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**Obasanjo, nation building and the Commonwealth**

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**Abstract**

*The statesmanship of Olusegun Obasanjo is interrogated in this paper in relation to his contribution to the nation building process in Nigeria via the platform of multilateral diplomacy at the level of the commonwealth. The paper focuses on National Interest and foreign policy which are two inseparable concepts in international diplomacy. It historically examines the process of foreign policy creation during Obasonjo's tenure in office. The paper suggests that the proposed commonwealth Union will create an a better enabling environment for engaging at multilateral levels.*

**Keywords:** Foreign Policy, Diplomacy, National Interest  
Commonwealth

**Introduction.**

**The statesman diplomat**

An Ambassador's only mission was to be a spokesperson for his sovereign. Not until the 15<sup>th</sup> Century did he also begin to be the "eyes" and "ears" of his country abroad<sup>1</sup>

The office of the head of state represents the primary embodiment of a nation's foreign policy objectives and power

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<sup>1</sup> M. H. Cardozo, *Diplomats in International Cooperation: Stepchildren of the Foreign Service* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1962), 19.



projection. Leaders often operate within this capacity as the primary diplomatic instrument of a nation's interest. In this regard Chief Oluṣẹgun Mathew Okikiṣla Arẹmu Ọbasanjọ, GCFR has brought the essence of this office to bear on Nigeria's diplomatic landscape in a most profound manner. He was born on 5 March 1938<sup>2</sup> in Abeokuta, present day Ogun State of Nigeria. His current home is Abeokuta, the capital city of Ogun State, where he is a nobleman as the holder of the chieftaincy titles of the Balogun of the Owu Lineage and the Ekerin Balogun of the Egba clan of Yorubaland.

As a young man of 21, he enlisted in the Nigerian Army in 1958. He trained at Aldershot, and was commissioned as an officer in the Nigerian Army. He was also trained in India at the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington and at the Indian Army School of Engineering.<sup>[9][10]</sup> He served at 1 Area Command in Kaduna. Promoted to Chief Army Engineer, he was made commander of 2 Area Command from July 1967, which was redesignated 2 Division Rear, and then the Ibadan Garrison Organisation.<sup>[11]</sup> He was also trained in DSSC, Wellington. During the Nigerian Civil War, he commanded the Army's 3 Marine Commando Division that took Owerri, effectively bringing an end to the civil war.

He is a former Nigerian Army general who was privileged to take the surrender of the Biafran Army in January 1970<sup>3</sup>. He rose to become the Chief of General Staff (An equivalent of Vice President) in the famous Murtala/Obasanjo regime from 1975 to 1976. He became the Head of State and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces on February 13, 1976 at the demise of the then Head of State: Gen. Murtala Mohammed.

In an unprecedented and rare commitment to democratic rule and unusual loyalty to his erstwhile boss, he stuck to the hand over program of the Murtala regime and conducted the 1979 general elections leading to the handover of the military to the

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<sup>2</sup> The Exact birthday or birth date of President Olusegun Obasanjo is not very clear

<sup>3</sup> Chief Olabode George, in his comments on Channels Television on February 16, 2015 at the Dramatic Exit of the former President from the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). Channels Nigeria 2015 anchored by Chamberlin Usuh at 8pm.

civilian administration of President Shehu Umaru Shagari on Oct. 1, 1979.

The handover to civilian democracy which was very rare on the African politics at the time endeared him to the international community especially the Commonwealth of Nations leaders who commended the rare feat from a Military General. He became the civilian President of Nigeria from 1999 to 2007. A Nigerian of Yoruba descent, Obasanjo was a career soldier before serving twice as his nation's head of state, as a military ruler from 13 February 1976 to 1 October 1979 and as a democratically elected president from 29 May 1999 to 29 May 2007.

Obasanjo spent most of his first term travelling abroad. He succeeded in winning at least some Western support for strengthening Nigeria's nascent democracy. Britain and the United States, in particular, were glad to have an African ally who was openly critical of abuses committed in Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe at a time when many other African nations (including South Africa) were taking a softer stance. Obasanjo also won international praise for Nigeria's role in crucial regional peacekeeping missions in Sierra Leone and Liberia. The international community was guided in its approach to Obasanjo in part by Nigeria's status as one of the world's 10 biggest oil exporters as well as by fears that, as the continent's most populous nation, Nigerian internal divisions risked negatively affecting the entire continent.

