

**The Dialectics of Nigerian Foreign Policy 1960-1966;
Appraising the Dynamism of Neutrality in the Cold War Period**

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Abstract

Foreign Policy defines a state's national interest abroad. The foreign policy of a state constitutes the essential elements that shape the state's behaviour with another state. The Nigeria's foreign policy between 1960-1966 had vacillated from non-alignment to total commitment to the West. The formulation of Nigeria's foreign policy as a newly created state came at a time the cold war between the East and West was at its peak. Therefore, this paper x-rays Nigeria's foreign policy orientation, objectives and argued that Nigeria's foreign policy despite her non-alignment posture was not indeed non-aligned. Nigeria showed total commitment with the western led bloc and supported their influences with regard to conflict in Africa and in the World. This paper concluded that though Nigeria had in mind not to join any body but later changed stand to pay solidarity to the west.

Keywords: Cold War, Dialectic, Dynamism, Foreign policy, Neutrality.

Introduction

The period between 1960 to January 1966 is often described as the period that covers the years of Nigeria first Republic. At this period, Nigeria external behaviour and responses to outside countries were to be governed by what Balewa had described as the "four principles" and announced to the General Assembly of the United Nations on October 8, 1960. Accordingly, Balewa maintained that:

Firstly, Nigeria would endeavour to cooperate with, and be, on friendly terms with other nations which recognized and respected its Sovereignty.

Secondly, Nigeria did not intend to align itself as a matter of routine with any of the power blocs, but would retain the freedom of action to consider every issue on its merits, having regard to Nigeria's interest. In short, Nigeria would be non-aligned.

Thirdly, Nigeria would pay particular attention to adopting clear and practical policies regarding Africa with a view to bringing about cooperation and progress to all independent African States and help non-independent African territories to achieve total independence.

Fourthly, Nigeria believed in Sovereign equality of States whether large or small and in the principles of non-interference in each other's internal affairs.¹

These principles became the guiding factors that shape and condition Nigeria's foreign policy with the external countries. Importantly, Nigeria joined the international community as an "independent" actor at the peak of internecine between the East and West

and between communism and capitalism on the one hand while on the other hand, when African continent was in the grips of festering crises. Thus, since Nigeria's foreign policy objectives could be described in what Lewu called Foreign Policy Concentriusm,² which depicts her policies with her immediate neighbours, West Africa, Africa and the World at large, Nigeria could not but take a stand on issues that characterized her first phase of foreign policy implementation. By this, Nigeria was to respond to continental issues such as the invitation of Algerian Government to Support Struggling Algerians who were attempting rejection of French government and settlers and also to lend support to the leaders of the government of the Republic of Angola in Exile (GRAE) in 1961 to overthrow colonialism. Balewa's government had on the principles of non-alignment refused to offer that support on the grounds that "we could not support violent overthrow of colonialism". According to Balewa, since the big Nigeria had been granted independence without "armed struggle" surely other African territories could get the same treatment if only they were patient and could negotiate.³

Rather than assisting those that were resisting colonial subjugation, Balewa insisted that Nigeria could help Angola train its civil servants but opposed to violent overthrow of colonialism. Meanwhile, this attitude and stance later changed in 1963 when it became obvious even to the Balewa's government that not all colonial powers were as clever and clear, sighted as the British and French. Indeed, this development galvanized Balewa's government to actively support the principle of liberation from colonialism through armed struggle⁴.

Therefore, during this period, Nigeria's foreign policy has vacillated between neutrality to total commitment towards decoupling Africans from the vintage of colonialism on the one hand, while on the other hand, to play aloof with the two distinct blocs of the East and West in the global society. This period provided a melting pot to a new state that was joining the World body as a 99th member to really exercise its independent action.

FOUNDATION OF NIGERIAN FOREIGN POLICY

The foundation of Nigerian Foreign Policy is of the British heritage. This historical foundation becomes a vital tool for analyzing, understanding and determining the people and their problems, interests, goals and, in concrete terms, Nigeria's capabilities and vulnerabilities and how best to achieve national policy objectives abroad. By foundation of Nigeria's foreign policy, one is faced directly with the circumstances that played out to bring Nigeria into statehood. As a heritage of the colonial merger of hitherto heterogeneous nationalities, Nigeria came as a state by the accident of European slave trade in Africa, more so in Igbo and Yoruba nations. By then, the Europeans had nothing in common with the North until the defeat of the North by the Ottoman Dan Fodio religious group that established Islam there and took over the coastal zones in the North which was annexed to Lagos as the capital of what is now Nigeria.

