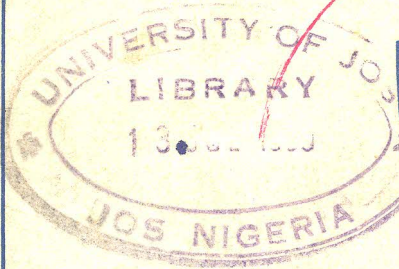


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**TO WHOM MUCH IS GIVEN:
THE IMPERATIVES OF
NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY**

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TO WHOM MUCH IS GIVEN: THE IMPERATIVES OF NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

We begin with two basic propositions. One: that the combined forces of history, geography, and fortuitous circumstances have thrust certain unique responsibilities on Nigeria in her dealings with the rest of the world. Two: that as a consequence, there is a set of basic conceptual, economic, defence and political imperatives which our foreign policy must come to terms with in order to effectively discharge those responsibilities.

Perhaps, Mr. Chairman, I should spend a little time, right at the outset, to explain precisely why these two seemingly trite propositions need restatement at this time. Let us recall that in 1960 the new Nigerian state was born in the context of a bouyant economy and great expectations, among the peoples of the world and Nigerians themselves, that an important new actor had arrived on the world scene. Within the following two decades, inspite of numerous political problems, Nigeria survived a civil war and went into a period of economic

boom and our political confidence knew no bounds. But in the recent past, surely in the past seven years, other circumstances have taken over. We have been battling to revive a depressed and languorous economy. The crisis of unemployment and other forms of social insecurity has deepened. Desperate individuals pursuing desperate means have blighted our image abroad. Those whom we assisted when the going was good have not shown us commensurate solidarity when we have needed it. And, whether we like it or not, the noble nostrums of our foreign policy have begun to ring hollow at a time when many can rightly claim that our priority number one is to set our own house in order. At such times we tend to overlook the unflinching imperatives of foreign policy as evidenced in the recognized aphorism that to whom much is given, much is required.

Under those circumstances we can distinguish between three basic kinds of reactions regarding what our foreign policy posture ought to be. The first reaction is out-and-out *isolationist*. Sometimes this reaction is expressed in economic terms. The reasoning then is to demonstrate that times are hard, that the resources in Nigeria are not enough for Nigerians and that therefore we have no business dabbling in other people's business whether it is in Chad, South Africa, ECOWAS or Angola. According to this reasoning we should rather emulate the American blues singer who, in the luxury of

his poetic licence, can declare that there are twenty-four hours a day, and that he spends twelve hours minding his own business and twelve hours leaving other people's business alone! At other times this reasoning takes on moral and rejectionist overtones. We are reminded that some of those whom we have helped in the past have not shown us much gratitude and that in any case some of them are so culturally different from us, or so destitute, that there can be hardly any basis for claiming affinities between us and them.

The next category of reaction can be termed *insular*. It is evinced in a cosy assurance that Nigeria is big and can very well do without other African countries. In this 'I'm-alright-Jack' reasoning there is little need for Nigeria to waste resources on a West African Economic Community when we can do so much better by concentrating on our own internal market which, it is said, is so much bigger and more advanced than all the other markets put together.

The final category is perhaps the most tendencious. I call it the *obscurantist* category although those who adhere to it believe themselves to be realist. Such a person would argue quite sincerely that there is no use for Nigeria to look ahead beyond her immediate coastline in order to anticipate foreign and defence policy needs for the long term because to do so would only mean acquiring new and burdensome responsibilities. And to do so would be presumptuous. We have a Nigerian expression which encapsulates this somewhat elusive reasoning. "Inyanga de sleep, trouble go wake am". And I

believe that our sometimes obscurantist attitudes towards the debate on developing a Nigerian nuclear know-how is greatly tinged by this type of reaction. More on this further on.

And so in this and many other ways because of prevailing but largely evanescent circumstances, we are tending to move away from a clear understanding of the imperatives of our foreign policy and the fact that on the African continent, at least, Nigeria belongs to that category of countries to whom much is given and of whom much is required.

Most often when we in this country consider Nigeria's endowments we tend to do so principally by making a roll call of Nigeria's physical attributes and other vital statistics in that category. This is what our Minister of External Affairs, Professor Bolaji Akinyemi, recently had to say on that score:

"Nigeria is the largest African country. Our population of 100 million is double that of any other country, and it ensures that one out of every five Africans is a Nigerian. Our GDP (Gross Domestic Product), currently estimated at 71 billion dollars, surpasses that of every African country, and is equal to that of South Africa. In the ECOWAS sub-region, for example, Nigeria's GDP is greater than that of all the other countries combined.

We have the second largest standing army in Africa after Egypt. We have 15.5 million pupils enrolled in primary schools, equal to the entire population of many African countries. Our extensive highway network, estimated at over 108,000 kilometers is second to

none in black Africa. Moreover, Nigeria is the 25th most powerful country in the world in terms of GDP. It is the world's 23rd largest exporting country, and it is the 22nd largest importer.

Most important of all, Nigeria is endowed with an aggressive, energetic and enterprising population....."¹

That was our Minister of External Affairs and these are very impressive figures indeed. And we can produce all kinds of tables such as the one below, including detailed comparison of the military hardware available to Nigeria vis-a-vis other African countries, all intended to show that Nigeria is a colossus towering above all her neighbours and most of her competitors on the African continent.

