

Afrocentric Policy of Murtala/Obasanjo: Insight and Foresight for National Interest in Nigeria's Foreign Policy

Chituru NYEWUSIRA, PhD

Department of History & Diplomatic Studies,
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Nigeria
nyewusira@gmail.com

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Abstract

This Study examined the foreign policy of Murtala/Obasanjo administration between 1975 and 1979. The study adopted a historical research method. In using this method, there was great reliance on secondary sources of data. Observations from the information in the sources were subjected to critical analysis and interpretations before conclusions were made. One preponderant phenomenon associated with the foreign policy of the Murtala/Obasanjo administration was Afrocentrism. The result of the study revealed that beyond the political grandstanding of Murtala/Obasanjo to liberate and stabilize sister Africa countries, little was known about the economic benefits of the administration's foreign policy to the generality of Nigerian people. The study further showed that, during the period under review, Nigeria's foreign policy mostly shot her into regional influence in Africa but could not visibly or strongly catapult her into global centre-stage. The Study recommended, among other things, that Nigeria's policy cannot completely neglect participation in African affairs but it must draw from the insight of Afrocentrism to de-emphasize concentration on matters mostly relating to African countries, so as to strike a balance between caring for Africa and having the foresight that promotes national interest in Nigerian foreign policy.

Keywords: Afrocentric, Relations, Murtala/Obasanjo, Insight, Foresight, National Interest

Introduction

Over the years, Nigerian foreign policy has had a fair share of its criticisms and controversies just as there has been an unending disagreement among Nigerian scholars, foreign policy analysts and other stake holders on what type of foreign policy that could be most suitable and satisfying for the country and the generality of its citizens. This has led to the continuous search for the appropriate theory, instrument and model of policy that can best be adopted for the country's foreign policy.

Albeit, despite the wrangling that has dominated the country's international politics and diplomacy, the nation under different regimes continues to promote and adjust its foreign policy with some attendant merits and demerits that are visible in the mould of her international relations (Wright, 2008). To say that Nigeria has always desired the right pathfinder for its foreign policy is demonstrated in the sundry efforts it has made via the establishment of Nigeria Institute for International Affairs (NIIA), Nigeria Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies,

Nigerian Intelligence Agency (NIA) and other organs or agencies of government that are built to strengthen and position the country for a rewarding diplomatic engagements.

Expectedly, the dynamics, prowess and deficiencies in Nigeria's foreign policy have continued to dominate public discourse in all fronts. Happily, it is such discourse that enables the nation and other stakeholders to evaluate the achievements, impediments or failures of the past foreign policies. And so, for all stakeholders to be thoroughly informed of what might be required for the nation's foreign policy to be proactive and result-oriented now or in the near future, a historical reconstruction of past foreign policies is most imperative.

During the administration of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, of the four principles of Nigeria's foreign policy, the least and last in the order of importance was how Nigeria will work with other African states for the progress of the continent and how to help every nation within the African territory to attain political independence. So Africa was not upper most in the agenda of the Tafawa Balewa administration. Rather, Nigeria was much concerned of how to be an active player in the politics of the United Nations. (Fawole, 2002). And so, one clear criticism that was associated with the foreign policy after independence was Nigeria's pro-Western policy and lack of consistency and passion for African policy (Anyako, 1987).

However, with the Murtala/Obasanjo regime between 1975 and 1979, there was a major paradigm shift in the ideology of Nigeria foreign policy. The shift generally reflected in more self-confidently assertive and more vociferous African-oriented policy. The mode and aftermath of this shift in the nation's trajectory of foreign policy formulation, implementation and interest has ever since reflected in some deep, robust and evergreen discourses about Nigeria's foreign relations and diplomacy. Nonetheless, these discourses are often a narrative than an analytical and extrapolative study. Therefore, a critical appraisal of the foreign policy of the regime of Murtala/Obasanjo has become necessary. It is only such critical study that will affirm or rebut the claim in some quarters that "fundamental changes took place both in style and content of Nigeria's foreign policy from 1975 onwards under both General Murtala Mohammed and Lieutenant-General Olusegun Obasanjo" (Fawole, 2003:98).

Again, even though the regime in question was headed by two different army generals, the foreign policy of one person did not differ from that of the other. If anything, the foreign policy of the six months reign of Murtala merely began where that of Obasanjo started. Indeed, Obasanjo was unequivocal in his maiden broadcast to the nation that his administration would not change the policy of his predecessor (Otoghagua, 2007). This is why the period from 1975 to 1979 is usually referred to as Murtala/Obasanjo administration or regime.

An evaluation of Nigeria's foreign policy between 1975 and 1979 is more appealing bearing in mind that, according to Aluko (1979), the personalities of the both leaders are explanatory variables for changes in Nigeria's policy during the period. The mention of Murtala Muhammed in the annals of the history of leadership in Nigeria has been memorable in several dimensions. However, whether his leadership impact had evident socio-economic motivations and gains can only be established via a historical review of the variables or sources that informed the foreign policy of his leadership. Equally, Olusegun Obasanjo, as the other *dramatis personae* in this regime, has been touted in some quarters as one of the great contemporary political leaders to have come out of Nigeria and Africa. Beginning from his

days as military Head of State, his visibility in international politics and diplomacy appeared not to be in doubt. However, whether his role in international politics positively impacted on Nigeria's socio-economic interest is also a different kettle of fish. Thus, any historical inquiry to unravel the impact of his diplomatic initiatives and activities on Nigeria can only be worthwhile.