On June 12, 2006 he signed the Greentree Agreement with Cameroonian President Paul Biya which formally put an end to the Bakassi peninsula border dispute.<sup>[14]</sup> Despite the fact that the Nigerian Senate passed a resolution declaring that the withdrawal of Nigerian troops from the Bakassi Peninsula to be illegal Obasanjo gave the order for it to continue as planned.<sup>[15]</sup>

### **Economic Growth and Debt Payment**

Before Obasanjo's administration Nigeria's GDP growth had been painfully slow since 1987, and only managed 3 per cent between 1999/2000. However, under Obasanjo the growth rate doubled to 6 per cent until he left office, helped in part by higher oil

prices. Nigeria's foreign reserves rose from \$2 billion in 1999 to \$43 billion on leaving office in 2007. He was able to secure debt pardons from the Paris and London club amounting to some \$18 billion and paid another \$18 Billion to be debt free. Most of these loans were secured and spent by past corrupt officials.

Prof. Akinjide Osuntokun in 1987 tried to articulate Nigeria's National Interest as follows:

The Question then is what constitutes Nigeria's National Interests? Our national interests are internal cohesion, national unity, the creation of a happy and egalitarian society, the creation of a state where career is open to talents and where there is employment for those who want to work and where there are the traditional freedoms of speech, political association, religion and equality before the law, coupled with this is the defence of the humanity and rights of all black men through deliberate action and policies. .... Once we agree about our national interest then it follows that these national interests are worth defending.<sup>4</sup>

The process of foreign policy making can be subdivided into two main categories, namely formulation and implementation. Largely, the two processes of foreign policy in Nigeria has been affected by the nature of the government that ruled the country at different times. During military regimes, all democratic institutions meant to formulate and implement foreign policies were absent. The constitution was suspended, the structures were sacked and the institutions were dissolved or weakened. Foreign policy making and implementation was the exclusive task of the military head of state and the high command. This is particularly so because of the hierarchical nature of the military with a top-down flow of power.

The head of state may engage whomsoever he wishes for implementation of the policies. There is therefore the fusion of

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<sup>4</sup> Prof Jide Osuntokun quoted in Sina Fagbenro-Byron "Towards A New Order of Diplomatic Practice for Nigeria" 14/11/2014

roles in foreign policy making. The perception, conception and infusion of roles at the foreign policy formulation stage, and the performance of roles and execution of foreign policies become the tasks of the military ruler and his cabinet. Most times, Nigeria's foreign policy action is actually the extension of the individual attitude and disposition of the head of state.<sup>5</sup>

It is pertinent to note that the military principally follows the institutional structure of external relations (except the legislative bodies) and engages the civilians and foreign policy institutions in the art of foreign policy making and implementation. Policy and research centres, such as the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Development Policy Centre (DPC), Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), Universities, Civil Service, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and non-governmental institutions constitute a pool from which military governments draw their personnel, ideas and strategies for external relations.<sup>6</sup> Although the orientation of the nation's foreign policy depends on the head of state or military president as the case may be.

Under a democratic dispensation, the formulation and implementation of foreign policies are shared responsibilities. However, the constitutional head of a foreign policy process is the President. In reality, however, the President is constrained by the group factor, namely his cabinet (particularly his kitchen cabinet), his political party, the legislature and the electorate.<sup>7</sup> The President's aides on foreign relations matters are also particularly of importance in this regard. The ministries and bodies of equal status assisting in the daily making of foreign policy include Office of the Vice President, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Foreign Service, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Culture and Tourism, Petroleum Resources, Education, Sports, the National Security Adviser and other Advisers to the

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<sup>5</sup> W. A. Fawole, *Nigeria's External Relations and Foreign Policy under Military Rule 1966 - 1999* (Ile-Ife: OAU Press, 2003); D. M. Jemibewon, *A Combatant in Government* (London: Heinemann, 1978).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

President.<sup>8</sup> This joint responsibility for foreign policy formulation underscores the Bureaucratic Politics Theory that there is no preponderant individual in foreign policy making.

Actually, there are other federal agencies as Customs, Immigration Service, State Security Services (SSS) or DSS, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), and the National Administration of Food and Drugs Control (NAFDAC), which have advisory or implementation roles to play in the foreign policy process.

The President's small group of the think-tank is also important in foreign policy decision making. The think-tank is made up of experts and experienced hands in the field of the country's international affairs, and could be at different times made up of members of the academia, diplomatic community, intelligence community, politicians and a few State Governors, leaders in the National Assembly, and a select-few from the Federal Cabinet, including the Foreign Affairs Minister. The think tank's tasks include to advice, recommend, enlighten, and possibly warn the chief executive on external relations policies.<sup>9</sup>

The other institutions that are expected to complement the process of foreign policy making include: Federal Aviation Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), the Nigerian Maritime Authority (NMA), Nigerian Olympic Committee (NOC), the Nigerian Football Association (NFA) and other Sports bodies. President Olusegun Obasanjo also created many other foreign affairs portfolios probably to either take up overlapping responsibilities with the Foreign Affairs Ministry, or to accord the minister marginal tasks so that the President himself would become the *de facto* Foreign Affairs Minister. These portfolios included the Ministry of Cooperation and Integration in Africa, office of the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Senior Special Assistant to the President on Foreign Relations, Chief of Staff to the President,