TABLE 1

Major Indicators in some West and Central African Countries (1985 Estimates)

Country	Population (Million)	GNP (\$ Million)	Per Capital GNP (\$)	Defence (Military Strength)	Total Export (Million)	Total Export (Million)	1984 External Reserves (\$ Million)	Total School Enrolment	Per centage share of U.N. Budget
Nigeria	96.6	85,730	1000	173,000	88,187	89,723	988	5,230,148 (1973)	0.10
Mauritania	1.7	680	440	17,000	31,964 (Ouguiyas)	14,497 (Ouguiyas)	75.3	39,493 (1971)	0.02
Sierra Loene	3.96	1,080	300	4,700	196.4 (Leones)	286.9 (Leones)	238,917 15.5	(1974)	0.02
Zaire	33.51	5,600	190	55,000	3,265.9 (Zaires)	2,750.5 (Zaires)	155.7	3,703,721	0.02
Ghana	13.31	5,650	390	23,000	€3,499 (1982)	€1,939 (1982)	204.3	1,607,281	0.04
Chad	4.92	425	100	n.a.	18,968 CFA Francs (1982)	237.5 CFA Francs (1982)	39.32	n.a.	0.02
Gabon	0.7	2,900	4,100	One Battalion	1181.8 CFA Francs (1982)	237.5 CFA Francs (1982)	39.32	n.a.	0.02
Ivory Coast	9.94	10,810	990	4,950	796.7 Billion CFA Francs (1983)	704.2 Billion CFA Francs (1983)	3.2 (1974)	751,159	0.02
Burkina Faso	6.84	1,580	250	4,070	18,110 CFA Francs (1982)	113,710 CFA Francs (1982)	109.2	150,179	0.02
Benin	4	1,195	300	2,650	13,270 CFA Francs (1980)	69,970 CFA Francs (1980)	4.8 (1974)	303,612	0.02

Note: n.a.

— not

available

Sources:

1. Alan Rake; *New African Year Book, West and Central Africa, 1985—1985—'86* London, IC Publications 1986.
2. George Thomas Kurian; *Encyclopedia of the Third World; Vols I & II* London, Mansell, 1978.

And yet we ourselves are painfully aware that even these shining encomiums must be seriously qualified especially in the circumstances in which our country presently finds itself. Our detractors can even point out, and they have often done so, that each one of these impressive figures only hides depressing problems. They remind us that we have not been able to count our population accurately; that the latest figures on our GDP is at SFEM rate; that we are overburdened by our foreign debts; that our primary and secondary schools are labouring under an education policy that is in a state of flux; that our university graduates go out into a depressed economy which offers little remedy for unemployment; and that in the past few years this aggressive, energetic and enterprising population has been battered even if unbowed.

I point out these aspects in order to remind us that when we recite these marvellous figures on our vital statistics we ought to keep in view the well-known fact that size does not necessarily make for quality. The real legacy that generations of Nigerians should boast of must be the quality of the management of our resources and the quality of life which we leave behind for the masses of our striving citizens.

And this is why, for my part, I wish to count Nigeria's endowments in other terms and in other realms. I have in mind the whole body of the legacy of foreign policies handed down to us across the years. The lofty aims of these policies are clearly expressed in Section 19 of our 1979 Constitution which says:

“The State shall promote African Unity, as well as the total political, economic, social and cultural liberation of Africa and the people of African birth or decent throughout the world and all other forms of international co-operation conducive to the consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect and friendship among all peoples and states, and shall combat racial discrimination in all its manifestations”.

It is clear that although our Constitution marks out the whole world as the domain of our foreign policy, it does reserve a special place in it for Africa and people of African origin. The role it carves out for Nigeria in its commitment to total political and economic liberation of Africa presupposes a powerful and active foreign policy for the country. A close look at the list of major national interests which our foreign policy is expected to promote demonstrates the same emphasis on wide-ranging preoccupation with African affairs:

- (i) the defence of Nigeria’s sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity;
- (ii) the restoration of human dignity to black men and women all over the world, particularly the eradication of colonialism and white minority rule from the face of Africa.
- (iii) the creation of the relevant political and economic conditions in Africa and the rest of the world which will not only facilitate the preservation of the territorial integrity and security of all African countries but also foster national self-reliance in African countries.

- (iv) the promotion and improvement of the economic well-being of the Nigerian citizens and
- (v) the promotion of world peace and justice.

Today the whole world knows that Africa is the centrepiece of Nigeria's foreign policy. But this preferred preoccupation has a long history — as old as the Nigerian state itself. As Nigeria was celebrating independence on October 1, 1960, Africa was already in turmoil.

For, two weeks after the Congolese independence was declared on 30th June, 1960, the Congolese government found itself in a deep crisis. There were mutinies by the army partly due to poor service conditions and low pay. Europeans living in the Congo became involved in the general state of panic. Belgian troops intervened siezing Matadi and the Leopoldville airport. As if this was not already crisis enough, Katanga announced her secession under Moise Tshombe. On the 12th of July, Lumumba's government asked the UN for military assistance against Belgian aggression. By mid-August the Congolese government began to show signs of stress. The break came on the 5th of September when President Kasavabu announced that Lumumba's appointment was revoked and that a new government under one Joseph Ileo had been set up. The same evening Lumumba made a broadcast in which he in his turn revoked the appointment of Kasavabu as President. Anarchy reigned in Leopoldville.

Nigeria made spirited diplomatic efforts to organize the African group at the United Nations. Our government sent a contingent of Nigerian troops as part of the UN force in the Congo. In 1964 when the Congo crisis flared up once more Nigerian troops returned to the Congo under the aegis of the United Nations.

One important result of the Congo crisis had been the division of the African states into two groups — Those who supported Lumumba and those who supported Kasavubu and Tshombe. This rift also revealed serious ideological differences that neutralised the Pan-Africanist ideology which many had thought was the most important single political influence in Africa at the time.

In the wake of this division different groupings emerged in quick succession. Those of you who are familiar with the history of OAU will remember the Brazzaville group — the conservative factor led by Cote d'Ivoire, the Casablanca Group — more radical led by Ghana, Guinea and Mali, and the Monrovia Conference which tried to unite the two extremes. Nigeria put her weight behind the Monrovia Conference. The second meeting of that group held in Lagos from January 25th — 30th, 1962, was a historic landmark in the attempts to set up a continental organisation. It was there that the then Governor-General of Nigeria, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, enunciated one of the corner-stones of Nigerian foreign policy. He said:

“From a general observation, it would appear that there is not much to choose between the respective accords reached by the member-states of the Casablanca Conference and those of the Monrovia Conference But there is one basic difference It is the conspicuous absence of a specific declaration on the part of the Casablanca States of their inflexible belief in the fundamental principles regarding the inalienable rights of African states, as at present constituted, to legal equality to self-determination to safety from interference in their internal affairs through subversive activities by supposedly friendly states ...”³

By May 1963 when the OAU was set up these principles were also enshrined in its charter under Article III.