Finally, one major feature of the foreign policy of this regime was continuity in policy. Thus, that policy continuity happened in the administration of Murtala and Obasanjo is thought-provoking. It is strongly opined that this element of policy continuity could have been informed by the dictates of national interests (Adeniji, 2005). Therefore, if policy continuity during Murtala/Obasanjo regime was in any way dictated by the nation's interests, then how Nigeria's interest played out the regime's foreign policy equally becomes an interesting subject for investigation.

The Problem

Nigeria's 'big brother' foreign policy, which mostly accommodated the plights of sister-countries in the West African sub-region in particular and the African region in general, has over the years been a subject of discourse. There is no doubt that the African dynamism and assertiveness that was preponderantly associated with the foreign policy of Murtala/Obasanjo was an exemplar of the big brother model of Nigerian foreign policy. This is why most scholars associated much of the foreign policy of the Murtala/Obasanjo administrations with Afrocentrism and noted that no past or present government has equaled the record of the duo of Murtala and Obasanjo in Afrocentric foreign policy (Obi, 2006). Besides, the need to revisit the history Nigeria's Afrocentric policy come into the front burner after most Nigerians observed that the immediate past administration of Mohammadu Buhari unnecessarily lavished much of Nigeria's resources on Niger.

Rational for the Study

The study will provide a useful insight for foreign policy reforms in Nigeria. In practical terms, the study will provide historical insight for people charged with the responsibility of re-appraising Nigeria's foreign policy on why they must clearly articulate and jealously protect national interest in the pursuit of the nation's foreign policy. As such, the Study will also help in highlighting the appropriate economic interest to be incorporated in the nation's foreign policy if and where she must continue to play the big brother role in the African region. Moreover, the Study will generate relevant information on how government can learn or leverage from the diplomatic expertise and/or pitfalls of both Murtala and Obasanjo, to establish a beneficial nexus between the country's domestic/economic interests and a much more rewarding foreign policy.

Conceptual Clarity

The concept and policy of Afrocentrism is founded on the premise that the motives, goals and activities guiding a foreign policy are fundamentally and dominantly seen in the way and manner they mostly relate or affect Africa issues. Afrocentric foreign policy is simply a mould of policy where Africa formed the centre piece of a nation's foreign policy. Indeed, socio-political terms such as Macro-Nationalism, Pan-Africanism, African Renaissance, African

Socialism and Black Brotherhood have all been identified as part of the philosophies that informed Afrocentrism (Idehen, 2016). Afrocentrism has been vastly construed as a policy against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, apartheid, racism and all forms of foreign aggression, occupation, domination, interference or hegemony. Generally therefore, it is considered a very veritable concept and instrument for fostering African solidarity and integration. The concept centres on the need for African countries to be in-ward looking in matters that affect the continent and for them to control their own destinies, resources and development opportunities (Nweke, 1985). For Nigeria the concept depicts an idea of a foreign policy where Nigeria, more than any other country, must recognize and protect the interest of Africa. In doing so, it is expected that Nigeria should use her resources- natural, human and material to advance the collective well being of Africa (Iganga, 2013).

It is widely posited that Nigeria occupies a unique position in the African continent, both politically and economically, and therefore nothing short of her commitment to the development of the continent is expected. As the most populous black nation in the world, it has been argued that her policy focus on afrocentrism is more or less a manifest destiny. The idea therefore is that the overwhelming demographic, economic and human capacity advantages of Nigeria naturally or inevitably confers on her the responsibility to be the best torch bearer to the rest of Africa (Amao and Okeke-Uzodike, 2015). Thus, the much expectation of Nigeria's frontline leadership in Africa is perhaps surmised in Chinua Achebe's treatise on "Nigeria's Promise, Africa's Hope" in *The York Times*, January 15, 2011.

A lot of Nigeria's leading involvement in the affairs of Africa and African nations is evidently historical. Adesope (1978:10) captures it in these words: "Nigeria sought in her African posture to project and protect the image of the Black man, whose dignity and welfare had become its primary concern and indeed the matrix of the nation's historical obligation". Nigeria before her independence has been in the forefront for the struggle of the independence of sister African nations, who of course suffered the same fate of colonialism with the country. Her activities of pan-africanism are well documented in the efforts and commitments of nationalists of Nigerian extraction. Hebert Macaulay, Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. Du Bois etc were Nigerians who were not only critical of colonial escapades in Africa but sacrificed their resources and convenience for the liberation of the people of the continent. Later in the 1950s, the likes of H.O. Davies, Obafemi Awolowo and Nnamdi Azikiwe went beyond domestic nationalist postures to demand and emphasize the need for common African struggle against imperialism.