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<sup>8</sup> Professor Bolaji Akinyemi, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, quoted in Folarin, "National Role Conceptions and Nigeria's African Policy, 1985 - 2007," 454.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

and the office of the National Security Adviser.<sup>10</sup> The President in absolute terms was firmly in charge of the nation's foreign affairs management. He was acknowledged the most travelled President in pursuit of the nation's foreign policy. The Presidents' frequent trips were indeed undertaken to get the nation out of the pariah state it had been drawn under the leadership of Gen. Sani Abacha. Gen. Sanni Abacha had ruled the country from November 1993 till June 1998 in the course of which the nation lost most of her western friends and allies. The regime executed Ken Saro Wiwa and eight others to earn a suspension from the Commonwealth of Nations further alienating the country from positive estimation in the eyes of the international community.

However, several of the Missions were closed down during the Buhari/Idiagbon regime due to worsening economic situation in Nigeria. By 1984, Four Missions were closed by the administration due to economic considerations. The Babangida administration from 1985 brought its own innovations into the Nigerian Foreign Service and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, creating more departments and units to cater for Nigeria's ambitious power politics and economic diplomacy.<sup>11</sup> Twists and turns in the Ministry, the need for capacity to meet prevailing challenges, and political considerations of the groups in power were compelling factors in the several cases of organizational restructuring of the Ministry. The military exit of 1999 also prompted certain overhauling. The Obasanjo administration, which ran from 1999 to 2007, carried out reforms in the Nigerian international scene as he restructured the entire Foreign Service. What was noticeable as from 2001 was a bloated foreign policy bureaucracy, which was deemed necessary because of the crisis in Nigeria's external relations which needed to be straightened then.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Senator Abubakar Sodangi, Member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, quoted in Folarin, "National Role Conceptions and Nigeria's African Policy, 1985 – 2007," 464.

<sup>11</sup> Bolaji Akinyemi, "How Nigeria is Letting Down the Black Race," text of lecture, Nigeria: The Blackman's Burden, delivered 24th February 2005 at the NIIA, organized by Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization to mark 28th Anniversary of FESTAC and 2005 Black History Month.

<sup>12</sup> Sule Lamido, "BBC Hard Talk Show," Tuesday, 12 November 2002, 11:54 GMT.

Before the coming of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999, Nigeria had the label of a pariah state. She was clearly avoided in the international system by very many countries, necessitating the frequent foreign trips of the new democratically elected President on "Diplomatic Fence Mending" adventures with the nations of the world in an attempt to re-establish the nation as a worthy, civil and friendly partner in the international system.

The Yar'Adua administration that succeeded Obasanjo in 2007 continued the structure it inherited but did not have to repeat those diplomatic trips as the Obasanjo administration had succeeded largely in renewing the diplomatic relations of the country with the majority of the countries that had hitherto severed relations and interactions with Nigeria in the comity of nations. President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua indeed inherited a greatly improved diplomatic relations between Nigeria and several states in the comity of nations.

These great improvements in the nation's diplomatic relations led to the enlargement of the diplomatic outposts. The Missions increased to 112 in 2010 and 118 by December 2013<sup>13</sup> these enlargements of the Mission outposts have placed heavier demands on the supervisory roles and responsibilities of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

These attitudes and treatments go a long way to influence the orientation and direction of the nation's foreign policies. It will be recalled that the three elements of Foreign Policy include overall orientation and direction of the nation's foreign policy, the objectives the nation intends to achieve and the strategies required in her foreign relations activities.

For example, the recent announcement by the UK government that Nigerians visiting the UK for the first time will have to deposit the sum of £3,000 {Three Thousand Pounds} have been interpreted correctly, the home government - including the Executive, Legislative arms of government and the Nigerians

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<sup>13</sup> Bola Akinterinwa, This Day Column on Sunday, March 9, 2014



themselves have spoken vehemently against the proposal at every given opportunity and forum<sup>14</sup>.

This proposed restriction, which includes other nations like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh: all members of the Commonwealth of Nations are being restricted in their visits to the UK. This is coming when the Commonwealth Union is being proposed to provide an alternative to UK's membership of the EU. The proposed Commonwealth Union is to be guided by four fundamental philosophies: the creation of a free trade area, visa-free travel area, common foreign policy and representation at the United Nations and Group of 20. There is significant support in the United Kingdom for a Commonwealth Union (CU) as an alternative to its membership in the European Union<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, the proposal to limit the movement of these categories of Commonwealth citizens to the UK is a clear negation and violation of the principles of the CU proposal. Because the Mission outpost is responsible for the Protection of National Interests and the interests of Citizens in their host countries, the number of her Mission outposts measures the gauge of the nation's popularity in the international community and the level of accommodation the nation is accorded in the partner nations.