Meanwhile back in Nigeria the Nigerian public, led principally by students and trade unionists, were helping to define and defend another lofty principles of Nigerian foreign policy — nonalignment. The occasion was the new Defence Pact concluded between Nigeria and Britain. The spate of criticism from the general public coupled with violent demonstrations by students finally led to the abrogation of the treaty in 1962.

Between 1962 and 1965 Nigeria intervened successfully in many conflicts on the African continent — The most notable include the mutinies within the Tanganyikan army in early 1964. At first President Nyerere had called in British troops to help him maintain law and order. This move proved most unpopular. Many radical Africans were willing to condemn Nyerere for letting in colonialism by the back door. Also

Tanganyika was the seat of the headquarters of the Liberation Committee and was itself next door to the minority settler regimes in the South. The new development was hardly conducive to the morale of the freedom fighters. It was Nigeria which in the end baled Tanganyika out. The extraordinary meeting of the OAU Council of Ministers which met in February 1964 over the issue, called for the replacement of the "neocolonialist" troops by African troops. In accordance with this decision the Nigerian government dispatched a battalion of our troops to Tanganyika to hold the fort. At a stroke Nigerian foreign policy had achieved three things. It showed its willingness to sustain the authority of the new continental body; it assisted a sister country in mortal danger of disintegration; and it demonstrated that Nigeria was solidly committed to the fight for the eradication of neo-colonialist influences in Africa by word and by deed. These three principles have remained more or less consistent in the body of credos which form our foreign policy.

February 1964 was also the month in which an ad hoc Commission set up by the OAU finally succeeded in settling the border crisis between Algeria and Morocco. Full-scale armed hostilities had broken out, in September 1963, between Algeria and Morocco over Moroccan claims on Algerian-controlled territory near their undefined border in the Sahara. The origins of the dispute lay of course in colonial history; its immediate causes were however a clash of the national interests of

the two countries — on the one side Moroccan irredentism and on the other the attractions of the mineral resources in the disputed territory. Ideological differences between the two regimes compounded the problem. What however exacerbated the problem was the fact that the Soviet Union and Egypt were known to be supplying Algeria with arms while France, Spain and the United States were known to have their sympathies on the Moroccan side.

As far as the African continent was concerned the principle at stake was that of producing African settlement to African disputes. Nigeria joined Ethiopia, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Senegal Sudan and Tanganyika in insisting on this principle. Their efforts paid off in February, 1964 when an agreement was reached between the belligerents. Morocco agreed to withdraw from the positions which shed occupied before October 1st 1963 while a no-man's land was created along the common border and the strategic highlands were demilitarized. The principle of "African settlement for African problems" is one which our foreign policy has assiduously pursued ever since and the responsibilities emanating from it feature as one of the important requirements of the foreign policy which has been handed down to us.

Mr. Chairman, no one is perfect. And as much as our foreign policy is committed to lofty objectives, and, in its practice, has often attained outstanding heights, we should be prepared to admit that it has also had its low-water mark. One such episode was the Rhodesian

Lasco of 1965. On November 11, 1965, the Rhodesian Government, headed by Ian Smith, declared independence under the now infamous title of UDI (Unilateral Declaration of Independence). The OAU had repeatedly, in numerous resolutions, urged the British government not to allow the minority regime in Rhodesia to seize independence. At the London Conference of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers in June 1963, the British government had promised "unimpeded progress to majority rule for the Rhodesian Africans". Consequently the extra-ordinary meeting of the Council of Ministers which was convened in Addis Ababa on December 3, 1965, called on the United Kingdom to put down the Rhodesian rebellion. It resolved that:

"... if the United Kingdom does not crush the rebellion and restore law and order, and thereby prepare way for majority rule in Southern Rhodesia by December 15, 1965, the member states of the OAU shall sever diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom".

When on the 15th of December, 1965, the Rhodesian UDI was still maintained, only ten African states followed the Addis Ababa decision. And Nigeria was not one of them. But we know the rest of the story. Zimbabwe went on to win her independence and Nigerian foreign policy played a glorious role in the closing chapters of that drama — more than making up for that 1965 debacle. Our commitment to the liberation movement has not faltered since that first false step. Lest anyone

should be in doubt about it Section 19 of our 1979 Constitution enshrined that commitment in our law. In that regard a new lofty standard had been set for us in our foreign policy.

Here, Mr. Chairman, I wish to make a timely point. In the annals of Nigerian history some of our chroniclers have ascribed the reason for this nadir in our foreign policy to what they see as the incorrigible conservatism of the Tafawa Balewa regime and its lukewarm attitude to the liberation movement. I beg to differ. We must remember that it was under that regime that Nigerian foreign policy led the successful fight to expel South Africa from the Commonwealth. On many occasions Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa had openly insisted that on the question of racial discrimination Nigerian foreign policy could not contemplate compromise. Furthermore, the South African Prime Minister, Verwoed, had this to say of Tafawa Balewa:

“The Nigerian Prime Minister is not a moderate on the question of white and non-white relations but a fanatic in his own cause.”⁴

We must also remember that these were the early days of our independence when our foreign policy still seemed to be symbiotically tied to British foreign policy, British defence and British political etiquette. I on my part, am more inclined to put down this fiasco to the distractions of our British connections on our foreign policy. These distractions still persist today. But that is another story Tafawa Balewa's mistake, in my view, was certainly a mistake of the head; but it was not a mistake of the heart.

But let us now proceed to the period 1966 to 1970. During this time it now fell to our role to defend one of the cardinal features of our foreign policy — the preservation of Nigeria's territorial integrity. True enough the danger basically emanated from within in the form of break-down of law and order, the fractionating of our army and police and finally secession. But with the involvement of no less than seven foreign countries in the conflict (Soviet Union, United Kingdom, United Arab Republic, Czechoslovakia, France, and even Portugal and South Africa) Nigerian foreign policy had a major task in employing our diplomacy to keep all these outside forces at bay for the sake of our territorial integrity. And we succeeded admirably. We kept on the right side of the OAU and the principles of that organisation. One of the major achievements of Nigerian diplomacy at that time was its ability to keep the question of Nigerian unity and territorial integrity constantly at the forefront and its success in winning universal respect for those principles. In our hour of need our foreign policy showed itself to be an excellent instrument for the defence of our territorial integrity.

