
Interrogating Nigeria's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century: Reflections on the Gains and Challenges of Obasanjo's Administration 1999-2007

Shuaibu Umar Abdul
Nasarawa State University Keffi
Nasarawa

&

Mohammed B. Ibrahim
College of Education, Akwanga
Nasarawa

Abstract

The history of Nigerian foreign policy since independence has constantly been changing, though the principles guiding her foreign relations remain the same. Nigerian leaders are largely responsible for these unstable external relations. Most unfortunately, is the fact that in spite of the leading role Nigeria has been playing in Africa and the world at large, there was nothing in the pattern and traditions of Nigerian foreign policy from independence to the emergence of Sani Abacha as Head of state to suggest that the country would become a pariah state in the international system. It is In view of the above imperative that this study aimed at critical examination of Obasanjo's Administration as it relates to rebuilding Nigeria's battered and shattered image within the comity of nations. Descriptive and analytical research methods were employed while secondary source of materials was used by the study. Individual decision making approach was adopted as the theoretical underpinning for the study. In that line, the study examines Nigeria's foreign policy under President Obasanjo's administration (1999-2007) and how the administration had tried hard to resuscitate the nation's battered image and respect for the nation and Nigerians abroad.. However, Obasanjo's administration could not be free from shortcomings in foreign policy formulation and implementation as unveiled by the study. The study found out that the nation has achieved significant gains through the regime's shuttle diplomacy. It recommends among others that, the scope of Nigeria's foreign policy should no longer be limited to continental affairs. It should be focused world-wide and geared towards the promotion of our cultural heritage, and

scientific, economic and technical cooperation with viable partners.

Keywords: Nigeria; Foreign policy; External relations; Nigeria's Foreign policy; Obasanjo's administration

Introduction

All states have some kind of relations with one another. No state in the modern times can avoid the involvement in the international affairs, and this involvement must be systematic and based on certain principles. In other words, states have to behave with one another in a particular manner. The framing of the foreign policy is, therefore, an essential activity of a modern state, for a state without foreign policy is like a ship without rider which may drift aimlessly and may be swept away by a storm of current events. What a state intends to do is defined by its interests; what is actually able to achieve is a function of its military and economic capability as well as the quality of its diplomacy.

The history of Nigerian foreign policy since 1960 has constantly been changing, though the principles guiding her foreign relations remain the same (Gambari, 1989). Nigerian leaders are largely responsible for these unstable external relations. Apparently, Nigeria's foreign policy is deeply rooted in Africa with strategic emphasis on political and economic cooperation, peaceful dispute resolution, and global nonalignment (Gambari, 1989). Nigerian leaders also have their attention fixed on the successful implementation of these principles. However, the influence of individual personality on Nigeria's relations with other countries cannot be totally ignored as different leaders adopt different styles in conducting external relations.

Examining the personality of the leader both at the theoretical and practical levels is therefore important to the understanding of Nigeria's foreign policy. This is largely due to the fact that critical historical analysis revealed that the country's foreign policy is synonymous to personality of the leader on board at any given time. However, it is important to accentuate that Nigeria's foreign policy started at moderate level since independence in 1960. This may be largely due to smooth power relinquishing that occurred between Nigeria and the then colonial master (Britain). The crux of the matter remains that, there was nothing in the pattern and traditions of Nigerian foreign policy from independence to the emergence of Sani Abacha as Head of state to suggest that the country would become a pariah state in the international system. Even the speech of the Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa on Independence Day October 1, 1960 seemed to indicate that Nigeria was properly focused and her mind set firmly directed at the goal of her foreign policy. He declared thus;

I have indeed very confident that, based on the happy experience of a successful partnership our future relations with the United Kingdom will be more cordial than ever, bound together as we shall be in the common wealth by a common

allegiance to her majesty Queen Elizabeth whom we proudly acclaim as Queen of Nigeria (hence) we are grateful to the British Officers who we have known, first as masters and then as leaders and finally as partners but always as friends (Balewa, 1960:26).

Immediately after, on October 7, 1960, Nigeria registered herself as the 99th member of the United Nations thereby becoming a recognized member of the international community. By her resources and even size, Nigeria was at the fore-front of Africa, providing with others, the necessary leadership and to fight the clutches of colonialism, neo-colonialism, underdevelopment, poverty, famine and racial discrimination. In fairness, some leaders gave the nation its right of place.

President Olusegun Obasanjo, at inauguration in May, 1999, inherited a nation with a battered image and without credibility externally. In his determination to regain Nigeria's lost glory and re-integrate it into the civilized world, he engaged in a deft shuttle diplomacy across the major capitals of the globe. It is in view of the above imperative that the study is set to examine the gains and challenges of Obasanjo's administration on Nigeria foreign policy in the 21st century.