The Nigerian Diplomatic Mission to the UK like every other major diplomatic outposts of sovereign nations across the world is not only vested with bilateral responsibilities and management of relations between the home and the host countries, some of the diplomatic mission outposts also have the added responsibilities of managing the multilateral diplomatic relations of the nation. These multilateral diplomatic relations

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<sup>14</sup> The UK government in 2013 had proposed that Nigerians along with first time visitors from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh visiting the UK for the first time will have to deposit the sum of £3,000 {Three Thousand Pounds}. The Nigerian government - including the Executive, Legislative arms of government and the Nigerians themselves have spoken vehemently against the proposal at every given opportunity and forum. Reactions have been carried by all Print and Broadcast Media channels in the country and beyond

<sup>15</sup> Introducing The Commonwealth, The Commonwealth Year Book 2013, (Commonwealth Secretariat, London: Nexus Strategic Partnerships, 2013) p. 70

range from the nation's relationships and interactions with supranational organization (UNO), Regional Organizations, Intergovernmental International Agencies to Non Governmental International Organizations and Specialized Intergovernmental Agencies which are contracted and managed in furtherance of the nation's national interests.

A few of the Nigerian Diplomatic Missions in this category are Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in relation to the African Union {AU}, the Washington/New York, USA in relation to the United Nations {UN} and for the purpose of this unique study, London/UK in relation to the Commonwealth of Nations. These unique Mission outposts undertake the onerous diplomatic tasks of managing the nation's interactions with multiple nations through the vanguard of regional, specialised or supranational organizations. Multilateralism has become a major medium for interactions among and between the nations of the world especially from the end of the WWII.

#### **Nigeria's Multilateral Agenda.**

The concept of Multilateralism explains Nigeria's enthusiastic and instinctive search for membership in key international organisations not only at sub regional, regional levels but also at global levels.<sup>16</sup> Nigeria as a nation believes such international organisations provide numerous opportunities, platform and vanguard for multilateral negotiations, relations and collaboration among states and could also be exploited by the country to its advantage in several other areas in the interest of the nation's economic and diplomatic advancement as the case may be. Lindsey Powell, while discussing the benefits of multilateralism to developing countries noted that:

Multilateralism is the most egalitarian form of international cooperation and decision making, and multilateral institutions are among the few in which developing countries can potentially have an equal voice. Because developing countries greatly

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<sup>16</sup> G.O. Olusanya and R.A Akindele, 'The Fundamental of Nigeria's Foreign Policy', 4.

outnumber developed countries in a one-country-one-vote framework, such nations are given the opportunity at least in theory, to exert an influence as great if not greater than their developed counterparts'<sup>17</sup>

In line with its avowed foreign policy principle; Nigeria joined a host of international organisations such as the United Nations and its specialised agencies, the Commonwealth of Nations, played a very active role in the establishment of the African Union, practically championed the formation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) among other regional organizations and organs/agencies of such bodies.

The Commonwealth membership of Nigeria can therefore be seen as the practical demonstration and expression of the Sir. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa government's implementation of multilateralism. This indicates that a major feature of Nigeria's diplomacy at independence was multilateral diplomacy. The Commonwealth Organisation was an ideal platform for member countries to discuss issues of mutual benefits to the Fifty-Three member states, solutions to global and members challenges and interactions in areas of mutual economic benefits. In this regard, Nigeria joined the Commonwealth Organisation in order to actively participate in Commonwealth Members decision-making processes.

Nigeria's diplomacy and participation in international organisations such as the Commonwealth of Nations which was logical as a former British empire, was conditioned by the desire to achieve ascendancy to a better position in the international system with a view to furthering its national interests different from the colonial interests. Nigeria also intended to use the Commonwealth platform to further the interests of Africa in as many sectors as possible. Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa made one of the official revelations of Nigeria's self-perception, when

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<sup>17</sup> Lindsey Powell, 'In Defence of Multilateralism'. Paper presented at the Yale Centre for Environmental Law and Policy, New Haven CT. prepared for Global Environment Governance: The Post-Johannesburg Agenda – 23-25 October 2003.

he affirmed that: "*Nigeria will have a wonderful opportunity to speak for the continent of Africa*"<sup>18</sup>

In the same vein; Maj. Gen. Joe Garba, former External Affairs Minister further remarked that "... *in all our dealings with international organisations, we are guided not by selfish interests, but by a higher sense of responsibility and concerns for countries, particularly in Africa, whose needs in some respects are greater than ours*"<sup>19</sup> Nigeria's perception of her leadership role and "Big Brother" in Africa was informed by its size, population as well as her rich natural resources and massive economic potentials.