But perhaps the greatest achievement of policy during that period was the successful coordination of our diplomatic and military efforts at the highest levels. Of course that was war time. But surely it has lessons for us even in peace time. And we should have reason to return later to this point — the need to constantly coordinate our defence and foreign policies, also in peace time, as the surest way to protect and enhance our territorial integrity.

If we now turn to Nigeria's foreign economic relations we would find ample evidence of spirited and successful attempts to pursue our foreign policy aim of promoting and improving the economic well-being of the Nigerian citizens. We can note the first efforts by Nigeria, between 1963 and 1966, to conclude a treaty of Association with the EEC (European Economic Community). Neither the original Treaty of Rome nor the Yaoundé Conventions had been found satisfactory by the Nigerian side. Not only did those agreements discriminate in favour of the franco-phone African countries but their provisions were thought to discourage the promotion of increased trade flows between African countries and especially between the various monetary zones. The Agreement on Association between Nigeria and the EEC, known as the Lagos Convention, which was signed on July 16, 1966, never came into force. Not only did France and Luxembourg refuse to ratify the agreement but our Civil War interlude effectively put an end to further progress on that front.

The expiration of the Yaoundé Convention in 1972 coincided with the enlargement of the EEC in the same year by the admission of Britain into the Community. This brought to the forefront the question of the fate of Commonwealth countries who had operated under special arrangements that included the Commonwealth Sugar agreement and the Commonwealth preference. Nigeria played a leading role in the negotiations which followed. For example when formal negotiations between the EEC and African Ambassadors began in

Brussels in 1973 it was a Nigerian, Ambassador E. O. Sanu, who was elected the negotiating Chairman and spokesman for the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific countries).⁵ On February 28, 1975, the Lome Convention was signed in Togo. Nigeria ratified the agreement on March 21, 1975.

A few aspects of the Convention are worthy of note. Perhaps the most revolutionary idea in the Lome treaty is the system agreed for compensating fluctuations in the earnings of export commodities from the ACP members. The Convention lists twelve commodities — raw materials which are particularly susceptible to fluctuations in price either because of bad harvests or general slump in the world market. These are cocoa, palm oil, groundnuts, tea, cotton, coffee, wood, bananas, hides and skins, coconuts, sisal and iron ore. By the provision of the so-called STABEX system those ACP countries whose export earnings depend up to 7.5 per cent or more (in the case of the poorer signatories the figure is 2.5 per cent) on any one of those twelve commodities are entitled to compensation if their earnings fall below a certain agreed level. Nigeria led the negotiation for that agreement even though she would not be entitled to its provisions because of her high income from crude oil. Furthermore, the Convention creates considerable scope for industrial cooperation between the two parties with promises from the EEC states to run programmes for industrial training, to transfer technological know-how and to help in the promotion of ACP products in the EEC markets. Finally, the

ACP countries have access to the EDF (European Development Fund). Nigeria in particular has gained from the operations of the European Investment Bank of which the IDB (Industrial Development Bank and NEPA, among others, have been beneficiaries.

28th May, 1975 saw the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Here again Nigeria, together with Togo, was the moving spirit in the negotiation, from 1972, which led to the signing of the final treaty. The objective is the setting up of a common market in the region through the removal of trade barriers, the encouragement of fiscal harmonisation and free movement of persons, services and capital.

Nigeria's sponsorship of the ECOWAS accords well not only with our foreign policy objectives of improving the economic well-being of Nigerians but also with the concentric circles perspective of our foreign policy. The Community, by creating a liberalised market zone around Nigeria could be a valuable incentive for Nigerian trade and industry at the same time as it offers potentials for maximising our influence in foreign affairs in the West African region. There can be no doubt that Nigeria is the most important member of the Community — a fact which has not infrequently evoked fears and jealousies among our smaller co-member, especially the francophone countries. Nigeria accounts for over 57% of the population of the Community. Its annual contribution to the Community's funds is assessed at 32.5% of the Community budget and Nigeria is among

the few members who always pay up promptly. In addition Nigeria supports other ventures in the region such as the ECOWAS Bank and the West African clearing house. We also participate in bilateral investments in the region such as iron mining, cement and sugar projects in Benin, petro-chemicals in Senegal and uranium in the Republic of Niger. In all this our foreign policy has been following the precepts laid down in the Second National Development Plan (1970—74) which sees the West African region as our "domain of immediate policy relevance"... in the belief that "Nigeria's industrial experience and development potential can provide the focal point in the active pursuit of West African economic integration".

I hasten to add here that although we are discussing Nigeria's external economic relations within the general perspective of Nigeria's foreign policy, the conduct of these external economic relations is not the exclusive preserve of the Ministry of External Affairs. At least three other ministries — Finance, National Planning and Trade — join in those responsibilities. In fact as far as OPEC is concerned, since 1984 it is the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy which has the primary responsibility. Nonetheless our external economic relations are based on and are part and parcel of the basic principles of our foreign policy. For this reason we shall have cause to look more closely into the organisation of its conduct.

In April 1980 the Shagari government hosted a special economic Summit of the OAU, in Lagos, in pursuance

of the principle that Africa remained "the corner-stone of Nigeria's policy". The Lagos Plan of Action was the document which resulted from this Economic Summit. It called for an African Common Market by the year 2000 and recommended the setting up of functional institutions for research and development in the nuclear and agro-industrial fields.⁶ Other areas in which Nigerian foreign policy has continued to address the issue of economic interaction in the West African sub-region include the attempts to conclude a Quadripartite Accord between Nigeria, Benin, Ghana and Togo, in 1985 and also the Nigerian expressions at the 1986 ECOWAS Summit in Abuja, of its willingness to commence, with effect from June, 1986, the implementation of the second phase of the ECOWAS protocol on Free Movement of Persons and Right of Residence.