The involvement of Nigeria in African affairs has taken different dimensions at different times. After the early nationalist movements that brought political independence to most African countries, Nigerians were deeply involved in the establishment of umbrella bodies that would champion the course of Africa. The formation of Organization of African Unity (now African Union), Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS), the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) group in addition to other similar bodies would not have been possible without obvious roles played by Nigeria.

The country has equally spearheaded and continues to spearhead many peace keeping missions around the continent. It is likewise on record that for most of her appearances in the United Nations general assembly, Nigeria has consistently been in the vanguard for canvassing and demanding for better a deal for Africa much more than she actually did or does for herself.

Regardless of the high points and positives of all these commitments for African interest it remains to be seen how well the Afro centric bias in Nigerian foreign policy has facilitated or promote the interests of Nigeria at home and in Diaspora (Amao and Okeke-Uzodike, 2015). Idehen (2016) was more vivid in noting that in all of the initial set of sacrifices by Nigerian nationalists for the course of the emancipation of their African brothers and other sacrifices of Nigeria to most sister nations in the post independence Africa, the level of the reciprocity of these sacrifices on Nigeria and for Nigerians are unknown. This therefore has opened the debate, not just amongst the Nigerian public but amongst scholars, career diplomats and opinion leaders, on the rational or justification for the adoption of Afrocentrism in Nigerian foreign policy.

Those who argue in favour of the need for Nigeria to sustain Afrocentric policy maintain that first; it is most prestigious for the country to relentlessly pursue such ideology. Secondly they insist that Afro centric policy will not only make Nigeria visible but dominant in the region. Thirdly, they argue that if Nigeria rescinds on Afro centric policy, other powerful countries in the region will snatch away such influential role from her (Ufo, Amao& Akinola, 2013). Fourthly, they contend that if Nigeria intends to influence decisions in Europe, America and Asia, she must first prove the capacity to by influencing decisions in Africa.

Again, the protagonists of Afrocentricism advocate that Africa should remain the centre piece of Nigerian foreign policy because the nation's political and economic progress as well as her socio-cultural emancipation were inseparable with what becomes the future and fortune of the Continent; implying that no African nation can claim to be developed as long as any part of the continent is underdeveloped and that no nation can be practically or meaningfully independent as long as an inch of the African soil remains under a foreign domination. It is in support of these views that Katung (1979) submitted that Nigeria must properly place herself in the leadership position in Africa. He added that to maintain this leadership and giving direction to the continent, Nigeria has to do more than she has been doing. Therefore, the common submission of the apologists of Afrocentrism is that Nigeria should not even engage in any posture of foreign policy where she could be compared to a toothless bulldog in Africa.

However, those who argue against Afrocentric policy, as a way of Nigeria asserting herself in Africa, say the country does not need such policy since "her neighbours are all weak and have no desire to threaten Nigeria in any serious way"(Olusanya and Akindele, 1986:28). They also contend that it is meaningless contemplating such policy when Nigeria cannot squarely address problems in the domestic or home front. That is to say that since Afrocentrism does not directly focus on Nigeria's internal imperatives and dynamics, it is less important to yearnings and aspirations of the masses of the country. Thus, the antagonists of the policy advocate strongly that Nigeria needs to move away from caring for Africa to caring for her interest and that of her home citizenry. Besides, they posit that it will be a misplaced mission to deploy her wealth and international goodwill mostly on African neighbours when she does not have any recognizable territorial ambitions in the continent. Finally, the critics of afrocentrism posit that Nigeria's insistence on this policy amounts to Nigeria trying to be more African than other African nations (Idehen, 2016).

Herskovits (1982) observed that for Nigeria to fulfill the assumed leadership role in Africa, it will be imperative for the country to provide a role model for the rest of Africa in terms of

ensuring successful democracy, stamping-out ethnic division and entrenchment of effective institutional frameworks. He further notes that Nigeria cannot exert lasting influence when poverty and other forms of economic hurdles are poorly tackled in the country.

The review here established that the concept of Afrocentrism in Nigerian foreign policy has its intrinsic merits and demerits. In the light of this, the debate on the pros and cons of the policy offers this Study the template for the re-definition and re-appraisal of the policy for pragmatic accomplishment of the yearnings and aspirations of the Nigerian people.

National interest in Diplomatic Relations.

Like most phenomenon in Social Sciences, national interest means different things to different people and nation. However, it is indisputable that one common determinant and denominator in relationship and interaction of nations is interest. This interest is intertwined with politics. Reflecting on the uses of national interest as an instrument of analysis in international politics, Morgenthau (1967) harped that the objectives of a foreign policy must be clearly defined in terms of the national interest. So national interest, whether propelled by the state or groups within a country becomes very critical in explaining the rationale for state action in any foreign policy.

The idea of national interest is easily or completely pinned down to national behaviour, it is part of the domestic philosophy, identity and socio-economic needs of any nation. It is also often regarded as the aggregate interests of the political leadership, policy makers or influential groups that must be projected and protected onshore or offshore, for the purposes of national advantage and development (Lukpata, 2013). Hence, the concept of national interest remains of importance and central in the interpretation of the dynamics of international relations.