As a corollary, Nigeria attempted to assert itself by making Africa the centre of her foreign policy and by giving a considerable attention to multilateral diplomacy, through which to further Nigeria and Africa's interests. One major interest area apart from the United Nations and its specialised agencies was the Commonwealth which Nigeria had belonged from inception of her sovereignty.

### **Commonwealth Diplomacy**

The Commonwealth and the United Nations were two remarkable platforms on which Nigeria amplified her Afro centric diplomatic interests of eradication of colonialism and apartheid from all corners of Africa. A very glaring manifestation of this interest was Nigeria's support for the expulsion of South Africa from the World Health Organisation in 1964 and in fact pushed for the expulsion of South Africa from the Commonwealth.

In 1964, when the South Africa declared Apartheid to be its official policy, the seventeenth World Health Assembly pressured by Nigeria referred to this as a: "special circumstance of failure to adhere to the humanitarian principles governing the World Health Organisation"<sup>20</sup> The WHO is just one of the many platform or forum in which Nigeria had championed her opposition

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<sup>18</sup> Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, *Nigeria Speaks* (Lagos, Longman, 1964.)

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Garba, "The New Nigerian Foreign Policy" *Nigerian Bulletin on Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 6, No. 2. (December 1976).

<sup>20</sup> WHO Official Record 135, 1964, p.23.

against the Apartheid regime. The Assembly deprived South Africa of its voting privileges based on Article 7 of the constitution, which allows it 'on such conditions as it thinks proper to suspend the voting privileges and services to which a member is entitled'<sup>21</sup>

More importantly, it was a collective attempt by African countries led by Nigeria at the forefront to bar South Africa from the UN, Commonwealth and their specialised agencies. Consequently, South Africa withdrew from the WHO and became an inactive member, However, it was restored to full membership rights including voting rights, at the May 1994 Assembly when Dr. Nelson Mandela was installed as the first Popularly elected President of an apartheid free South Africa. Although Nelson Mandela had been released on February 11, 1990 signalling the end of Apartheid, the Global community took them serious when democracy was restored with the inauguration of Dr. Nelson Mandela as President in 1994.

The Commonwealth of Nations is an intergovernmental organization of 53 member states that were mostly, essentially former territories of the British Empire. The Commonwealth operates by intergovernmental consensus of the member states, organized through the Commonwealth Secretariat and NGOs organized through Commonwealth Foundation.

The Commonwealth dates back to the late 19th century with the decolonization of the British Empires through increased self-governance of its territories. The London Declaration formally constituted it in 1949, which established the member states as "free and equal". The London Declaration indeed marked the epoch of the "New Commonwealth" Whatever had existed in the interactions between the Commonwealths nations from the 1860s to 1949 were confined to the "Old Commonwealth" order. The symbol of this newly defined free association is Queen Elizabeth II who is the Head of the Commonwealth, a wholly symbolic position. Queen Elizabeth II is also the head of state of

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<sup>21</sup> WHO Constitution, Article 7, p. 4.

16 members of the Commonwealth, known as Realms<sup>22</sup>. The other members of the Commonwealth numbering about fifty-three have their own heads of states: 32 members are republics and 5 of the members are monarchies.

Member states have no legal obligation one to another, instead they are united by language, history and culture as well as their shared values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. These values are enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter and promoted by the quadrennial Commonwealth Games.

The Commonwealth covers more than 29,958,050 km<sup>2</sup> (11,566,870 sq mi), almost a quarter of the world land area, and spans all the continents. With an estimated population of 2.245 billion, almost a third of the world population, the Commonwealth in 2012 produced a nominal gross domestic product (GDP) of \$9.767 trillion, representing 15% of the world GDP when measured in purchasing power parity (PPP). This represents the second largest nominal GDP and GDP PPP in the world<sup>23</sup>.

Member states are seeking to establish a Commonwealth Union (CU) through the creation of a free trade area, visa-free travel area, common foreign policy and {a common voice} representation at the United Nations and Group of 20. There is significant support in the United Kingdom for a CU as an alternative to its membership of the European Union.

Although the major focus of this work is not to consider how Nigeria's decision-making process has affected foreign policy during the 1960s, a brief examination of the phenomenon will be expedient at this juncture so as to put the work in proper perspective.

The fact that during the First Republic the Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar, maintained a rigid personal control over foreign policy

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<sup>22</sup> Natalie Teniola, *The Commonwealth of Nations 2002: Bringing Alive The Commonwealth We All Share*, (London: Media House, Old Trafford Press, 2002), 4-10.