The Murtala/Obasanjo regimes carried our commitment to liberation to new heights. On November 1975, on Angola's independence day two rival governments were proclaimed. The first was in Luanda where Agostinho Neto of the MPLA proclaimed the new regime; the other in Huambo where Jonas Savimbi of UNITA set up a coalition administration with the FNLA, under his presidency. From then on the events raced to a climax. Two days after, the dissident forces of FNLA and UNITA, **aimed by massive supplies of arms from their foreign supporters and units of regular South African army, were making a costly but sure progress to the capital, Luanda. Under the circumstances the MPLA government undertook two measures. First, it**

arranged a massive increase in its supply of Soviet arms. Secondly, it invited Cuba to send in an estimated force of 10,000 men to assist the MPLA forces. These measures not only stopped the advances of the opposing forces but laid the foundation for a total victory.

The situation remained tense. The American President, Gerald Ford, sent a circular letter to African states insinuating the dangers of Communist involvement in Angola and calling on the Africans to condemn the involvement of the Russians and the Cubans. The Nigerian government reacted with alacrity throwing its weight behind the MPLA government. It published Ford's circular letter together with a reply in which it characterized the American note as an attempt at "arm-twisting, an insult to the intelligence of African nations and scorn to the dignity of black men". From now on Nigeria led the so-called progressive group on the Angolan issue. It went further and announced its recognition of the MPLA as the legitimate government of Angola. But there were other countries which did not share Nigeria's views.

It was under these circumstances that the Extraordinary Summit of the OAU, the first of its kind, was convened in Addis Ababa, on 10th January, 1976 to discuss the Angolan issue. Two resolutions lay before the assembled delegates. The first, calling for recognition of the MPLA, was sponsored by Nigeria with the backing of twenty-one states. The other resolution presented by Senegal and calling for a national union

government, was also co-sponsored by twenty-one states. In effect, twenty-two states against twenty-two and the Chairman was none other than Idi Amin. The rest is now history. Within a month of the Extraordinary Summit the MPLA had been recognized by a majority of the OAU members and the OAU Secretariat was able to admit Angola on 11th February, 1976 as the 47th member of the OAU.

Similarly, in 1978 the Nigerian government nationalized Barclays Bank on the grounds that the Chairman of Barclays Bank International in London had spoken in defence of the apartheid system. In July 1979 the assets of British Petroleum in Nigeria were also nationalized. The charge this time was that BP had sold crude oil to South Africa but the whole world believed that Nigeria, through this measure, was sending our clear signals of its displeasure at the purported inclination of the Thatcher government to lift sanctions on Rhodesia and to recognize the government of Abel Muzorewa.

We are now in a position to clinch the point under our first proposition, namely, that history, geography, and fortuitous circumstances have imposed unique responsibilities on Nigeria. We have seen that in terms of size and natural endowments Nigeria is big enough to command high expectations from our own citizens, from our brothers and sisters of the African continent and from the whole world at large. It was perhaps merely a fortunate accident that in the early 1970's Nigeria struck it rich in crude oil. That fortuitous factor added more sinews to our foreign policy so that we were able to pursue our aims more confidently and more resourcefully.

But I have tried to show that our lofty objectives have always been there and that during our history, the Nigerian people and those who have managed our affairs have always had the vision that in our foreign affairs Nigeria must remain in the ranks of those who are masters of the game. With all their human failings our successive leaders have diligently pursued that policy whether in the defence of our territorial integrity, the pursuit of new economic horizons for our citizens, the defence of human freedom, aid to our neighbours or that preferred preoccupation of our Constitution — the total liberation and welfare of Africa and peoples of African origin.

Those eminent legacies which we inherited from those who have passed before us do us credit as a nation; but they also constitute responsibilities which we are by duty bound to discharge. They are the imperatives of our foreign policy. And they serve us notice that there is a certain standard below which we dare not fall in our dealing with the outside world, if we do not wish to devalue our historic credentials. Let us now turn to those imperatives.

The Imperatives of Nigeria Foreign Policy

Given the level of ambition of Nigerian foreign policy, the first point that must be made is that a good defence policy is a basic prerequisite. Nigeria is fortunate in that she is surrounded by neighbours with whom she shares ethnic affinities in the border areas. In addi-

tion all the neighbouring countries are much smaller than Nigeria in terms of size and resources. On the other hand the countries surrounding Nigeria are all french-speaking and operate within France's orbit of influence. Many of them have defence arrangements with France and other powers. Furthermore the fact of Nigeria's size and economic power has often given rise to resentment against Nigeria on the part of those countries.

The responsibilities facing our foreign and defence policies in this regard can be summarized as the defence of Nigeria's independence, the protection of our delicate process of evolving a Nigerian way of life, the promotion of our fledgling economic might and the fostering of an image and a network of solidarity around us behind which the Nigerian social order can prosper.

And it must not be thought that Nigeria's first line of defence is located at our borders. Ideally, our first line of defence must be perceived to lie within the territories of contiguous states thus affording us a viable buffer zone. And the more we commit our trade and industrial resources in the surrounding states the more this principle of defence becomes imperative. For this reason the proper coordination of our defence and foreign policies becomes a vital necessity. An active and effective foreign policy would save costs for defence by helping to produce favourable conditions of cordiality and mutual commitment between Nigeria and our immediate neighbours.

Our maritime borders are particularly vulnerable to foreign machinations. Well over 85% of our foreign earnings is accounted for by crude oil. And oil is exploited predominantly in the maritime zone which stretches from 10 nautical miles off-shore within the continental shelf to about 41 nautical miles off the Calabar port. Within the same area there are vast resources of the sea such as fish and mineral resources which will increasingly become crucial for the economic survival of Nigeria. It is said that vast areas containing our oil installations — including Calabar port — are within shell-ing distance from Malabo in Equatorial Guinea. The area known as the Bakasi Peninsula has been a subject of lively controversy between Nigeria and Cameroun. In 1981 five Nigerian soldiers were killed in the zone by Camerounian gendarms. Moreover there is increasing evidence of foreign presence in those areas including Sao Tome and Principe. South Africa is known to be attempting to entrench her presence within the South Atlantic and has recently been acquiring submarine plans from West Germany for that purpose.

For the long term we should pay particular attention to the entire zone known as the South Atlantic bordered in the west principally by Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina and in the east by South Africa, Angola, Namibia, Gabon, Congo and Cameroun and other West African countries. The defence of that zone impinges on the viability of the Nigerian state since it governs our access to the sea and to sea resources and the life-line to our major economic resources will remain there for a long

time to come. It therefore becomes an imperative of Nigeria's foreign and defence policies to safeguard that zone as a basic requirement of policy.