Theoretical Framework: Individual Decision Making Approach

Individual Decision making approach is an attempt to understand politics from the stand point of the decision making process as spare headed by individuals. Its major premise is that decision makers are human beings who have their strengths, weaknesses, emotions, bias, personal preferences and world views. These they get to bear on the particular decision, which they take in the name of the state. The approach demystifies the state, and reduces its actions to that of its leaders.

Essentially, the approach sees the States as the decisional units and the actors are the decision makers. For its perception of actors Van Dyke (1960) in Gauba (2003:100) posits that:

Every actor is a decision-maker. Those acting for political parties, decide which candidate to nominate, voters decide whether to vote and for whom. Legislators decide which proposals to advance or support. Executives decide what legislation to seek whether to sign or veto acts of the legislative body, precisely which steps to take in executing or administering the law and what policies to pursue where action is left to their discretion.

Gauba (2003) asserts that decision making approach is concerned with analysis of political systems, process and behaviour in terms of their decision mechanism and its functions. He subsequently points that decision making approach

involves the following.

- Identification of the issues on which decisions are made
- The structures involved in decision making
- The actors involved in decision making (this may involve study of personality if necessary)
- The alternative courses of action or options that were considered before making a choice
- The factors influencing the choice of the decision makers, i.e their range of preferences vis-à-vis the utilities attached to each of the alternatives.
- Any external factors, pressures or constraints which influenced their decision and;
- The out-come of the decision including its political costs.

The introduction of the approach to the study of international relations and foreign policy is traced mainly to Richard Snyder, and two of his Junior Colleagues, H. W. Bruck and Burton Sapin. According to Asobie (1990) "Snyder developed in 1954 what is perhaps the first published explicit theoretical model on foreign policy decision making". While Rosenau (1969) believes that Snyder's work was the "first extended and systematic attempt to conceptualize the role of decision making on the formulation and implementation of foreign policy and in the processes of international politics". He further sees the approach to the study of international political phenomena, and in the end the decision-making approach proved to be a crucial front in the behavioural revolution in political science.

It is however important to accentuate that foreign policy making of most developing states (particularly Nigeria) usually lies within the power and interest of those individuals at the helm of affairs. Every individual is peculiar. People are different and react to the same circumstances differently. The idiosyncratic approach to individual level decision making, focuses on decision makers as individuals. Different individuals that make foreign policy decisions are most likely to make different decisions depending on their perception, world views and motivations. In looking at this approach, five characteristics of individual decision makers will be explored. These are personality, physical and mental health, Ego and ambition, personal history and personal experiences, and perceptions.

Moreover, the decision making theory is found to be relevant in terms of explaining the dynamics of Nigerian foreign policy. It has been able to provide convincing explanation of the nature and character of Nigerian leaders from the colonial era to date. The theory has clearly shows that the idiosyncrasies of the Nigerian leaders, the domestic factors as well as the dynamics of international environment have significantly impacted on Nigerian foreign policy. Most importantly the theory gives vivid analysis of the foreign policy making of most

developing states (particularly Nigeria) which usually lies within the power and interest of those individuals at the helm of affairs. Every individual is peculiar. People are different and react to the same circumstances differently. In sum, it is on the basis of the above imperatives that this theory will serve as a useful framework in explaining the transformation of Nigerian foreign policy over the years.

The Context of Nigerian Foreign Policy

The transformation from a colonial state to an independent state is often manifested in the freedom of behaviour to initiate, formulate and implement policies without being dictated to, or guided by, an external force. One of the areas where this is always manifested is in the freedom and authority to conduct a foreign policy. Freedom to conduct a foreign policy therefore constitutes one of the evidences of the attainment of independence.

Kolawole (2004) submitted that in design and implementation, the tenor, texture and goal-value of a foreign policy of a nation is aimed at the realization and attainment of a national interest as designed, defined and directed by an incumbent leadership. The implication of this is that a colonized state is a dependent state which can only visualize foreign policy from the perspective of its colonizer. Hence, Nigeria from January 1914 when the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates was formally effected to October 1, 1960 when she attained independence could not pursue all independent foreign policy which could be said to be separate and distinct from that of Britain. But it must be noted that the opportunity of independence threw many challenges to the newly emergent nation -challenges that were apparently unanticipated or glossed over as surmountable. In the area of foreign relations, the freedom to conduct one's own affairs as deemed fit and proper also posed two immediate problems (Kolawole, 2004). One is domestic; Nigeria from the moment of independence has been facing centrifugal and centripetal forces which have challenged her nationhood. Those forces are manifested in political, government instability, party system instability, military rule, ethnicism, religious intolerance and even a civil war. Ironically and this is depressing, independence rather than being a blessing was posing as a curse.

In foreign policy pursuit, the domestic structure usually provides the leverage for external relations. The linkage between domestic policy and foreign policy is so firm that one cannot be treated in isolation of the other. This must have informed the submission of Kissinger (1970) that "foreign policy begins where domestic policy ends". The point is that the domestic structure in Nigeria since independence has not always been stable enough to warrant and support an enduring pattern of foreign policy.