"By this, Nigeria became an historical 'geographical expression' powered by phony claims by the Europeans based on treaties entered into with the illiterate traditional rulers of the vicinity⁵. At independence, Nigeria inherited the Westminster, based political system with inadequate personnel to handle the formulation and implementation of the country's foreign policy and carry out its administrative correlate. In fact, it was difficult at that time to

think of immediate virile and vibrant” foreign services structure for the pursuit of Nigerian foreign policy objectives.

Therefore, it is convincing to say that the beginning of Nigeria foreign policy is linked to the recruitment of the first batch of Nigeria's diplomatic (foreign) Services trainees in 1957 before the country's independence on October 1, 1960. In that year, Eke holds that twelve officers were recruited to form commonwealth and foreign relations . These apparently became the first generation staff of the Nigerian Foreign-Service officers in the country. Although, before independence the British colonial masters had arrogated and saddled themselves with the responsibilities of making and conducting all Nigerian foreign policy decisions, diplomatic and trade relations with other countries, but has after the independence to justify her independence status by executing her foreign relations.

Though being perceived as tyro, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa took the responsibility and preferred to conduct Nigeria foreign policy alone without an existing cabinet committee on foreign relations. What Abubakar do whenever he did that was to inform the cabinet. By this, Sir Abubakar Balewa surmounted the burgeoning problems of the time and curiously laid what are today taken for the foundations of Nigeria foreign policy .⁸The Nigerian foreign policy is guarded by the factors that underlaid its formulation. These factors are the basic principles that determine Nigeria's national interests and objectives. The national interests and objectives are outlined in the broad circle that stretches from domestic to international obligations. Thus, these include:

- the defense of Nigeria's sovereignty, territorial integrity and national independence;
- creation of the necessary economic, political, social and cultural conditions to secure the independence of Nigeria and other Africa countries;
- promotion of the rights of all black and others under colonial administration;
- promotion of African integration and support for African unity;
- promotion of international co-operation for the consolidation of universal peace built on freedom, mutual respect among all nations, equality for all peoples of the world and elimination of discrimination in all its manifestations;
- respect for territorial integrity of all nations.
- respect for the international law and treaty obligations as well as the seeking of settlement of international disputes by negotiation, medication, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication and
- promotion of a just World economic Order⁹.

These objectives are at the heart of Nigeria's national interest and form the nuclei of her external relations in the global society.

NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY: ITS OBJECTIVES AND NATIONAL INTEREST

What constitutes Nigeria's national interests is embedded in the objectives that define her foreign policy. These objectives become the plan of actions that give realities to her sovereign existence. Therefore, Nigeria's foreign policy can be defined as those plans of actions which define her relations to ward external environment. By this, a foreign policy of a country can be said to be a system of activities evolved by communities for changing the

behaviour of other states and for adjusting their own activities to the international environment¹⁰.

In other words, foreign policy is a product of home environment which implies that it must emanate from home and thus becomes an extension of domestic politics. A foreign policy of a state consists the external behaviours of state¹¹. In other words, it is a set of actions, strategies or tactics adopted by a state in its relationship with other actors in the international system.

For Legg and Morrison foreign policy is a set of explicit objectives with regard to the world beyond the borders of a given social unit and a set of strategies designed to achieve those objectives¹². The implication of this goes to show that foreign policy depicts a plan of actions that guide a country in her relations with another country. The foreign policy of Nigeria is defined in broad circle that underlie her relationship with another state whether political, diplomatic, economic or socio-cultural, this is why when we speak generally about Nigeria's foreign policy, what comes to mind is the decision making process that officials representing Nigerian state seek abroad, the values that underlie those goals and the means or instruments used to pursue them. Nigerian foreign policy deals with such objectives and interests she strives to achieve in her relationship with another country. Therefore, the foreign policy objectives of Nigeria are predicated on the implementation of her foreign policy principles which was made known to the World on October 8, 1960.