This raises the question of defence spending. Of late it has become conventional wisdom to question the admittedly sizeable allocations to defence in our budget — an allocation which has generally stayed around the 20% mark. The main argument is that it is impossible for government to bear the burden of social services such as utility services, education and health while at the same time maintaining such high levels of spending on defence.

There is no doubt that the economic constraints on Nigeria in the past few years make it necessary for us to revise our view on the appropriate level of spending on Defence. And it is clear from the budgetary allocations for 1987 that government is aware of this fact. Nevertheless we ought not lose sight of the commitments which we have historically accepted as a basic requirement for Nigeria's foreign policy. The need to be able to safeguard our territory should not be sacrificed even in times of economic recession. In a situation in which Nigeria has ambitions to retain leadership in the sub-region a vigilant and costly defence is a necessary price for our objectives. The penalties for lack of preparedness are likely to be infinitely more damaging and costly than any price we may have to pay in terms of tightening our belt for the sake of our defence.

But in addition it will be necessary for us to make greater efforts to ensure that our defence allocations are spent more effectively. In particular the indigenous production of basic armaments and militaryware should be encouraged more vigorously. Furthermore we should spend on highly sophisticated weaponry only when we can be assured that there is a clear linkage between them and defence of objectives and strategic planning. One must also hope that before long, with the on-going organisation for a political programme, the energies of the military will be fully released so that they may concentrate on doing what they do best, namely, the defence of the country.

The burgeoning debate over the merits and demerits of Nigeria requiring nuclear know-how again demonstrates that some Nigerians are worried that the country will not be able to afford large spendings on a nuclear adventure while large numbers of our citizens do not know where to find their next meal. However it must be noted that that debate has gone somewhat awry. The impression has been given that nuclear know-how necessarily implies the production of a nuclear bomb. And moreover those who give this impression sometimes assert that the only reason why Nigeria would want nuclear know-how is in order to match the threat posed by South Africa.

In fact, for a more balanced debate it will be necessary to point out that nuclear know-how is a fact of modern life which opens up a lot of leeway for any country that wishes to remain viable in the first ranks —

not least of all in the field of energy resources. Let us also note that a country such as Sweden, which is neutral, acquired the know-how in the early 1950's but has resolutely refused to produce a missile even though she has made sure to keep abreast of its development and the development of a delivery system. In a complex world in which the polarization of foreign interests and new defence alliances are throwing the long shadows of military threat at our doorstep it pays to be prepared. I believe it would be a criminal omission for Nigeria to deliberately opt out of a crucial development of the 21st century. Nuclear know-how is not acquired overnight. If we continue to work diligently at improving our economy, there is no reason why in the next decade or so we should not be able to commit more resources to modernization. It is ironical to reflect that only 10 years ago we should have been able to spend on such development without tears. On that occasion in a position of affluence we did not show that foresight but squandered our resources in a most prodigal fashion. I believe it is time to show foresight now in a position of penury, by planning ahead so that we can sieze the day when the economy improves. Looking around us in the South Atlantic, at least three countries, Brazil, Argentina and South Africa are reputed to have acquired the nuclear know-how already. A fine regional leader Nigeria would be indeed if we allowed that technology to pass us by irretrievably!

The next area concerns organization, funding and training in our Ministry of External Affairs. If we accept the fact that both our stature and objectives demand that we should pursue a vigorous foreign policy, then it goes without saying that we must be prepared to provide enough funding and training facilities in order to maintain a first-class service. Time was when the Nigerian foreign services was reputed to rank among the best in the world — so much effort had the government put into training its personnel well before inde-

TABLE 2
BUDGETARY ALLOCATIONS TO THE FOREIGN
SERVICE IN SELECTED AFRICAN COUNTRIES
(1984 figures) as percentage of total budget. 1

	%
SENEGAL	6%
BENIN REPUBLIC	3.94%
COTE D'IVOIRE	3.3%
ZAIRE	3%
NIGERIA	1.52%

1. *See* A. BOLOJI AKINYEMI "BALANCE AND CREDIBILITY IN NIGERIAN FOREIGN POLICY" GOLD MEDAL LECTURE SERIES, LAGOS, SEPTEMBER, 1986.

pendence. We also provided an adequate level of funding. Only a few weeks ago the Federal Government had to send out 10 million naira to bale out our legations abroad where they could no longer make both ends meet. Staff were not receiving their salaries; in some cases rents were owed, electric lights were cut off and heating could not be provided in residences in mid-winter. Worse still Nigeria was failing to meet her dues in some international organizations. It is well that the government took prompt action but if we indeed mean to maintain our stature, our foreign legations must not be allowed to languish. The staff ought to be well trained and their morale must be kept high when they are out to serve the country. One of the basic assets to be desired in a foreign service is a confident corps. Nigeria's stature attracts enough resentment towards our foreign service operators as it is; they should be made confident and well-trained enough to surmount it. In these days when we are battling with the damaging effects of drug-trafficking on our image there is an added reason to make our foreign service operators independent and confident.

There is much room for improvement in the training of our foreign service staff. Too few of the young recruits seem to now have the right amount of exposure to practical service in legations abroad. That situation calls for urgent improvement. Besides more of the staff should be encouraged to master foreign languages. It is not conceivable that Nigeria can play its rightful role to perfection in international matters unless the foreign

language resources within the Ministry are kept ample and well trained. With so many ubiquitous Nigerian students who have acquired ability even in the remotest of languages this should not pose an insuperable problem. What we are experiencing now is the fact that our francophone neighbours generally seem to master the English language more than we master French. There are historically understandable reasons for that. For example, the predominant American culture in this epoch, as seen in the enormous influence of American music and television, has made the English language more readily accessible to our French speaking neighbours than French is to the anglophone world. But we should not allow this fact to operate to the detriment of our diplomacy. English and French are now fairly at par as the languages of diplomacy. And since we are surrounded by frenchspeaking neighbours we have a stronger stake than most in seeing that we can operate effectively in both languages.