Two is external. Nigeria emerged as an independent state in the age of the cold war which culminated in the bipolarity of the international system. Although, there was the non-aligned movement that was expected to serve as a third force

and provide a sanctuary for nations that were not prepared to belong to any of the two powers but the idea of non-alignment was illusory, superfluous and ineffective. It is difficult to use powerlessness to confront power. So in the cold war years, the choice followed the "either or – spectrum" of decision-making. Nigeria without openly and courageously stating so chose to ally with the West (Kissinger, 1970). But the truth is that the reality of Nigeria's foreign policy is that her fortune and misfortune seem intrinsically linked with and tied to the West. So, a pro-West stance is explainable in terms of economy, education, party politics and social relations.

Critical Interrogation of Obasanjo's Foreign Policy 1999-2007

An objective evaluation of Nigeria's foreign policy in the fourth republic 1999-2007 can best be carried out when President Obasanjo's performances are placed side-by-side with the promises he made during the election process; as well as the goals he sets out to achieve as a democratically elected president within the framework of the Nigerian constitution. This scholarly approach is in sharp contrast to what many journalists and political writers write about President Olusegun Obasanjo. While some have been evaluating only his performance, others have been confusing or combining "legacy" with evaluation (Ojameruaye, 2007). Review of most of the assessments made by writers on President Olusegun Obasanjo have been rather subjective and are not based on the promises President Obasanjo made, but on what the assessors expected him to do. More so, there are no well-defined benchmarks for the assessments. To be sure, it is difficult to conduct an objective assessment of performance of political office holders in the absence of well-defined and measurable performance indicators and time-bound targets. This chapter therefore sets out to evaluate President Olusegun Obasanjo's foreign policy vis-à-vis his promises and objectives set out at the beginning of his administration in 1999.

i. Domestic Factors Influencing Nigeria's Foreign Policy

Nigeria's 47 years (1960-2007) as an independent country have been characterized by two main phases of either authoritarian military rule or democratic transitional civilian rule, with all the attendant characteristics which has impacted the country's foreign policy. Within this framework, three major domestic factors can be identified as being the key determinants in Nigeria's foreign policy formulation: first, the country's ravaged and weak economy; second, the personality and character of Nigeria's leaders and their perceptions of how to nurse and revive the economy; and third, the issue of ethno-religious diversity in a federal context, which more often than not makes consensus on national issues difficult to achieve (Rosemary, 2005). While other domestic factors such as historical traditions, domestic environmental factors, organized vested interests and public opinion have impacted on Nigeria's foreign policy, it can be said that the three major factors identified above are more decisive in the Nigerian context.

Other domestic factors that drive Nigeria's foreign relations are the roles played by the key institutions in the country. Specifically, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs and the Presidential Advisory Council on International Relations are the major institutions concerned with Nigeria's foreign policy formulation. Between 1999 and 2007, information technology, democratic system of government, diplomacy, economic restructuring, intelligence gathering, defense engagement, humanitarian operations and military expenditures were among the factors driving Nigeria's foreign policy (Rosemary, 2005). Moreover, Nigeria's foreign policy potential is clearly based on its demographic size of over 160 million people, its multi-ethnic population, its vast oil reserves and its reservoir of highly skilled and educated people, national income, gross national product, energy consumption and political stability also shaped the foreign policy formulation of Nigeria.

An examination of the domestic constraints on Nigeria's foreign policy reveals the ways in which the country's foreign policy has been characterized by reactive and uncoordinated policies. Since the 1999, the Nigerian state has had to contend with multiple crises including the fall in global oil prices, communal violence and religious-based violence. Many of these conflicts have erupted over issues such as contested boundaries and sharing of resources, other conflicts have also involved matters relating to "settlers" versus "indigenes" or "oil producing communities" versus "oil multinationals," all of which have fuelled instability and led to a questioning of a national Nigerian identity (Rosemary, 2005).

Lastly, the role that oil plays in Nigeria's foreign policy cannot be underestimated. Oil lies at the heart of policy formulation in Nigeria. To that extend, the country described as the world's eighth largest oil- producer (Rosemary, 2005).

ii. Obasanjo's Shuttle Diplomacy

President Olusegun Obasanjo was renowned for his shuttle diplomacy which was a vital instrument of forging bilateral and multilateral collaborations for sustainable development and peaceful co- existence in the West Africa sub-region as well as with other countries of the world. The Obasanjo Government presented the country with a great opportunity to make sociopolitical and economic progress and the opportunity also to foster a more hospitable international environment, it was therefore not surprising that starting in its early phase, the Obasanjo Government eagerly laid solid foundations for political, social, and economic transformations, and also strove to gain more international friends and allies through his shuttle diplomacy tactic.