According to Frankel (1973), national interest is the most widely used and generally intelligible short-hand description of all purposive elements in foreign policy. National interests are those things that a state could or do seek to protect or achieve vis-a-vis the interests of its allies or neighbours. National interest is essential in the framework of international relations because it is used to promote sensitive interest abroad (Daniel, 2014). It factors political, social and economic well-being of the nation which should not be compromised in the face of diplomatic relations (Johari, 2011). All these in effect run contrary to the position of decision-making theorists that national interest cannot really be identified (Asobie, 1991). National interest could be political, military, environmental or economic. There is the general consensus that the key aim of Nigeria's foreign policy is to promote and protect the country's national interests in her diplomatic interface and relationship with countries.

In view of the foregoing, there has been strong advocacy for a continuous analyses and evaluation of Nigeria's interests in her various international engagements. According to Anyaoku (2005), such analyses are necessary to determine not just what to do but should provide directions that will guide negotiations in international bargaining.

Indeed, scholars and stakeholders over the years have emphasized the need for the importance and supremacy of national interest in the formulation and drive of Nigerian foreign policy. This is because, according to Opepeyemi (2013:565), Nigeria has operated "a father xmas style of foreign policy which had somehow contributed to the economic misery of the nation". This

means that Nigeria pleases other nations to her detriment. This philanthropic and prodigal style of Nigeria's foreign policy, in any wise, does not appear rational and even patriotic considering that very serious-minded nations do not make list of national interests items that are likely to be attained at the expense of their nations (Johari, 2011).

In their conceptualization of Nigeria's national interest in international relations, Olusanya and Akindele (1986:3) noted "Nigeria's national interest...can be identified as predicated on the nation's military, economic, political and social security....Anything that will promote Nigeria's economic growth and development is the national interest." The import of this is aptly captured by Adeniji (2005:22) who opined that ultimately, "The Nigerian should be the main beneficiary of Nigeria's foreign policy." This implies that any foreign policy/diplomacy that does not properly articulate and sufficiently reflect national interest cannot be said to be sufficiently rewarding for the nation (Ade-Ibijola, 2013)

Since a country's foreign policy is expected to be driven by a set of national interests, how nations determine and logically pursue such interests becomes a critical component for the appraisal of a nation's foreign policy. No doubt, one difficult assignment before policy makers is how to articulate the scale of importance in national interests (Orugbani, 2004). However, Emini (2013), does not consider this a much problem as he noted that the major interest of any foreign policy is the preservation of the economic well being or prosperity of the nation.

From the foregoing, the concept of national interest is therefore useful in explaining the *raison d'être* for Nigeria's foreign policy during the Murtala/Obasanjo administration. This is important because amidst the confusion of what is national interest, virtually all Nigerian leaders have claimed to have pursued their foreign policies based on the national interest of the country when in actual fact they took actions that clearly have not been in favour of the generality of the wishes, aspirations and betterment of most Nigerians (Obi, 2006). An understanding of the concept of national interest also clearly provides the platform for spotlighting the rationale and pursuance kind of economic interest (as an unarguable aspect of national interest) or lack of it in Nigeria's foreign policy during the period under review. Emphasis on economic interest is based on the assertion of Ade-Ibijola, (2013) that national interest of Nigeria is primarily aimed at protecting and promoting the economic well being of the country.

Afrocentrism as the Centre Piece of Murtala/Obasanjo Policy.

The Murtala/Obasanjo regime began on 29th July, 1975 when Africa was in the middle of an intensified, albeit, covert political battle between the Western and Eastern blocs. Equally, the regime was also faced with emerging issues in sub-regional co-operation in addition to the challenges of an obnoxious apartheid regime and white supremacists in Southern Africa which was equally in the front burner of international politics. The latter issues became the major external issues that the Murtala/Obasanjo regime ostensibly could not ignore, bearing in mind the considerable influence that Nigeria was expected to exert in the African region.

The foreign policy of Murtala/Obasanjo regime was much more interested in regional interaction and integration in Africa. According to Ikunga (2014) Nigeria, under Murtala/Obasanjo, advanced the following reasons for adopting this policy:

- (1) To facilitate the independence of African states
- (2) To defend the independence and integrity of African states
- (3) To promote Nigeria's leadership and influence in Africa.
- (4) To promote African unity
- (5) To lead Africa out of colonialism and imperialism

First, the foreign policy of the Murtala/Obasanjo regime was mostly on Nigeria's immediate neighbours, beginning with when the nation had to extend and intensify the sale of oil at concessionary rate to neighbouring countries. Although this decision to sell oil at a concessionary rate was initiated by the government before it, it was shocking that the Murtala/Obasanjo regime intensified policy in the face of numerous economic and social projects such as the Universal Primary Education (UPE) that required massive government finance. Again, even when the oil boom was considered as one factor that informed the audacity of this policy, the intensification came when Nigeria had myriads of nagging and daunting socio-economic problems such as drop in agricultural produce and export. The concessionary gesture was done with the mind-set that, in return, the gesture will be reciprocated by beneficiary countries who were expected to allow Nigerian entrepreneurs who actively wish to expand their businesses in these neighbouring countries to do so. This expectation was never realized (Lang, 1998).