<sup>23</sup> *Introducing The Commonwealth, The Commonwealth Year Book 2013*, (Commonwealth Secretariat, London: Nexus Strategic Partnerships, 2013) p. 70-74

formulation gave foreign policy a very conservative bias. Sir Abubakar Balewa and his party, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) were thoroughly imbued with conservative principles. Similarly, the fact that top civil servants, either in the Cabinet Office or in Ministry of External Affairs, have been closely involved in decision-making has contributed towards the adoption of cautious and responsible policy in Nigeria's relations with other countries.

This is mainly because government officials anywhere tend to be cautious, conservative and realistic in their actions, the conservatism of Nigeria's policy has led to the adoption of the principles of laissez-faire in foreign relations and the rejection of sudden and violent changes. This has led to the adoption and pursuit of the principle of respect for the independence and territorial integrity of all African states. This principle paid off handsomely during the Thirty months of Nigerian civil war from 1967 to 1970.

Another principle of policy, which owed much to the pragmatism of the late Prime Minister and his top officials, is that of functional cooperation as a means of forging African political unity. This principle was vindicated by events in Africa during the 1960s. Likewise, the conservatism of Sir Abubakar and his top officials substantially contributed towards the pro-West bias of Nigeria's non-alignment policy. Although this did not prove to be a disaster, it did for some time make Nigeria unpopular among African nationalists. The unwillingness of the entire Western powers including Britain to sell Nigeria arms at the beginning of the Nigeria's civil war showed the bankruptcy of that policy<sup>24</sup>.

Thus, Nigeria can see that the main principles of her foreign policy in the 1960s have been sound. Only her brand of non-alignment has been discredited. This has been realized by the authorities as can be seen from the establishment of closer contacts with the USSR and other East European countries. From the 1990s till date, the Asian Tigers have strategically began to

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<sup>24</sup> Ukiwo, Ukoha. "Violence, Identity Mobilization and the Reimagining of Biafra." *Africa Development*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 1, (2009):22-25.:

Falode, Adewunmi, James. "The Nigeria Civil War, 1967-1970: A Revolution?." *African Journal Political Science and International Relations*, vol. 5, no. 3 (March 2011): 120-124.

make diplomatic in-roads into the Nigerian economy thus displacing and replacing the UK and the West in some critical sectors of the Nigerian economy. It is hoped that greater effort will continue to be made to demonstrate her independence in the pursuit of the economic advancement policies henceforth. After all, there are no permanent friends or permanent enemies in the international milieu, only permanent interests abound!

In spite of this, the ministry has consistently contributed effectively to the formulation of policy. Dispatches from the overseas missions have continued to serve as the basis for policy formulation. This function in fact increased significantly after the January 1966, coup. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs now drafts most of the policy papers, major speeches meant for international conferences and other important occasions. Under the Gowon administration the Ministry formed the lynch-pin in the formulation and execution of the country's foreign policy. The permanent secretary in the ministry also served as a member of the Federal Executive Council<sup>25</sup>. This arrangement was discontinued by the Murtala Muhammad regime.

The regime in fact seems to have regarded the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as being too conservative, reactionary and routine bound and thus incapable of advocating and formulating foreign policies commensurate with its radical posture. The government therefore used the services of extra-ministerial organizations especially the Universities, the press<sup>26</sup> and the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs.

In his speech at the launching of the Nigerian Journal of International studies, the Commissioner for External Affairs Col. J. N Garba (1975) reiterated the government's desire to make use of scholars in the formulation of Nigeria foreign policy<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Oral Interview with Amb. Olu Adeniji, Retired Diplomat and former Minister of Foreign Affairs on June 15, 2012, in NIIA, Victoria Island, Lagos

<sup>26</sup> Oral Interview with Amb. Victor Adegoroye, Retired Diplomat on June 1, 2012, in NIIA, Victoria Island, Lagos

<sup>27</sup> Joseph Garba, the New Nigerian Foreign Policy Nigerian Bulletin on Foreign Affairs, Vol. 6, No 2. (December 1976).



The 1960s and 1970s saw a growth linked to the decolonization process. Nevertheless, the collapse of communism and the continuing vigour of nationalism also gave rise to a substantial expansion in members of the independent states in the last twenty years. No independent state feels it has truly reached the status unless it has a network of diplomatic missions to fly its new flag in foreign countries and the United Nations.

The growth of international organizations and the need to staff them has also contributed as has the broadening of many embassies remit to take in work in economic and trade spheres while traditional consular sections and consulates have had to deal with an exceptional growth in world tourism and immigration.