The term *Shuttle Diplomacy*, or mediated communication, according to Cambridge Dictionary, refers to discussions between two or more countries, in

which someone travels between the different countries, talking to the governments involved, carrying messages and suggesting ways of dealing with problems (CALD, 2005). While The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, defines *Shuttle Diplomacy* as “Diplomatic negotiations conducted by an official intermediary who travels frequently between the nations involved (AHD, 2009).” The notion of *Shuttle Diplomacy* is said to have emerged from Henry Kissinger's efforts in the Middle East in the early 1970s. He flew back and forth between Middle Eastern capitals for months in an effort to bring about peace after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. The central feature of his "American Plan" was separating the [ceasefire](#) from long-range problems and minimizing Russian involvement in the process.

The politics behind *Shuttle Diplomacy* is primarily based on the use of a third party to convey information back and forth between the parties, serving as a reliable means of communication less susceptible to the grandstanding of face-to-face or media-based communication. The intermediary serves not only as a relay for questions and answers, but can also provide suggestions for moving the situation toward resolution and does so in private. By keeping the communication private and indirect, the parties will not feel a need to use the debating tactics they commonly use in public conversations, and will be able to build up a level of [trust](#) that could not have been developed in those circumstances. Once this trust and a certain level of mutual understanding is developed, then face-to-face and even a routine of communications can be started. However, the diplomatic innovation of *shuttle diplomacy* was made possible by modern communication technologies and air transportation, which permits the mediator to travel easily between the negotiating parties.

The Obasanjo led administration embarked on a new round of shuttle diplomacy, which took the President to several parts of the world. The objectives of these shuttles include:

- a. Re-integration of Nigeria into the comity of nations
- b. Attracting foreign investment and fresh financial flows
- c. Securing debt relief/forgiveness from the country's creditors and

It is therefore logical to evaluate President Olusegun Obasanjo's foreign policy based on these objectives. While most writers, especially those from the media criticized the frequent foreign trips of President Obasanjo as unwarranted wastage of public funds, his shuttle diplomacy is noted for the following achievements:

a. Re-integration of Nigeria into the Comity of Nations

Over the years, Nigeria's external image has been fluctuating from a good one to a bad one. She juggled between a good image at certain periods (e.g. 1960-1967, 1970-1983, and 1999-2007) and a bad image at other periods (1993-1999) (Egwemi, 2010). Thus, President Olusegun Obasanjo, at inauguration in May, 1999, inherited a nation with battered image and without credibility externally. In his determination to regain Nigeria's lost glory and re-integrate it to the

civilized world, he engaged in a deft shuttle diplomacy across the major capitals of the globe. The president, during his extensive foreign trips, have addressed the United Nations (UN), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Group of 8 (G-8), Group 77 (G-77), the Commonwealth, African Union (AU) and European Union (EU) (Ajayi, 2006). The nation has achieved significant gains through the regime's shuttle diplomacy. Apart from the psychological relief following its re-integration and accommodations into the world affairs, Nigeria had assumed the leadership of several international organizations notably the ECOWAS, AU, and G-77. It had hosted very important international summits including those of the Commonwealth Heads of State and Government and the AU in 2004, the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) in 2005, and severally, the ECOWAS since 1999. The nation had also hosted the All Africa Games in 2004. Obasanjo had been the guest of honour to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in May 2004. All these imply that the international system has restored its confidence in Nigeria. Generally, Nigeria's increasing profile in its foreign relations implies that the nation has regained its role as a leading player in multilateral politics and diplomacy (Ajayi, 2006).

b. Attracting Foreign Investment and Fresh Financial Flows

President Obasanjo also adopted the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) in 2003, intended to promote export and woo foreign investors through a variety of reforms, including macroeconomic stability, deregulation, liberalization, privatization, and transparency (Muhammad-Zaki, 2011). To achieve this, his administration embarked on major domestic reforms. For instance, the Nigerian banking and financial system were structured and reformed in 2004; the Capital Market was also reformed: the Investment and Securities Act (ISA) Number 45 of 1999, was reviewed; In March 2005, the Electricity Power Sector Reform Act was passed into law to liberalize the energy sector and break the monopoly of the defunct National Electricity Power Authority (NEPA) in the industry. As a result, NEPA's monopoly status was unbundled and the present Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) was born. The Act also established the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC), to regulate the industry. Ports reforms were also carried, and a legislation called Nigeria Ports Authority (NPA) bill was sent to the National Assembly in 2006 to amend the Ports Act of 1959 and the Ports Act of 1999 to enhance efficiency at the nation's ports (Muhammad-Zaki, 2011). It must be noted that all of these were aimed at attracting foreign investors into the country.

c. Securing Debt Relief/Forgiveness from the Country's Creditors

As at 1997, Nigeria's external debt stood at \$27.008 billion which presented Nigeria as the highest indebted country in Africa (CBN, 2002). By the end of