Economic Implications of Sub-Regional Policies

The hosting of the 2nd Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) by this regime was a clear indication of Nigeria's commitment in encouraging and promoting regional unity for Africans in particular and Diaspora Africans in general. It was also a calculated move to promote cultural and economic link with the rest of Africa (Adeniji, 2005). However, beyond the foundation of FESTAC town that came to be after the jamboree and the FESTAC housing facilities that were constructed and eventually sold to a few privileged Nigerians, the exercise could not, in any other way, impact positively on the lives of many Nigerians considering that hundreds of millions of dollars, possibly even several billion dollars, of its oil riches that were spent to organize FESTAC project (Smith, 2005).

Project FESTAC, apart from the first phase of housing scheme that came with it, did not further any interest for Nigerians. The expected Phase 11 of the Housing scheme never took off. Of course, directly after the razzmatazz that came with FESTAC in 1977, serious infrastructural collapse and dilapidation became the sorry story of the town. If anything therefore, Smith (2005) was more unequivocal in noting that project FESTAC contributed to the tremendous corruption that has beleaguered the country in recent times because no proper account was rendered on the funds allocated to the festival and the project. This cannot be contradicted because it is inexplicable why and how Nigeria alone has to virtually bear the enormous cost of the FESTAC festivity while the rest of Africa enjoyed the funfair.

One other notable foreign policy that was associated with economic drive of this regime's foreign policy was its role in the consolidation of Economic Community of West African States

(ECOWAS). This was historic for the regime for a number of reasons. Ab initio, Nigeria, under Belewa, was one country that was vehemently opposed to any form of political integration in the sub-region. Indeed Nigeria, Liberia, Ethiopia and seventeen other states were opposed to any continental or sub-regional integration. Nigeria and these countries based their opposition to any form of political and economic integration on their bias for the principle of the absolute equality of states, non-interference in the domestic affairs of states and fear of external radicalization.

However under Murtala/Obasanjo, Nigeria, along with Togo, offered strong leadership inspiration to the sustenance of economic integration and growth in the West African sub-region, under the auspices of the West African Economic Community (ECOWAS), which was formed in May 28, 1975. Precisely, the Murtala Mohammed began to pay more attention and to take interest in the affairs of Nigeria's immediate neighbours. First, he insisted that ECOWAS secretariat must be in Nigeria. He also began to engage in several and regular exchange of visits to ECOWAS countries. Nonetheless, not much of economic gain came to Nigeria out of these sub-regional diplomatic moves. However, one notable impact was that the regime signed an agreement with the Republic of Benin to establish joint sugar factory in Sabe-Benin at the cost of about N80 million. This project was included in the five-year National Development Plan, 1975-1980. Unfortunately, the benefit of this particular bilateral trade agreement was not sustained thereafter (Nwahiri, 2010).

Again, beyond this bilateral trade, the regime, under the ECOWAS philosophy entered into other bilateral trade agreements that covered maritime, power and military services. In addition, the regime opened its borders to nationals of most member states for economic escapades. In all of these diplomatic gestures to member states of ECOWAS and the country's investment in sub-region's economic bloc, Nigeria has not substantially gained from the ECOWAS agenda (Danfulani, 2014). By being a frontline vanguard in regional economic integration, it was naturally expected that this gesture of Nigeria would have translated into immense growth and progress in the home economy either in a short or long term. In fact, that Nigeria still struggles economically, alongside other West African nations shows that the policy on economic integration was limited in success.

Economic Implications of Regional Policies

The analysis of the regime's intervention at the regional level was epitomized in a draft resolution presented at the extraordinary summit conference of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), now African Union (AU), held in Addis Ababa on January 11, 1976. The resolution called on the OAU to (1) render material and military assistance to the MPLA government in Luanda; (2) reaffirm its unconditional commitment to the total liberation of Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa (3) denounce and strongly condemn the aggression against Africa by fascist and racist regime in South Africa (Otubanjo, 1989).

Beyond the resolution, the regime directly gave financial, military and material back up to the liberation movements in Angola, although with particular support to Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola or Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). Nigeria's overall push for a government of national unity in Angola, which was also in line with the position of Organization of African Unity (OAU), was to bring about a united, integrated and

peaceful Africa (Nwahiri, 2010; Obi, 2006). Nigeria's deep involvement in Angola was also aimed at scuttling a wider foreign intervention that could have created unimaginable fragmentations of that country and initiated divisions in the various African countries that supported other movements that rivaled UNITA. (Richard, 2013). Nigeria, in particular, did not only accord diplomatic recognition to MPLA led-government but publicly supported it with \$20 million financial grants, \$100 million interest-free loan, supply of military hardwares, MiG Fighters and other essential needs. Nigeria's reason for providing extensive material support to MPLA, as explained by the nation's Commissioner for External affairs Brigadier Joseph Garba, was that if South Africa could provide such material support for UNITA, then Nigeria ought to also do so for its MPLA ally (Eke, 1990).