We should find ways of strengthening the hand of the Ministry of External Affairs in the conduct of our External Economic Relations. It is possible and it should be salutary to tighten the cooperation between the Ministry and other relevant ministries such as Trade, National Planning and Finance by locating more responsibility in the Ministry of External Affairs. Officers who are seconded from other ministries should be high ranking enough to make adequate input into policy.

Finally the experience of the civil war years should be put into use effectively now in peace time, regarding the

co-ordination between defence and foreign policies. To begin with there is every need for the Minister of External Affairs always to have a place in the highest policy-making authority of the land. Beyond that, there should be greater coordination of intelligence between the Ministries of Defence and External Affairs.

The All-Nigerian Conference on Foreign Policy which took place in Kuru in April 1986 proved to be a valuable asset in foreign-policy formation. We may recall that at the Conference various shades of opinion and works of life were represented. It was the first time that such a Conference had been convened. One of the suggestions put forward by the Conference was the setting up of a Nigerian Council on Foreign Relations. Judging from the interest and the solidarity shown at the Kuru Conference such an institution definitely has a place in the realms of foreign policy formation. Even though the Council should ideally be a private organisation, independent of government, it would be valuable if government used its enormous influence to make sure that it gets off the ground properly. In the long run such an institution ought to be an asset to both government and the Ministry of External Affairs, by helping to mobilize and inform public opinion — among other functions.

The present commitment of the government to promoting ECOWAS must be commended. Perhaps our foreign policy should now seek in a more determined fashion to work out a more stable relationship with France. Hitherto we have often seemed to shy away

from that task sometimes resigning ourselves to the belief that France is Nigeria's competitor number one in the West African region. That may well be but it is equally true that today France, for good or for ill, is deeply involved in our economy. Her stakes in Nigeria are very high indeed. Consequently Nigerian policy ought now to have a stronger basis for influencing

TABLE 3(a)

Direction of Nigeria's External Trade, 1960-1979:
Import by Regional Groupings (as percentage of total value of imports)

Year	Countries and Regional Groupings									Total
	United Kingdom	Other Commonwealth Countries*	Western Europe	United States	Eastern Europe	Japan	W. Africa	Others		
1960	43.6	5.9	26.0	5.4	2.0	13.1	0.3	9.6	100	
1961	38.8	7.8	26.2	5.4	2.6	13.8	0.3	5.1	100	
1962	36.8	7.4	27.5	7.5	3.0	12.4	0.2	5.3	100	
1963	36.3	6.4	30.1	4.0	3.6	13.8	0.3	6.1	100	
1964	31.3	5.3	30.0	11.5	3.0	12.3	0.4	6.1	100	
1965	31.5	5.8	32.1	12.2	2.9	9.5	0.4	5.6	100	
1966	30.0	6.0	33.9	16.3	2.8	5.6	0.5	4.9	100	
1967	29.0	5.6	32.6	12.6	3.8	8.5	0.6	7.3	100	
1968	31.4	4.7	32.8	11.7	5.0	3.8	1.0	9.6	100	
1969	35.0	4.7	30.5	11.9	3.9	3.8	0.6	9.7	100	
1970	28.3	3.1	45.0	11.5	3.6	0.8	0.8	7.0	100	
1971	32.0	4.9	31.0	14.1	4.1	8.3	0.3	5.2	100	
1972	29.5	4.6	36.4	10.4	3.4	9.9	0.3	5.5	100	
1973	27.1	4.0	37.2	10.3	3.7	9.2	0.2	8.2	100	
1974	23.1	4.0	40.5	12.3	4.2	9.2	0.4	6.2	100	
1975	23.0	2.4	43.7	11.0	3.1	9.8	0.5	6.0	100	
1976	23.0	2.5	44.5	11.7	1.8	9.6	0.5	6.0	100	
1977	22.0	2.8	44.3	11.2	2.6	10.7	0.8	5.7	100	
1978	21.9	3.5	45.0	10.6	2.2	10.7	0.4	5.6	100	
1979	18.9	3.4	45.9	10.7	2.1	10.9	0.4	7.8	100	

Source: Computed from Central Bank of Nigeria *Economic and Financial Review*, Vol. 6 No. 1, June 1968 p. 79; Vol 8, No. 1 June 1970 p. 79 Vol. 9 No. 2 December 1971 p. 225; Vol. 10 No. 2, December, 1972, p 62; Vol. 19, No. 2, December, 1981, p. 57; Vol. 15, No. 1, June 1977, p. 81.

* Excluding Commonwealth countries in West Africa.

** Error due to rounding off.

France. A look at Table 3 also shows how Nigeria's trade with the European Community has increased by leaps and bounds over the past ten years. By contrast our trade with the United Kingdom is dwindling in importance. There is every reason to expect that even in political matters, regardless of the Commonwealth, Nigeria will find her relations with the European Community and the USA more important than our relations with the UK. In any case the UK is now our remorseless competitor where it pinches most — light crude oil. Our political problems with them are also mounting and the attitude of the present Thatcher regime to Nigerian problems is not the most charitable. In fact if matters deteriorate further one will not be surprised to see a considerable exodus of Nigerians from Britain (and the United States as well) if their continued domicile there is made more untenable than is the case now. As we pursue our economic destiny in the West African region Nigeria now needs to come to terms with new influences in Europe.