December 1998, Nigeria's debt service obligation amounted to some 36 per cent of the national budget which translated into a payment of some \$1.68 million out of the \$3.61 billion that was actually due for 1998 (The Guardian, 1999). This huge indebtedness makes Nigeria weak country with less assertive power in international politics. In order to tackle this financial problem, the Obasanjo led government went on the drive for foreign direct investment, the campaign for cancellation of the nation's debilitating debts and a cutting edge economic diplomacy. President Obasanjo went on foreign trips to woo prospective investors to the country and established high diplomatic contacts with leaders of Nigeria's major trading partners, and sought debt relief from the nation's creditors. Nigeria's foreign reserves rose from \$2 billion in 1999 to \$43 billion on leaving office in 2007. He was able to secure debt pardons from the Paris and London club amounting to some \$18 billion and paid another \$18 Billion to be debt free. Nigeria's former minister of Finance Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala noted that:

Initially, we owed \$35 billion and \$30m billion of that was owed the Paris club group of creditors of 15 countries, most of them Western countries and Japan. We exited the Paris Club through the debt cancellation. So \$5 billion is left. We don't owe the IMF even one kobo. Of the \$56 billion that is left about \$2.5 billion is owed multilateral Institutions. This includes the World Bank, African Development Bank, among others, and these are long term, 30 to 40 years loan of little or no interest (Afrodat 2007:24).

iii. Influence of Obasanjo's Personality on Nigerian Foreign Policy

President Olusegun Obasanjo proved himself to be a tough leader, unafraid to stand up and challenge the existing domestic structures that negatively affect the image of the country. He advanced his foreign policy agenda by making regular trips to western countries despite the criticism he received at home. He ensured that Nigeria's relationship with the great powers was restored. President Obasanjo tried all in his powers to make sure that Nigeria remains in the good books of these countries.

For instance, in less than 15 months of assuming power in 1999, President Obasanjo moved to restore friendly relations between Nigeria and the U.S which in the end resulted to the military co-operation agreement signed by both countries in the year 2000. The scheme is known as the Military Professional Resources Initiative (M.P.R.I) under the scheme the U.S undertook to send its military institutions and help Nigeria to procure military aid. Under the same arrangement the U.S government also agreed to assist Nigeria in retraining and re-equipping Nigerian soldiers to enable them perform their peace keeping role in Sierra Leone more efficiently and effectively (Berkers, 2011).

On the continental scale, President Obasanjo showed a strong determination toward the success of the New Partnership for African Development (N.E.P.A.D). As the chairman of NEPAD implementation committee of head of

state president Obasanjo was constantly in touch with the new partners of Africa toward the successful implementation of the scheme. Thus, Nigeria under Obasanjo despite its lean purse was involved in settling disputes in different parts of Africa. Nigeria's involvement in this regard has been in two dimensions. There is no doubt that president Obasanjo has really succeeded in re-lunching the country into the orbit of international politics, from her pariah status of the Abacha years. Probably his personal clout, contact and commitment helped a lot in this regard. However, it must be pointed out that the introduction of democratic rule in Nigeria was a critical success factor, which made the world very eager to welcome the country back into fold, in order to perform her natural role as a leader in the West African sub-region and indeed Africa (Berkers, 2011).

The Gains of Obasanjo's Foreign Policy

Improved Bilateral Relation

With the inauguration of the former President Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999, Nigeria's relations with other western countries, as well as non-western countries improved. For instance, Nigeria-China relations deepen during Obasanjo's administration. In 2001, the two countries signed an agreement on the establishment of a Nigeria Trade Office in China and a China Investment Development and Trade Promotion centre in Nigeria (Gregory, 2009). Bilateral relations between the two countries intensified further during President Obasanjo's second term in office, from 2003 to 2007. President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao of China both visited Nigeria during this period and Obasanjo visited Beijing twice (Newsgd, 2010). During President Hu's visitation to Nigeria, 26th-27th, April, 2006, he agreed with President Obasanjo to work on a strategic plan for the future growth of bilateral relations to push forward the strategic partnership between the two countries (Newsgd, 2010).

To further enhance the bilateral relations between the two countries, they both agreed to establish an intergovernmental Nigeria-China investment forum which was later founded in 2006. Obasanjo used his influence as his own minister of Petroleum to secure major oil blocs for Chinese firms. These blocs' awards entailed significant infrastructure-building commitment for Chinese firms across a range of sectors adding to the already growing number of Nigerian projects in their hand since 1999 (Obioma, 2013).