Nigeria's determination to be involved in Angola was equally propelled by refusal of the country to watch the racist regime in South Africa choreograph political events in Angola, not at the peak of the crisis where South African military units were almost moving into the capital Luanda. Thus, Nigeria moved in to support MPLA with all the moral, political and logistic tools to forestall an extension of racist rule in Angola. Suffice it to say that the riches of Angola-diamond, petroleum, copper and coffee, to mention but a few was the special interest to Western European countries which exploited the territory during colonial administration and sought to continue to avail themselves of Angola's wealth to their selfish advantage but to the detriment of the Angola people even after independence*.

However, no visible economic gains accrued to Nigeria for all of these diplomatic commitment and effort to help Angola gain independence and political stability (Fawole, 2003). This is not surprising because, *ab initio*, it was not economic interest that motivated the actions of Nigeria in Angola. If anything, Nigeria had no definite interest other than the promotion of Africanist spirit in the liberation of a sister nation that was besieged by agents of colonialism and white supremacy. Nigeria merely demonstrated a sense of nationalists struggle in conjunction with native Angola nationalists who were poised to be freed from the shackles of colonial rule. At the independence of Angola, the Soviet who with Nigeria supported Angola, secured bilateral agreement with Angola government to allow the Russians exclusive fishing rights in the Angolan coast. When Nigeria sought for similar agreement, she was turned down. (Obi, 2006)

The bottom-line analysis is that economic interest was no where found as an indicator in the drive of Nigerian foreign policy towards Angola (Sotunmbi, 1990). This is in agreement with the assertion of Opeyemi(2013) that economic diplomacy and economic interest have been seriously wanting in Nigeria's model of foreign policy decision-making.

Furthermore, the regime embarked on integration mechanism through its strong posture of Pan-Africanism as Nigeria got strongly entangled in the decolonization processes in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia and the obnoxious apartheid government in South Africa. In Zimbabwe, Nigeria made an initial contribution of \$134,000 towards the liberation struggle in that country. She made another donation of \$250,000 to OAU liberation committee, with particular instructions that the fund be channelled for the liberation of Zimbabwe via the purchase of arms and military training that could aid Zimbabwe to outmatch her enemy in firearms, power and effectiveness. Nigeria also provided many places in Nigerian universities and advanced learning institutes for black Zimbabwean students (Sunday Times, 1975).

In a similar gesture, Nigeria in 1976 gave Mozambique \$1.5 million to help the country cushion the effects of the economic hardship that emanated from the sanctions against the minority white rule in Rhodesia. In Namibia, Obasanjo gave half a million dollars to South West African Peoples Organization (SWAPO), which was the African representative in the struggle for the liberation of the Namibian people (Eke, 1990.). In all of the humongous financial commitment in these geographically afar-off Southern African nations, Nigeria did not get any known economic reward other than attracting to herself the label a 'big brother country' in the region.

Again, economic diplomacy was manifest in the regime's bank-rolling or footing the bills for most regional programmes that were targeted towards the fight against racism and apartheid in South Africa. This was affirmed in the acknowledgement by Nelson Mandela on his visit to Nigeria after 27 years of incarceration. Mandela was quick to note that Nigeria was one country that made the highest pecuniary commitment for the liberation struggle in South Africa. In the Murtala/Obasanjo regime freedom fighters such as SWAPO, the ANC and the PAC were allowed to open offices in Lagos at the government expenses. This notwithstanding, the regime covertly and tactically encouraged very many vibrant Nigerian youths and private individuals, under the aegis of advocacy and solidarity groups, to raise funds for the struggle against white minority rule. This led to the establishment of the South African Relief Fund (SARF). Two year after the fund was established; it realized more than \$20 million dollars (Fawole, 2003). General Obasanjo personally donated \$2,000 to the fund while his cabinet members donated \$1,000 each (Eke, 1990). The fund was used to procure and send materials to the liberation movements in South Africa.

Suffice to note that, not minding the fact that Britain was a chief supporter of racist regime in South Africa, Nigeria deposited money realized for the SARF with Barclays Bank and Standard Chartered Bank, which were British companies (Nigerian Tribune, 1978). The analysis that ordinary stems from this action is: Nigeria gave SARF money to Barclays and Chartered Banks to trade with; they make profit out of it; send some profit margin home to England and surreptitiously lend some of the other profit margin to British interest company in South Africa to buy or build more armaments that were used to mow down the blacks in Soweto; while Nigeria used the withdrawal from the banks only to provide succour to those who survive the massacre in Soweto. The analysis of this instance merely illustrates a case of the vicious circle that was the approach of Nigerian foreign policy. It clearly suggests that, without the realizing it, Nigeria was obliquely using that SARF fund to help British interest in South Africa. Similarly, it was contradictory and deluding that while the Nigerian government was busy demanding for equal work pay between blacks and whites in South Africa, her citizens who worked along their white counterparts at the home front suffered pay disparity right under the helpless watch of the government (Nigerian Tribune, 1978).