These principles are key in determining Nigeria's national interests and objectives. To that extent, Nigeria's foreign policy objectives include:

- Defence of Nigeria's sovereignty, territorial integrity and national interest;
- Creation of the necessary economics, political, social and cultural conditions to ensure the independence of Nigeria and other African States;
- Promotion of rights of all blacks and others under colonial administration;
- Promotion of African integration and support for African Unity;
- Promotion of international co-operation for the consolidation of universal peace built on freedom, mutual respect among all nations, and equality for all peoples of the world and elimination of discrimination in all its manifestation;
- Respect for the territorial integrity of all nations;
- Respect of international law and treaty obligations as well as the seeking of settlement of international disputes by negotiation, medication, conciliation arbitration and adjudication;
- Promotion of a just World Order¹³.

THE CONCEPT OF COLD WAR

The concept of Cold War is born out of the breakdown in relationship between the East and West beginning from 1945 up to 1962. It explains the peculiar change that took place in the course of international relations after World War II. In other words, it was the state of highly strained relationship identifiable with "great schism" between the two emergent Super-Powers (USA and USSR)¹⁴. Its authors were the Soviet Prime Minister Stalin and President Truman of the United States. The Cold War represents the ideological differences between the two great leaders who made concerted efforts to promote the heat of

mutual suspicion, hatred and confrontation as occasioned by economic policies of the two Super-Powers. As noted by young, whilst the origins of the Cold War had principally been found within Europe tension was always apparent elsewhere¹⁵. According to him, whilst Washington was disturbed at the communist Victory in China in 1949 and in June 1950 the invasion of pro-Western South Korea by the Communist North dramatically demonstrated that Cold War tensions outside Europe could have a major impact within Europe¹⁶.

Though apparently difficult to construe its origin, most historians agreed that the post world War II development created the setting for the Soviet-American confrontation. Since there is controversy over the origin of Cold War, scholars date the origins back to the Russian Revolution of 1917, while some others focus on dates between 1915, 1947 and 1950¹⁷.

The origins of the Cold War stemmed from the military, political and ideological differences especially between the Soviet Union and the U.S. that became apparent at the allied War conferences held in the last year of the war; on the visions of the post, War world.

By this, Savigear holds that the principles and ideologies of the super, powers continued to affect the fundamentally different policies of the Soviet Union and the United States and of their allies¹⁷. It was, however, a clash between two super-powers influenced by the feelings of Mutual Suspicion, hatred and enmity. Both the super-powers adopted the course of hating and condemning each other so as to expand the sphere of influence at the cost of the power and influence of other. This hatred changed the pattern of international relations and polarized the World into two blocs.

THE DYNAMISM OF NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

The dynamism of Nigeria's foreign policy investigates the philosophical concept of her neutrality during the Cold War period. By "neutrality" we refer to her non-aligned posture during the period of her First Republic. Therefore, at independence in 1960, Nigeria adopted the policy of not aligning with any power bloc as matter of routine. This implies that Nigeria was to be neutral in the phase of Cold War between the East and West which characterized her first foreign policy formulation and implementation. However, as a result of the colonial heritage and the inability, even willingness of the ruling elite to struggle for national economic self, reliance, Nigeria was unable to maintain clearly non, aligned posture in her external relations. The balance of her foreign relations weighed more in favour of Western bloc¹⁸.

Therefore, in spite of her note of address where Balewa boasted of non, alignment of Nigeria, Nigeria's foreign policy vacillated from neutrality to support of the Western bloc. Therefore, Nigeria's foreign policy was pro, West.

Nigeria's foreign policy during the Cold period, especially between 1960-January 1966 could be describe as being pro, West. To say that Nigeria, as at, period was non-aligned that was to say the least of her solidarity to the Western bloc. Therefore, at independence, Nigeria had stated what became her foreign policy objectives which were made known to UN General Assembly affirming that Nigeria could be non-align. Within the framework of her foreign policy objectives, Nigeria became enchanted to the cause of African development which she had affirmed to be the centre piece of her foreign policy.

Therefore, the first condition that made Nigeria adjusted from her initial policy of non, alignment was the crisis in Congo. The Congo crisis of 1960s provided a litmus test to s

which Nigeria was to first execute her foreign policy of non-alignment. By this, Nkrumah maintains that the dispute between the activist Lumumba, whose party had the largest single block of votes in the legislature, and the ceremonial president Joseph Kasavubu very quickly had repercussions on the UN and on Africa and the West had unfortunately seen in Lumumba a dangerous Communist which he was not¹⁹. In this way, Balewa's government decided to support the position of Kasavubu against prime minister Lumumba, a situation that sparked a serious protest within the various quarters of Nigeria including Trade Union leaders, students and segments of the official opposition as well as radical elements of the NCNC that openly criticized the posture of the Nigerian government which was likened with subservience to imperialism.

