveying diplomatic message without outright war. Naval courtesy visits in peace time can be very useful in demonstrating ability to project power to friends and foes alike. The role of the Nigerian Navy in Liberia and Sierra Leone underscores the point I am trying to make.

Modern wars can hardly be fought without an efficient air force. I am also aware of the fact that there is no replacement for the foot soldiers, because somebody has to mop up after successful bombing raids. What I am suggesting, is that an efficient and manoeuvrable air force is not only strategically and logistically useful, it is also a useful tool of diplomacy. We need a highly mechanised army that can be deployed rapidly in whatever theatre of operations. We must establish our priority between a large and inefficient and immobile army and a small rapid deployment force. Building a strong armed force does not necessarily mean one is advocating a policy of jingoism.
Armies exist all over the world to deter potential enemies and to help maintain peace when called upon by civilian or domestic political authorities. Nigeria does not have a potential enemy that could threaten her existence in her region but this does not mean that her neighbours would always have pacific feelings towards her. Our aspiration for a big role in the international system also demands that we have strong armed forces that may be called upon for peace keeping or peace enforcement, as we have previously done in several parts of the world including Bosnia, Lebanon, Manibia, Iraq/Iran, Angola and in armistice line between Israel and Egypt.

We need to modernise the structure and apparatus of our foreign policy. Essentially, the Foreign policy of any country is the policy of the incumbent head of state. This is why all Ambassadors and envoys are the personal representatives of the head of state. In other words, when the foreign policy of a country succeeds or fails, it is the head of state that must receive the praise or blame. In short the foreign secretary/minister and the Ambassadors are merely emissaries of the head of state. Therefore, the head of state must show keen interest in what goes on in his foreign ministry. Most of what goes on is routine in nature but when important developments take place the head of state’s approval must be sought. The foreign minister should therefore have unfettered access to the head of state. Statements on behalf of the country must be issued by the foreign ministry alone and not by any other ministry. This would ensure a unity of direction in the pursuit of our national interests. As much as possible professionalism must be encouraged in the operation of our foreign policy.

The Personnel of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs must be carefully chosen and screened. It is essential that people with the right academic background in the arts and the social sciences be trained as diplomats to provide the shock troops for our country’s foreign policy. At the apex of the personnel pyramid is of course the Minister who is the political head of the Ministry. Care must be taken to choose the right kind of person to serve as Minister of Foreign Affairs. The person chosen must be
amiable, pleasant, charismatic, knowledgeable in world affairs and fluent in English and possibly in French as well. He must be the kind of person whose personality is not threatening. This point is important because of the fact that Nigeria is a dominant power in our continent and particularly in our region. If our Foreign Minister says the wrong things even at a social level, they will be misconstrued as if we were throwing our weight around. The essence of foreign policy is the advancing of one’s country’s interest through the making of friends and building of bridges. Any person or thing destructive of these ends is a failure and must be removed. There is no specific or special academic or professional background that is a requirement for the appointment of a Foreign Minister.

The criterion is essentially whoever the Head of State or government trusts. This is because at the end of the day, the foreign policy of a country is by and large the policy of the incumbent Head of State or government.

There have been successful Foreign Ministers who have come from a variety of backgrounds. The United States post Second World War Secretary of State, General George Marshall, was highly successful but perhaps more successful has been Henry Kissinger who was well grounded in diplomatic history and political science. Lord David Owen, former successful British Foreign Secretary was a Neurologist and even nearer home we have had successful Ministers of Foreign Affairs such as Generals Joe Garba and Ike Nwachukwu as well as Professor Bolaji Akinyemi. The point that should be made is that the choice of a Foreign Minister requires careful and scrupulous consideration. This is because no matter how well considered and intentioned the foreign policy of a country is, it is equally important that the purveyor of that message must know his onions and must be schooled at least in the rudiments of diplomacy. This is simply because, as Marshall McLuhan, the guru of communication said, the medium is the message. The language of foreign policy may among other things, lie in the comportment of the Foreign Minister. How he treats colleagues, ambassadors of other countries, and foreign delegations may
send the right or wrong messages that are either intended or unintended without the Minister knowing this. This is why whoever is Foreign Minister must be supported by the permanent officials of the ministry or outsiders schooled in the art and science of diplomacy. The onus of course must be the willingness of the political head of the ministry to seek and listen to professional advice.

Ministers must listen to advice of professional diplomats and academics and others particularly from the armed forces, security organisations and the press. In this regard there is a need for the creation of a post of national security adviser who shall advise the head of state on daily basis on the implication of development in the international scene. The head of state must also ensure that he appoints people with diplomatic savoir-faire to operate the foreign policy of Nigeria. I would also like to suggest the creation of a council on foreign relations, initially funded by government and members of which should come from, Universities, business, the armed forces, relevant research institutes and from the ranks of retired diplomats. This body should be independent of government and should be able to discuss openly matters of the moment in foreign affairs so that government can benefit from its expertise. In recent times there has been friction between the Minister of Foreign Affairs and his Minister of State over jurisdiction. While for all times the Foreign Minister must have superintendent authority over the foreign office, the time is ripe to make the Minister of State, Minister of Islamic and Asian Affairs specifically within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

At the end of the day all Nigerians must be involved in promoting the good image of our country. This can only be done if individual Nigerians behave well here at home and everywhere abroad. We must build a reputation of a disciplined country where things work. The present reputation of Nigeria as a dynamically chaotic country is not a good augury for the future. Our reputation as fraudsters, drug peddlers and pushers, asylum seekers, racketeers and document and passport forgers have done irreparable damage to our country. Some of these
crimes need to attract the stiffest punishment. We need to restore the good image of Nigeria and Nigerians so that in future when we say like the Roman of old "Civis Nigerius Sum" we can expect to be respected as decent people anywhere in the world as well as expect the long arm of a radically rejuvenated country to protect us.
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Finally, it is customary to end an inaugural lecture by paying homage to those whose lives have crossed one’s for better. I owe whatever I am today to God Almighty from whose infinite mercies I have always drawn. I was encouraged to study history and to specialise in this area notably by Professors J. F. Ade Ajayi, Robert Gavin and my supervisor and mentor at Dalhousie University Halifax Canada Prof. John Edgar Flint. I also would like to remember Professor Michael Crowder who encouraged me to write. In my contribution to history I have been eclectic demonstrating expertise in diplomatic history, international relations, military and strategic studies as well as biographies. I have paid my dues.

I thank my wife Abiodun who provided conducive domestic environment and my children Folasade, Oluwatosin, Oluwaseyi and Yewande who are in their different ways carrying forward my family’s tradition of academic excellence. I inherited from my mother Elizabeth Otoola hard work and intellectual curiosity and from my widely travelled father, David Osunwenu Osuntokun, doggedness, courage and commitment to firmly held views and principles even in the face of possible persecution. I also inherited from both of my parents absolute integrity.

I miss my highly distinguished brothers namely Joseph Oduola, Edward Abiodun and Benjamin Oluwakayode who were of national importance in this country, having made respectively, contributions to politics and Education, Engineering and the military and medicine particularly the neuro sciences. If it was their will, they would have liked to see their baby brother fulfill this academic obligation to the University Community. They have passed on into higher glory. But when all is said and done, what will remain is the good name which my family has firmly established in this country and which will continue to serve as a beacon to future generation of Nigerians.

I thank you all.
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