Furthermore, as part of the sacrifice to end racism, the regime had a policy where it penalised foreign investors in Nigeria who were discovered to have had whatever relationship with racist South Africa by ensuring that there was no more award of multi-million contracts to such companies. In addition, where such companies succeeded in getting a contract award, it was liable to a fine of five times the original cost of the amount it got from government (New Nigerian, 1978). Similarly, government ensured that such companies took undertaking to end any connection with the apartheid regime as a condition for doing business in Nigeria just as it tactically disallowed goods from the racists' enclaves in Southern Africa to find their way into

the country (Punch, 1978; The Nigerian Observer, 1978). The implication of this was that Nigeria stifled business and investment opportunities that would have buoyed her own domestic economy, all because she wanted to be in the frontline of stamping out apartheid in South Africa.

To say the least, the level of financial resources that the regime deplored in its fervent efforts to confront and contain apartheid is unquantifiable (Danfulani, 2014). Upon that, much as the regime fought against an unjust white minority government that dominated political and economic landscape in South Africa, it was seriously confronted with similar social injustice at the domestic front. This was evident in the testimony of Brigadier Joe Garba that, under the regime, Nigerians suffered poor means of distribution in the local economy, where the minority controlled national resources belonging rightly to the majority of all Nigerians (Daily Sketch, 1977)

The use of Afrocentric economic diplomacy in Nigeria was obviously emboldened by the country's prosperity in oil economy. The expansion of the oil sector in the 1970s improved Nigeria's international position and dominance in regional affairs. The fortunes of the nation's economy has always influenced the pace and tempo of the country's foreign adventure. The oil boom in the 70s powered Nigeria's commitment to the de-colonization struggle at that time and the hosting of FESTAC 77. African nations and indeed other countries have always courted Nigeria for the largess of her oil economy (Obi, 2006; Obiozor 2003).

The above analysis therefore clearly indicates that Murtala's six-month tenure in office as military Head of State was not only noted for his belief in the role that Nigeria had to play in the politics of the African continent, but equally in his unrepentant commitment in the promotion of the value and worth of the black man and the black race. Murtala, even as a member of Gowon's cabinet, was very critical of that government's policy because of its lack of focus in African affairs hence his restructuring of decision-making in foreign policy when assumed power in 1975.(Fawole, 2003, Sotunmbi, 1990). On assumption of office, the government of Murtala became determined that, in all its efforts to settle international controversies, Nigeria must first champion the cause of nations in Africa (Nigerian Herald, 1976). Indeed, Ofoegbu (1990) strongly agrees that the impact of a Head of State on Nigerian foreign policy towards Africa was more pronounced under General Murtala Mohammed. Again, unlike the Gowon's regime that was cautious and abhorred major decisions that are in favour of African states, the Murtala/Obasanjo regime was daring and emphatic in making decisions on issues that affected African states.

Again, under the Murtala/Obasanjo regime, Nigeria's policy for Africa focused on non fraternization with those who treat fellow indigenous Africans as sub-human (Daily Sketch, 1975). As a matter of fact, the interest of Murtala/Obasanjo regime was *inter alia*: to shape the necessary political and economic conditions in Africa; to facilitate the independence in all African countries; to promote equality and self-reliance in Africa (Daily Times, 1978).

There is no doubt that one explanation for policy continuity of this administration was traceable to the common idiosyncrasies that both men (Murtala and Obasanjo) exhibited for African affairs. The duo advocated for mutual respect for African countries just as they were opposed to undue foreign interference in African Affairs (Daily Sketch, 1978). This was why the regime

of the pair was mostly identified or associated with Afrocentric policy in the history of diplomacy in Nigeria (Inamety, 1993).

Nigeria's Africa-centered foreign policy was blindly pursued outside any known regards for the nation's domestic and economic interests and challenges. The flaws of the regime's attentiveness in the affairs and happenings in Africa to the detriment of domestic interest is tantamount to the Biblical aphorism that a man ought to have removed the speck in his eyes in order to be in a better position to remove a bigger log in another person's eye. The Murtala/Obasanjo foreign policy did not contemplate exploring the hindsight of the axiom that 'Charity begins at home'.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Nigeria's policy should not have been largely concentrated on Africa, but directed at world-wide interest and towards the promotion of Nigeria's national interest with viable global partners and allies in socio-economic relations that are targeted at improving the plight of the common Nigeria man (Gambari, 1980). Nigeria's pursuits of Afrocentrism only shot her into the African stage but could not visibly or strongly catapult her into global centre stage.

Furthermore, there is no doubt that Afrocentric foreign policy of the Murtala/Obasanjo regime had all the qualities of show-man diplomacy. The much financial commitments and sacrifices it made on several issues relating to the interest of Africa and African nations only betrayed or portrayed the impression that Nigeria was affluent enough to do all of that. In as much as the regime boosted Nigeria's image, prestige and position in the leadership of Africa, this never in any way translated into any much domestic and economic advantage. The policy of the regime did not effectively help us in solving much of the internal socio-economic problems of the country. The financial commitment to the struggle for the liberation of African nations and attempts to secure regional and sub-regional integration through commitments to concessionary sale of oil, the FESTAC project and intensified activities in ECOWAS activities did not manifest in economic advantage to Nigeria. This obviously would not have been the case if Nigeria had carefully determined the domestic and economic advantages of these engagements before she became committed to them.