Furthermore, Nigeria- Israel relations between 1999 and was warm and firm which was unlike the previous years of acrimony. The newly elected President Olusegun Obasanjo, with his global shuttle diplomacy, restored Nigeria's relation with Israel. This was expressed in reciprocal visits by high-level government officials and the intensive exchange of technical and professional knowledge through MASHAV (the Israeli Centre for International Cooperation) programmes. Economic and commercial relations between the countries also thrived during this era, as more and more Israeli companies from various sectors were attracted to invest in Nigeria (<http://abuja.mfa.gov.il>, 2011).

Nigeria has also enjoyed generally good relations with its immediate neighbors. A longstanding border dispute with Cameroon over the potentially oil-rich Bakassi Peninsula was addressed by International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague in 2002. The ICJ awarded most of the disputed Bakassi Peninsula and maritime rights to Cameroon, and the UN established a Mixed Commission on implementing the ICJ ruling. On June 12, 2006 Nigerian President Obasanjo and Cameroonian President Biya signed an agreement in New York on implementing the ICJ decision. Nigeria promptly withdrew its troops within 60 days. On August 14, 2008, Nigeria formally ceded Bakassi to Cameroon. What could have turned to full blown war was settled diplomacy (Falana, 2012).

Moreover, since the restoration of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, the bilateral relationship between Nigeria and United States has continued to improve, and cooperation on many important foreign policy goals, such as regional peacekeeping, has been excellent.

Improved Multilateral Relations

Nigeria, though a member of many international organizations, resurfaced as a global player beginning from 1999 when Olusegun Obasanjo was democratically elected the president. For instance, Nigeria became an active player in United Nations with its quest for permanent seat during the Obasanjo era. The country also regained her lost glory at the World Trade Organization (WTO); International Monetary Fund (IMF); World Bank/IBRD; African Development Bank (AFDB); INTERPOL; Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC); Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); African Union (AU); Maritime Organization of West and Central Africa (MOWCA) and several other West African bodies; Commonwealth; Nonaligned Movement (NAM); and Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), among others due to major domestic reforms carried out by Obasanjo in rebranding the country's image (Oloruntoba and Akinboye, 2013).

Improved Public Image

Most civil society leaders and international organizations saw a marked improvement in human rights and democratic practice under Obasanjo. The press enjoyed greater freedom than under previous governments. Arguably, Nigeria's biggest macroeconomic achievement has been the sharp reduction in its external debt, which declined from 36% of GDP in 2004 to less than 4% of GDP in 2007. Nigeria's economic team had enjoyed an excellent reputation in the international community. It produced an encouraging body of work, notably budgets described as "prudent and responsible" by the IMF and a detailed economic reform blueprint, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS).

Other positive developments included:

- i. Government efforts to deregulate fuel prices;
- ii. Nigeria's participation in the *Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative* (EITI) and commitment to the G8 Anticorruption/Transparency Initiative;
- iii. Creation of what had been an effective Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), which until 2008 had earned 150 convictions and recovered over \$5 billion in mishandled funds; and
- iv. Development of several governmental offices to better monitor official revenues and expenditures (Nwachukwu and Uzoigwe, 2004).

Active Foreign Policy

Nigeria's foreign policy during President Obasanjo's democratic administration was active. He engaged the Nigerian military in peacekeeping operations which have demonstrated its capability to mobilize, deploy, and sustain battalions in support of peacekeeping operations in the former Yugoslavia, Angola, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Sudan/Darfur (Ojo, 2001). Nigeria also has pursued a policy of developing domestic military production capabilities. Before the lifting of sanctions by many Western nations, Nigeria had turned to China, Russia, North Korea, and India for the purchase of military equipment and training (Anyako, 2013).

Challenges of Obasanjo's Foreign Policy in the Fourth Republic

Though, Nigeria's resumption at the centre stage of relevance in global relations through President Obasanjo's *shuttle diplomacy* between 1999 and 2007 had diplomatic gains, however, other national issues even drag the country's image in the mud. These include the Niger Delta Crisis; corruption, kidnapping, and other humanitarian issues (Ojameruaye, 2007).

To many scholars, it was failure on his part to secure Bakassi Peninsula for Nigeria from Cameroon; and the surrender of Charles Taylor to the International Court, an action that will make future African dictators to distrust promise of asylum by a Nigerian leader and thus make them more likely to remain in office at all cost. This would later affect the credibility of the country in the West African sub-region. For instance, the shuttle diplomacy embarked by President Olusegun Obasanjo to mediate the political situation in Cote D'Ivoire failed to yield the expected cooperation of defeated Mr. Laurent Gbagbo. President Obasanjo recorded nil success in persuading the feuding factions in the claim to Ivorian presidency to work out a middle ground. It must be noted that President Obasanjo has a credibility crisis because of his perceived betrayal of former Liberian President, Mr. Charles Taylor. Discussions with diplomats and international relations experts reveal that Laurent Gbagbo felt that President Obasanjo was actually a wrong choice to mediate the crisis (Fawole, 2012).