To defend this, Balewa insisted that Nigeria was only playing a role as a United Nations member and not necessarily siding with Western position in Congo.²⁰ Balewa's explanation did not change the situation nor stop the opposition and other articulate voices from criticizing his government as Balewa was noted to have betrayed Africa. The position of Nigerian government under the leadership of Tafawa Balewa in Congo was widely criticized when the United secretary of State told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing that the U.S had successfully utilized the United Nations Forces in Congo to promote America's national interests. As a payback of her good child role, the nomination of Nigeria to serve as the Congo Reconciliation Committee was seen as a reward by the U.S. for being a good boy at the international level²⁵.

In further supporting Western influence in Africa, Balewa refused to restrict himself from the articulated and progressive opinion in Nigeria or Africa when he tried in vain to get Moise Tshombe admitted to the OAU. submit in 1964. Balewa found it necessary to support the Belgian Paratroop dropped on Stanleyville in 1964 on the ground that Tshombe had invited the United States and Belgium to undertake the invasion since the prime minister Tshombe had blatantly invited the services of white mercenaries from South Africa and South Rhodesia to help slaughter his own people.²² This action was widely criticized both in Nigeria and Africa especially as more moderate leaders like Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya maintained that Nigeria's stand was pro-West²³; in spite of her principles announced to the World at UN.

Nigeria's pro-West stand was justified at this time on the ground that Balewa's government gave a grant of 40,000 pound sterling to assist Britain in building its diplomatic Mission in Lagos without any compensating reciprocal action on the part of Britain. This happened at a time when the Soviet Union was prevented from even obtaining a flat for its own embassy in Lagos. Moreover, Aluko opines that Balewa's government, when it finally agreed that the Soviet Union could open an embassy, limited the number of high level officials diplomatic vehicle plates to five and later ten, whereas the British and other Western countries could have as many as a hundred or more if they so decided.²⁴ The Balewa's government continued with what appeared like colonial policy by banning any literature coming from the communist World even when such ban did not prevent communist materials entering Britain or other Western countries. More so, Balewa rejected all scholarship awards coming from Eastern Europe and most Nigerian students who surreptitiously went to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe to study were trailed by the British intelligence service and information passed on to the Nigerian government.

Another condition to which Nigeria pledged solidarity to Western bloc was on the Anglo-Nigerian defence pact which all the leaders of the three political parties had agreed on and kept in secret before the London election of 1959. This agreement was to be formally signed and ratified after the attainment of independence. The disclosure of this pact by Action Group (in opposition) in 1961 as the country was thrown into political crises led to such a storm of protest and violent demonstrations, the result of which forced Nigeria to reconsider the issue. The argument on the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact was believed to directly contradict Nigeria's stance on non-alignment. Therefore, as argued by Ogunsanwo, asking Britain to set up a military base in Nigeria was not only contradictory to Nigeria's stance on non-alignment but was also tantamount to a betrayal of our independence and sovereignty²⁶. By this, the pact was abrogated though it did not change the heart of the prime minister who seemed convinced that Nigeria's vital interests were compatible with Britain's national interests. So, the government of the United Kingdom was given the task of protecting and promoting Nigeria's interests abroad.

CONCLUSION

Foreign policy is an essential element of a country's sovereign existence. This is because a foreign policy of a state defines her behaviour and attitudes toward another state. To that extent, the importance of foreign policy will be likened to a sheep without shepherd which will go astray in while searching for pasture. In other words, foreign policy relates to behavioural attitude adopted by state while dealing with another state.

Therefore, Nigeria's foreign policy during the Cold War could be described from the behavioral attitude adopted to deal with the two blocs of the East and West. At independence, Nigeria had stated her readiness not to align herself with any of the two contending powers but shortly after independence Nigeria's foreign policy implementation changed to pro West and she began to pledge solidarity to the Western bloc as against her formal statement that Nigeria should be non-aligned. Therefore it is on the strength of this that Nigeria's foreign policy from 1960-1966 could be said to be pro, West.

End Notes

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