

**NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY UNDER
MURTALA/OBASANJO AND ABUBAKAR TAFAWA
BALEWA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY.**

BY

OMOTERE TOPE

N.C.E., B.Ed

JUNE, 2011

Published Online By:
EgoBooster Books

© 2011 Omotere Tope

Published By:
EgoBooster Books, Ogun State, Nigeria.

All rights reserved.
Identification No: 001
File No: 2011122201

Project Classification: *International Relations.*

This research project is right protected. You do not have the right to modify the content, copy or reprint it. Any attempt to reproduce this book by any means (photocopy or storage in CDs) is prohibited. Student researchers using/citing this project should acknowledge it at their footnotes, endnotes, bibliography or references. Students are advised to carry out original researches as works prepared by Omotere Tope have not undergone serious academic supervision but were meant for commercial purposes.

www.omotere.tk

Office: EgoBooster, Shop 5, Kikelomo Shopping Complex, Ojuri B/S, Ijagun,
Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State.

TELEPHONE

NIGERIA: 08077447220, 08074472654,
INTERNATIONAL: +234 807 744 7220

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Omotere Tope attended Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Otto- Ijanikin, Lagos from 2002 to 2006 (N.C.E. in Christian Religious Studies/ History) and holds a B.A. (Ed) in History and Diplomatic Studies from Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State. He has undergone training at the United States Institute of Peace (Online Training Program) with a certificate of course completion in *Conflict Analysis*.

He conducts researches (both online and offline) to produce academic works that students can use for their long essays, theses and dissertations. With access to his online project database www.omoteretope.tk, students in Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and Universities can download full texts of related works prepared by him and other researchers. This will enable them to read literature reviews, check for empirical evidences from data analysis and understand the methodology used.

Contact

Email: omoteretope@gmail.com

Tel: 08077447220, 08074472654

Facebook: www.facebook.com/omoteretope

Blog: www.omotere.tk

Website: www.omotere.co.cc

Website: www.naijaresearch.co.cc

Webstore: www.stores.lulu.com/EgoBoosterBooks

NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY UNDER MURTALA/OBASANJO AND ABUBAKAR TAFAWA BALEWA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY.

PROPOSAL

Introduction

Nigerian leaders often see their country as the “natural leader” of the African continent. And the country’s foreign policy is best understood and assessed in the context of its regional and continental ambitions largely designed by the presiding head of state or president. Thus, a study of Nigeria’s foreign policy under Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (1960-1966) and Murtala/Obasanjo (1975-1979) will expose us to understand better the actors and factors that shape the country’s foreign policy.

Generally, Nigerian historians and political scientists regard the Murtala/Obasanjo regime (1975 – 1979) as a period that Nigeria became the “Giant of Africa” due to her confrontational foreign

policy posture. Coupled with the transition programme initiated by General Murtala Mohammed and later implemented by General (Rtd.) Olusegun Obasajo, the regime was tagged a successful one. When this is compared to the foreign policy Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, one realizes that the two different regimes pursued the same foreign policy objectives but differently. The both have their peculiarities in building the country's power status within the African sub-region. This study therefore seeks to provide well researched and comparative study regarding Nigeria's foreign policy under Murtala/Obasanjo and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa

Synopsis of Chapter

Chapter one

This chapter begins with an introduction which gives a general background to the study. This is followed by objectives of the study,

statement of the problem, literature review, scope and limitation of the study, significance of the study, research methodology, and lastly the endnotes.

Chapter Two

This chapter looks at the conceptualization of the term 'foreign policy'. It also traces the evolution of Nigeria foreign policy. The chapter discusses Nigeria's foreign policy objectives and the instruments by which she conducts her foreign policy. It also examines the principles of Nigeria's foreign policy.

Chapter Three

This chapter provides a comprehensive detail on Nigeria's foreign policy under Murtala/Obasanjo and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa.