Moreover, since domestic policies determines to a large extent the country's foreign policy, President Obasanjo domestic policies on infrastructural

development yielded little result which in turn negatively affected the conduct of foreign relations especially in the area of wooing investors to the country. In the words of Ojameruaye (2007:12):

The country did not witness a significant improvement in infrastructure during the past 8 years. While many federal roads were rehabilitated and some were constructed, the condition of many federal roads still leaves much to be desired. For instance, a significant section of the Shagamu –Benin road, linking the West and the Niger Delta/East, remains in a state of disrepair. The second River Niger Bridge at Asaba/Onitsha is yet to be constructed after many years on the drawing board ... The most pathetic case is electricity supply. Despite the much ado, there has not been any significant improvement in public electric power supply...Power producers during the past one year to generate about 6,864 MW. Actual power availability (supply) has not improved and has fluctuated between about 2,000MW and 4,000MW during the past eight years, about the same level before Obasanjo assumed power (Ojameruaye, 2007:12).

There were quite a number of controversial domestic issues that affected the foreign policy implementation of President Obasanjo. One of the most critical issues was the Third Term Agenda of the President. While the President made a strong effort to fight corruption and ensure good governance, there were criticisms against his third term agenda which nearly soiled his international reputation (Okpokpo, 2000). The centrality of the **Third Term Agenda** is based on the controversial attempts by supporters of [Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo](#) to change the [constitution](#) to allow for a [third term](#) in office. Though, the idea was rejected by the Nigerian Senate, the third term agenda eventually led to a political media uproar in Nigeria as well as in the international circle. It took the centre stage of discussion in Washington DC with many US diplomats kicking against immoral amendment of the constitution (Paden, 2004). The issue was of concern to the United States who issued a statement through its embassy that “the United States respects the right of any country to amend its constitution through democratic, transparent and legal means”. Jeter, a former US ambassador to Nigeria noted that any extension of President Obasanjo in office could undermine the President’s stature in the international scene (The Punch, 2005).

Conclusion

Deducing from the above interrogation, the study was able to find out that before 1999, Nigeria was described as a pariah state due to idiosyncrasy, personality trait, and the mode of operation of the then military junta headed by late General Sani Abacha. However, the advent of democratic government that ushered in President Obasanjo in 1999 coupled with the various reforms the government embarked upon domestically and internationally such as NEEDS, NEPAD, and shuttle diplomacy have actually brought out Nigeria out of the messy situation that late General Sani Abacha led the country into. The

alternative strategy of shuttle diplomacy adopted by the regime has, to a greater extent shape the Nigerian foreign policy and regains her image within the comity of Nations.

It is however important to note that the study also found out that the regime within the period under review was able to achieve some successes such as improved bilateral relations, multilateral relations, improve public image as well as active foreign policy. The study finally found out that despite the great successes recorded in the country's foreign policy in the fourth republic, it is discovered that there are challenges that often drag the country into the mud. This includes neglecting internal dynamics in the formulation of Nigerian Foreign policy and other national issues of importance such as Niger-Delta crisis, corruption, Kidnapping, humanitarian issues and the current Boko Haram insurgency which claim many lives and properties within a shortest period including foreign nationals.

Conclusively, there is no doubt that President Olusegun Obasanjo succeeded in re-lunching Nigeria into the orbit of international politics, from her pariah status of the Abacha years. Probably his personal clout, contact and commitment helped a lot in this regard. However, it must be pointed out that the introduction of democratic rule in Nigeria was a critical success factor, which made the world very eager to welcome the country back into fold, in order to perform her natural role as a leader in the West African sub-region and indeed Africa.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings and conclusion, therefore, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The scope of Nigeria's foreign policy should no longer be limited to continental affairs. It should be focused world-wide and geared towards the promotion of our cultural heritage, and scientific, economic and technical cooperation with viable partners.
- ii. The goal of the country's foreign policy should aim at addressing domestic problems and enhancing our national development, and military arrangements with NATO countries in order to give peace a permanent character in our societal needs and our sub-region.
- iii. Nigerian foreign policy should aim at creating benefits for the betterment of the people. It should no longer focus on Africa without clearly defined policy objectives.
- iv. Improve social infrastructure, electricity supply, water supply and sanitation.
- v. Continue the anti-corruption campaign with greater vigor. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission should be independent of the executive, for instance by ensuring that it gets a fixed percentage of federal revenue and reports to a joint council of the executive, judiciary and legislature
- vi. At the national level, Nigeria should ensure the rule of law.

- vii. Nigeria's foreign policy should encompass a clear opinion and strategy on major international issues such as the reform of the United Nations, bilateral relations between Nigeria and members of the [African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States](#) , African Union, European Union, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, [Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries](#), among others.