While summitry has on occasions displaced the ambassador from prime positions even the most energetic leader could not be in two or more positions and meetings at a time. Prime Ministers and special envoys still rely on the ambassadors to pave way for successful visits abroad just as foreign ministers needed embassies to keep them informed about other countries' negotiation positions ahead of multilateral talks.<sup>28</sup>

A distinguished British Diplomat Christopher Ewart-Biggs, who was assassinated in Dublin by the IRA, wrote of the Paris embassy's support for an EEC summit, "...one doesn't reach the summit without a base camp. The base camp was this embassy."<sup>29</sup> It is the modern diplomat's task to man that base camp and occasionally perhaps to bask in the reflected glory of those who reach the summit. Less glamour than in diplomacy of old but no lack of fulfilling tasks to execute.<sup>30</sup>

Foreign policies are the authorized official guidelines, courses of action and strategies used by governments to guide their actions in the international arena. They spell out the objectives state leaders have decided to pursue in a given circumstance or relationship.

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<sup>28</sup> <http://grberridge.diplomacy.edu/>. accessed on July 1, 2013

<sup>29</sup> Satow, Ernest. *A Guide to Diplomatic Practice*, (London: Longman Press, 1975), p. 21

<sup>30</sup> <http://grberridge.diplomacy.edu/>. accessed on August 12, 2013

They also define the strategies by which they intend to pursue those objectives. Foreign Policy is described “as a coordinated strategy with which institutionally designated decision makers in a country seek to manipulate the international environment in order to achieve certain national objectives”<sup>31</sup> Day-to-day decisions made by government are guided by “*Raison d’état.*” While the foreign policy of a nation is necessarily a reflection of its domestic reality, the preoccupations of all foreign policies are protection of national and citizens' interests, image, territory, promotion of economic interests and enhancement of national security and peace.

Foreign policy makers set out certain objectives before they proceed to lay down basic principles and formulate the policy. Several of these objectives are common, though the degree of emphasis always vary. A former Foreign Secretary of India submitted:

The primary purpose of any foreign policy is to promote its national interests, to insure its security, safeguard its sovereignty, contribute to its growth and prosperity and generally enhance its stature, influence and role in the comity of nations. A country’s foreign policy should also be able to serve the broader purpose of promoting peace, disarmament and development and of establishing a stable and equitable global order.<sup>32</sup>

All these factors go a long way to determine the nation’s choice of principles and objectives and the extent to which it can go in pursuing foreign policy goals as well as the recognition and

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<sup>31</sup> W. F. Handrieder, “Compatibility and Consensus, a Proposal for the Conceptual Linkage of External and Internal Dimensions of Foreign Policy” in American Political Science Review, Vol. CXL, No. 4, December, 1967. p 971.

<sup>32</sup> D. Muchkund, “India’s Foreign Policy in the Evolving Global Order” International Studies April-June 1993, 17.

respect accorded the nation and her citizens in the international environment.<sup>33</sup>

Officials of the Foreign Service are Diplomats. A diplomat is at times spoken of as the “eyes and ears” of his government in other countries. His chief functions are to execute the policies of his own country and to keep his government informed of major developments in the rest of the world which eventually guide policy formulation<sup>34</sup>

In recent years, the Commonwealth has suspended several members "from the Councils of the Commonwealth" for "serious or persistent violations" of the Harare Declaration, particularly in abrogating their responsibility to have democratic government. This is done by the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG), which meets regularly to address potential breaches of the Harare Declaration. Suspended members are not represented at meetings of Commonwealth leaders and ministers, although they remain members of the organisation. Currently, there is one suspended member, Fiji.

Nigeria was suspended between 11 November 1995 and 29 May 1999, following its execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa on the eve of the 1995 CHOGM.[58] Pakistan was the second country to be suspended, on 18 October 1999, following the military coup by Pervez Musharraf. The Commonwealth's longest suspension came to an end on 22 May 2004, when Pakistan's suspension was lifted following the restoration of the country's constitution. Pakistan was suspended for a second time, far more briefly, for six months from 22 November 2007, when Musharraf called a state of emergency. Zimbabwe was suspended in 2002 over concerns with the electoral and land reform policies of Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF government, before it withdrew from the organisation in 2003.

In an address before the America-Japan Society in Tokyo, on Nov. 22, 1938, Joseph C. Grew, United States Ambassador to Japan,

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<sup>33</sup> M. Mamman, *Four Decades of Nigeria's Foreign Policy: An Overview 1960-2000* (Lagos: NIIA, 2001). p. 3

<sup>34</sup> R. Roberto, *World Order and Diplomacy* (New York: Oceania Pub. Inc.1969), p. 42.

commenting on the work of the Diplomatic Mission and the diplomat in Foreign Service, thus explained the supreme purpose of a diplomat:

He must be, primarily, an interpreter and this function of interpreting acts both ways. First, he tries to understand the country in which he serves, its conditions, its mentality, its actions and its underlying motives and to explain these things clearly to his own government. Then, contrariwise, he seeks means of making known to the government and the people of the country to which he is accredited or assigned the purposes and hopes and desires of his native land. He is an agent of mutual adjustment between the ideas and forces upon which his nation acts<sup>35</sup>