TABLE 3(b)

Direction of Nigeria's External Trade, 1960—1979:
Export and Re-exports by Regional Groupings (as percentage of total value of exports)

Year	Countries and Regional Groupings								Total**
	United Kingdom	Other Commonwealth Countries*	Western Europe	United States	Eastern Europe	Japan	W. Africa	Others	
1960	47.6	1.4	33.9	9.4	0.4	1.5	0.7	5.2	100
1961	43.9	1.2	33.6	11.1	0.4	1.5	0.9	7.2	100
1962	42.0	1.8	38.0	10.8	1.0	0.9	3.3	2.2	100
1963	39.4	2.1	42.7	9.2	0.8	1.3	3.4	1.1	100
1964	37.9	1.6	40.6	6.7	2.3	1.7	5.2	4.4	100
1965	38.2	1.3	41.0	10.0	3.2	1.2	2.0	3.1	100
1966	37.3	4.3	39.8	8.0	1.2	1.5	1.9	6.0	100
1967	29.9	4.3	48.0	7.9	3.0	2.6	1.5	2.8	100
1968	28.9	3.8	45.5	8.3	5.7	1.8	3.0	3.0	100
1969	27.3	3.0	44.0	12.6	3.6	1.0	0.8	7.1	100
1970	28.3	3.1	45.0	11.5	5.6	0.8	2.1	7.0	100
1971	21.5	2.3	45.8	17.3	3.4	1.4	2.1	6.2	100
1972	21.0	2.0	42.8	20.9	1.8	3.8	2.1	5.6	100
1973	16.9	3.3	36.3	24.1	1.4	4.6	1.1	10.5	100
1974	18.5	2.2	34.7	27.4	1.8	4.1	1.4	11.5	100
1975	14.1	1.3	33.5	29.0	1.8	3.5	1.3	15.6	100
1976	14.3	0.6	32.2	35.1	0.2	3.4	1.7	12.5	100
1977	8.1	10.0	22.1	39.5	0.2	0.1	2.3	17.6	100
1978	6.4	4.0	35.0	42.2	0.3	0.1	2.5	9.5	100
1979	6.1	7.2	36.1	44.4	0.2	0.2	1.7	4.2	100

Source:

Computed from Central Bank of Nigeria, *Economic and Financial Review*, Vol. 6, No. 1, June 1968, p. 82 Vol. 8 No., June 1970. p. 82, Vol. 13. No. 1 June, 1975, p. 54; Vol. 15, No. 1, June 1977, p. 82; Vol. 19, No. 1, June, 1981, p. 53.

- * Excluding Commonwealth countries in West Africa.
- ** Error due to rounding off.

Of recent new ideas have been fermenting at our Ministry of External Affairs. The venture into the concert of Medium Powers perhaps confirms our earlier proposition that Nigeria is committed to an ambitious foreign policy. But one would like to believe that the venture is not being undertaken merely for the sake of prestige. Indeed there is sense in seeking ways to counterbalance some existing international forces which are now bearing down increasingly on Nigeria — especially in the South Atlantic zone. Besides when the fight against apartheid has been fought and won, we would definitely need other political forums in order to deal with the changing spectrum of our competitors. For that reason the venture deserves encouragement. It will be necessary, however, to constantly ensure that moves undertaken in that direction are sufficiently canvassed so that the Nigerian public is not alienated.

A more important area is perhaps Nigerian policy towards the so-called African Diaspora. Our policy should try to create avenues for maintaining a rapprochement between Nigeria and peoples of African origin in the Americas, Caribbean and South Pacific. Not to do this would deprive Nigeria of one of the important avenues of realising her longstanding ambition of being a worthy representative of the black race.

We should speak out whenever there are legitimate reasons to believe that the interests and human rights of the African Diaspora are violated or trampled upon within certain countries. We should use our influence with such countries to try to better the situation of our

African comrades. In the past decade or so our economic relations with Brazil have grown to a very important level. There is no doubt that there are areas in which Nigerian policy and Brazilian policy can come closer still. But we have yet to see a resolute attempt on the part of our policy to use our growing relations with Brazil to instigate a fresh and fairer deal with the African Diaspora in that country. One of the most important legacies that Nigerian foreign policy has inherited is the important tradition of Pan-Africanism. Any country which aspires to be in the forefront of African affairs must of necessity become a flagbearer for that tradition. In its heyday Pan-Africanism rooted itself in the West Indies and in North America before it came home to roost in African. We should recognise our duty now to use every means available to us — diplomacy, economic power, culture and propaganda — to carry forward those pristine aspirations of Pan-Africanism. And Nigeria is in an excellent position to take over the mantle of leadership of Pan-Africanism.

Our record in the liberation movement is good; it is imperative that we should keep it high. Events in South Africa have reached a critical stage and are rapidly approaching a climax. No one knows what form the denouement will take. One thing is certain: whatever the course of development of the crisis, Nigeria will be called upon to strain her energies to bring about the liberation of Southern Africa. The one issue on which the whole of Africa unites is the question of liberation.

Here again any country which aspires to lead Africa must maintain unimpeachable credentials on that issue.

It is not going to be easy; but we must prepare ourselves. This is the time to project the right priorities in our Foreign and Defence policies for the coming struggle. It is my belief that just as we must strain every energy on the economic front in organising ECOWAS so must we look to our Foreign and Defence policies in the South Atlantic. Every arm of our Defence is destined for a crucial role in this preparation but one of the indices of greatness for Nigeria in the next twenty years will be how far we succeed in developing our resources as a maritime power in the region. I believe also that if we pursue those priorities in our foreign and defence policies we are likely to provide a powerful impetus for our domestic struggle to produce a united, productive and patriotic nation.

Mr. Chairman, in the past five years or so Nigerians have passed through an excruciating economic depression. One of its most serious effects has been the advent of a crisis of expectations among ordinary Nigerians. Under such circumstances we are apt to forget or else be inclined to throw overboard some of the eminent responsibilities to which our forebears have committed this country. But we should not allow ourselves to become insular, isolationist or obscurantist. Even in our period of adversity it is apt that we remember that the bad times must surely pass away. In the meantime we can neither stop the progress of time nor the machinations of our adversaries. For that reason

Nigerians should constantly keep in view the eminent but onerous responsibilities which have been handed down to us in our foreign policy and always discharge them in the full knowledge that we are a link in a chain of history which has committed us to great achievements.

TABLE 4

Nigeria's African Trade, (1973—1983)
(As percentage of total trade) Non-Oil

	<i>Imports</i>	<i>Exports</i>	<i>Oil Exports</i>
1973	0.9	4.5	1.5
1974	1.2	4.6	1.7
1975	1.0	3.5	1.9
1976	0.9	2.5	2.0
1977	1.2	3.1	2.3
1978	1.0	3.5	3.4
1979	1.2	3.7	3.4
1980	1.1	3.4	2.8
1981	1.1	3.4	2.9
1982	0.7	2.5	2.6
1983	0.7	2.5	2.2

Source: Central Bank of Nigeria, Annual Report, various years.

NOTES:

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