The Murtala/Obasanjo regime should not have continued to pursue foreign policy that involved financial or economic sacrifices without considering the economic potentials of the policy. Political and economic stability in Africa will no doubt benefit Nigeria but she does not necessarily need to pay the price for such stability. African interest cannot be put over and above Nigeria interest. Much as Nigeria was not ready to sit on the fence in matters that affected African countries, it would have been rational for the country to lend its support to these countries mostly by offering strong diplomatic counsels that have provided insights on how the affected countries could have evolved internal mechanisms necessary for addressing whatever challenges at that time rather than the wholesome economic sacrifices that were obviously never recouped. Considering that the roles played by Western countries, particularly in the myriads of conflicts in white minority regimes in Southern Africa, was informed by pure economic interest (Garba, 1977), Nigeria should also have explored and anchored her sacrifices in the Southern African on possible economic advantages that emerged in a post-apartheid era. Regrettably too, the post-apartheid era has seen Nigerians Southern Africa suffer xenophobia.

The foreign policy of the regime did not make much pragmatic economic sense. Rather, it was more of a nation's self-avowed mission to change any condition it felt was anti- Africa. During the period under review, Nigeria was direly in need of good road, better health facilities, better communication system and other essential amenities, yet the regime deployed the nation's scarce resources in funding ECOWAS, UNITA, and the struggles against apartheid. A good foreign policy on image-making, in as much as it is necessary, should not take precedence over a country's domestic challenges.

In recent years, Nigeria has passed through socio-economic challenges ranging from terrorism, drastic drop in her economic fortunes, to the activities of ethnic militia groups. The tragedy of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria is a case begging for international succour, and yet no African country has evidently demonstrated the political will to intervene with some essential aids to help out Nigeria. Many schools have been closed down in the North East and yet no African country has volunteered to provide local accommodation for these children in their school facilities. After all, Nigeria provided many places in Nigerian universities and advanced learning institutes for black Zimbabwean students during the time of crisis in Zimbabwe (Sunday Times, 1975).

The experience of Afrocentrism in Nigeria foreign policy is skewed. Therefore any plans to revisit such policy in the future can mostly be relevant where and when the following recommendations are considered:

- Any renewed policy on Afrocentrism should not be based on sentiments but on a pragmatic and rewarding intent. Nigeria should only take responsibilities for issues on Africa when such issues are not critically related to her own domestic and economic needs.
- Much as Nigeria may have used Afrocentric policy to gain the Big Brother image and prestige, it is instructive to recommend that the country go beyond securing image and prestige to pursue other tangible gains and interests within the framework of this foreign policy.
- Considering the prevailing global political economy and the economic depression in Nigeria, it is germane for Nigeria to primarily safeguard her domestic economic interest in Africa before showing interest in matters that are of concern to other African countries.
- Using Afrocentrism to share Nigeria's economic fortunes with African nations in trouble without explicit or implicit terms for diplomatic ties is not apt in a highly competitive international environment of today.
- Concentration of foreign policy on Africa is self-negating. If Nigeria decides to commit more of her scarce resources to African nations without any reciprocation, she will merely be guilty of being a good and willing horse ridding herself to death.
- Going by the popular saying that 'even in Freetown nothing is free' Nigeria can only share the benefits of economic fortunes with her less fortunate brothers in Africa if there

are laid down conditions for reciprocity. A good foreign policy should not only be adventurous but gratifying.

- Nigeria cannot completely neglect participation in African affairs but must de-emphasize concentration so as to strike a balance between caring sister African countries and her national interest. It is irrational for Nigeria to be more conscious of Africa than she is of herself. This no doubt was what Obasanjo contemplated in his second coming between 1999 and 2007. While his government gave every backing to the vision and mission of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), it nevertheless consciously launched and positioned Nigeria as the "Heart of Africa", as a way for Nigeria's businesses to also effectively flourish within the framework of NEPAD. This is a classical balance between Afrocentrism and Nigeria's national interest which should be sustained.
- Nigeria's foreign policy in Africa should not only reflect passion for intervention in the problems of sister nations but prudence in the nation's resources. The unquantifiable whooping financial resources that Nigeria deployed in her attempts at gaining sub-regional and regional influence is a worst form of prodigality that should be avoided in the future.
- Nigeria can still maximize its potentials for supremacy in African affairs not only by Afrocentric policy but by being exemplary in sustaining political stability, durable democratic institutions, transparency in governance, zero-tolerance to corruption, educational excellence and electoral credibility and other ideals of enviable nations. Therefore, Nigeria must change the erroneous conception that the country's international image and esteem is a function of the extent to which she can be considered a leader of the African continent.
- Finally, in the 21st century diplomacy, Nigeria should ultimately aspire to be visible at the international stage rather than only jostling to be an African champion.

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