References

- AFRODAT. (2007): *Nigeria: Foreign Debts, Stolen Wealth, IFIS and the West: A Case Study*
- Ajayi, K. (2006): "Nigeria's Foreign Policy and Image Crisis" *The Social Sciences*, Vol. 1, Issue: 2
- American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition Houghton Mifflin Company, 2009
- Anyaoku, E. (2013): Remarks at the presentation of two books published by the Presidential Advisory Council on Foreign Affairs, Abuja.
- Asobie, H.A. (1990): "Decision Making Models Revisited: An Analysis of the Application of Theories and Models of Foreign Decision Making to the Study of Nigeria's Foreign Policy in Olusanya, G.O. and Akindele, R.A. (eds), *The Structure and Processes of Foreign Policy Making and Implementation in Nigeria 1960-1990*. Lagos: NIIA press.
- Balewa, A.T. (1960): "*Our Great Day Has Arrived*", Text on Independence Day October, 1, 1960. Address.
- Berkers, E. (2011): *Enneagram Type 8-The Challenger*.
<http://www.eclecticenergies.com/enneagram/type8.php>. Accessed 26/07/2011
- Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary, 2005
- Central Bank of Nigeria Annual Reports and Statement of Account 1990 - 1999. Abuja: Central Bank of Nigeria.
- Egwemi, V. (2010): "Managing Nigeria's Image Crisis: Akunyili's Rebranding Programme to the Rescue", *Current Research Journal of Economic Theory* 2(3): 131-135, 2010
- Falana F., (2012): "The Independence of the State of Bakassi: Legal Dimension" A paper presented at 12th Brainstorming Session on Bakassi at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Lagos, 23rd August
- Fawole, Alade. (2012): "Nigerian Foreign Policy: The search for a new paradigm" in Thomas Imobighe and Warisu Alli (eds), *Perspectives on Nigeria's national politics and external relations: Essays in honour of Prof A. Bolaji Akinyemi*, Ibadan, University Press Plc.
- Gambari, I. A. (1989): *Theory and Reality in Foreign Policy Making: Nigeria After the Second Republic*. Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press International
- Gauga, O.P. (2003): *An Introduction to Political Theory (4th Edition)*. New

- Delhi: Macmillan Indian Ltd.
- Gregory, M.S. (2009): *Elephant Ants and Super Powers: Nigeria's Relations with China*, South African Institute of International Affairs Occasional Paper, No. 42 <http://abuja.mfa.gov.il/> Accessed: 21/06/2011
- Kolawole, D. (2004): *Nigeria's Foreign Policy since Independence: Trends, Phases and Changes*. Lagos: Julius and Julius Associates.
- Kissinger, H. (1970): "Domestic Structure and Foreign Policy" in D.V. Edwards (ed), *International Politics and Analysis Readings*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Muhammad-Zaki, B. (2011): *Economic Diplomacy and Nigeria's Foreign Policy*: Ibadan Macmillan Press
- News9.com: Chinese, Nigerian Presidents Agree to Promote Strategic Partners adopted from <http://news9.com> specsids/huvistivenations new. Accessed. 20/03/2010
- Nwachuku, L. A. Uzoigwe, G. N. (2004): *Troubled Journey: Nigeria Since the Civil War*. London: University Press of America
- Obasanjo, O. (1988): *My Command*. Ibadan: Heinemann Publishing Press
- Obioma, J. D. (2013): "Nigeria's father-Christmas foreign policy: A case of unrequited love. Assessed on Feb.11, 2013 from <http://theeconomyng.com/news174.html>
- Ojameruaye, E.O. *A Tentative Analytical Evaluation of President Obasanjo's Performance (May 1999- May 2007)*, <http://www.waado.org/Contents.html>: Accessed: 05/09/2011
- Ojo, B.A. (2001): *Problems and prospects of sustaining democracy in Nigeria*. New York: Nova Science Pub Inc
- Okpokpo, E. (2000): "The Challenges facing Nigeria's Foreign Policy in the Next Millennium" *African Studies Quarterly*, Volume 3, Issue 3, 3(2)
- Oloruntoba, S.O and Akinboye, S.O (2013): "The Crises of Global Capitalism and African Development Trajectory: in Search of Alternative Political Economy?" in *Redeemer's University Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, Vol.1, No.2.
- Paden, J.N. (2008) *Faith and politics in Nigeria: Nigeria as a Pivotal State in the Muslim World*. Washington: USIP
- Rosemary, N. (2005): "*Nigeria's Foreign Policy After the Cold War: Domestic, Regional and External Relations*". IPA: Oxford University
- Rosenau, I.N. (1969): (ed), *International Politics and Foreign Policy*. New York: Free Press
- Snyder, R., Bruck, J. and Sapin, B. (1962): *Foreign Policy Decision Making: An Approach to the Study of International Politics*. New York: The Free press of Glencoe.
- The Guardian 13, September, 1999
- The Punch, November, 21, 2005: "Third Term Bid Immoral: Ex-US Envoys, Northern Leaders Move Against Agenda.