The Foreign Service provides a nation with a platform to enhance her image in the estimation of other nations in the international arena. It must be such that citizens will be proud of their nation. Lord Palmerstone once argued that just like the Romans of old could say: "Civis Romannus Sum" meaning "I am a Roman" and expect to be protected by the military might of Rome, a Briton in any part of the world, should be able to say "Civis Britannicus Sum" meaning "I am British" and expect the long arm of the British government to protect him.<sup>36</sup>

In the same vein, a Nigerian in any part of the world for whatever reason must be able to depend on his Diplomatic Mission to protect him and his interests. This has come to assume a very critical aspect of Diplomacy in recent times. Diplomacy has not only become a major instrument of regulation of relationships between nations, it has also assumed a vehicle and machinery for the protection of the citizens and their interests in a foreign country.

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<sup>35</sup> P. Chandra, *Theories of International Relations* Third Edition (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Ltd., 2007), 114.

<sup>36</sup> M. Andres, "Foreign Service - New Tasks and Methods," *German Foreign Affairs Review* Vol. 36, No. 1, (1985).

Diplomacy as a concept and practice is as old as man. However, the origin of organized diplomacy may be traced to the relations among the city-states of ancient Greece. By the fifth century BC, Nicolson stated, "special missions between the Greek city-states had become so frequent that something approaching our own system of regular diplomatic intercourse had been achieved."<sup>37</sup> Thucydides reported about diplomatic procedure among the Greeks, as, for instance, in his account of a conference at Sparta in 432 BC in which the Spartans and their allies considered what action to take against Athens.<sup>38</sup>

The Romans contributed in a way to the advancement of the art of diplomacy by negotiation. Their representatives became skilled diplomats and trained observers. This extended the practice of diplomacy to include observation and reporting along with representation.<sup>39</sup>

Modern diplomacy as an organized profession arose in Italy in the late middle ages. The rivalries of the Italian city-states and the methods, which their rulers used to promote their interests, are described in masterful fashion in Machiavelli's "The Prince". Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan, established the first known permanent mission at Genoa in 1455.<sup>40</sup>

In the next century, Italian city-states established permanent embassies in London, Paris and at the court of the Holy Roman Emperor; a British Ambassador was assigned to residence in Paris; and Francis I of France "devised something like permanent diplomatic machinery"<sup>41</sup> After the peace of Westphalia of 1648 formalized the state system<sup>42</sup>, permanent missions became the rule rather than the exception. Diplomacy became an established

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<sup>37</sup> Harold Nicolson, *The Congress of Vienna, A Study in Allied Unity: 1812-1822* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1946), 46.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>39</sup> Kishan S. Rana, *21st Century Diplomacy - A Practitioner's Guide, Key Studies in Diplomacy* (England: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 67.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* 309

<sup>41</sup> O. Akadiri, *Diplomacy, World Peace and Security*, (Akure: Ondo State Government Printing Press, 2003), 240.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 246

profession and a generally accepted method of international intercourse. As diplomacy became more formal, its rules became more standardized. The 1815 Vienna Congress contributed in this respect, placing diplomacy on a formal basis, with standardized rules of procedure and protocols. The rules were embodied in the Reglement of March 19, 1815 and in regulations of the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1818.<sup>43</sup>

The new diplomacy of the nineteenth century, then, demanded new methods, new skills, broader knowledge as well as new personnel. These methods were defined in many international agreements and became an intricate and generally observed code. Diplomats were people who observed the rules of the game and understood each other.<sup>44</sup>

Harold Nicolson, whose delightful little book *Diplomacy* has become a classic on the subject has called attention to three developments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which have greatly affected the theory, and practice of diplomacy. These are:

- (1) The "growing sense of the community of nations,"
- (2) the "increasing appreciation of the importance of public opinion" and
- (3) The "rapid increase in communications"<sup>45</sup>

The first two clearly enlarged the diplomat's functions and enhanced his importance. The foregoing process stimulated the evolution of the five traditional roles of diplomacy, namely; Representation, Negotiation, Reporting, Interpretation and Protection. These five pillars of diplomacy now extend into trade, investments, security, sports and cultural exchanges. The Nigerian mission to the UK, which represents the Nigerian Foreign Service in that country, is expected to perform all these functions to advance Nigeria's national interests. The research seeks to assess its performance in the actualization of its mandate over the study period.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 240-248

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 241

<sup>45</sup> H. Nicholson, *Diplomacy*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 44

## Conclusion

It is clear that the diplomat cannot be distanced from the diplomatic craft and the embodiment of foreign policy in heads of state had created both opportunities for enforcing state agenda and personal idiosyncrasies that in some instances have not turned out well for the state. The expansion of multilateral platforms for diplomacy like the commonwealth has overtime created more encompassing avenues for diplomatic forays increasing the likelihood of success.

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