Chapter Four

This chapter focuses on the various domestic and international factors that shaped Nigeria's foreign policy under

Murtala/Obasanjo and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. The chapter further gives an objective comparison of the two governments regarding their economic, political, military and multilateral foreign policy posture.

Chapter Five

This chapter gives a summary and conclusion of the whole research work. Recommendations on how the 21st century Nigerian diplomats and government officials can advance the country's foreign policy objectives drawing lessons from the Murtala/Obasanjo and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa governments.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Nigeria's foreign policy has largely been driven by domestic forces, especially by the presiding president or head of state. This was evident in 1960 when Alhaji (Sir) Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the then Prime Minister, made Africa the centerpiece of Nigeria's foreign policy. In his words, *we belong to Africa and Africa must claim first attention in our external relations.*¹ Thus, successive governments have had to carve out their foreign policies (although, with focus on Africa) making the foreign policy of Nigeria a unique and dynamic one.

While Nigeria's foreign policy derives its backing from its demographic size of over 150 million people, its multiethnic population, its vast oil reserves and its reservoir of highly skilled

and educated people, the leadership determines the conduct of external relations.

From 1960 to 1966, Nigeria's foreign policy was largely conducted by the Prime Minister. The period, when critically examined, it was marked by caution and relative inactivity. As the Prime Minister, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa featured mostly in the conduct of Nigeria's external relations. In fact, Nigeria's relation with other countries was based on the dictates of the British government. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, being his own Foreign Minister, he operated the country's foreign policy within the Commonwealth of which Britain was the head. However, this period paved way for the rise of Nigeria to the 'Regional Power' status in the latter years by spearheading the formation of the Organization of the African Union in 1963.

When Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's era is compared to the Murtala/Obasanjo military regime, there are sharp differences than

the similarities they share. For instance, the period covering 1975 to 1979 marked the formal articulation of Nigeria's foreign policy and its centeredness on African countries. While Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's era was inactive on regional issues, the Murtala/Obasanjo era witnessed a confrontational foreign policy which challenged the domination of foreign powers on the African soil. One important point to note is that the historical antecedent that shaped the foreign policy of Murtala/Obasanjo had their roots in military intervention in Nigerian politics in the 1960s.

The first military government (January 1966 to July 1966) pitched her own foreign policy on reassuring all nations about Nigeria's commitment to international obligations and tried to attract foreign investors to continue investing in Nigeria despite the coup d'état.²

The second military government (August 1966 to July 1975) touched the three most important areas of Nigeria's external relations: West Africa, Africa, the Commonwealth and the World. The emerging

issues during this period help defined Nigeria's foreign policy. The Nigerian Civil War, the problems in Southern Africa, the stand of the British government and the Cold War all forced Nigerian leaders under Gen. Yakubu Gowon to have a rethink of the country's foreign policy. In essence, Nigeria made friendship with countries considered enemies of the West, that is, Russia and also recognized the people's republic of China meaning that she is a non-aligned country.

Hence, the third military government (Murtala/Obasanjo regime - August 1975 to 1979) maintained a confrontational foreign policy so as to assert her position on the African continent. Nigeria challenged the activities of the US government in the Africa and worked on the integration of West African countries. Nigeria renewed her commitment to African affairs and this shaped her foreign policy towards African countries. The era gave birth to a confrontational

diplomacy and the formal articulation of Africa centeredness of Nigeria's foreign policy.

Nigeria's foreign policy from 1975 to 1979 placed her in a position that made other African countries to regard her as the "Power of Africa".³ She played the big brother role and pursued the policy of decolonization of African countries. This period is very important to this study as it marked a radical turn in the country's foreign policy. The period also made a progressive preparation of transferring power to the civilians to form a democratic government. This was a great feat in Nigerian political history and could not be matched by the inactive foreign policy of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's in the early 1960s.

Nigeria leaders did pursue different agenda but these two governments Murtala/Obasanjo regime and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's regimes shared a semblance in one angle but maintained different postures regarding Nigeria's external relations. While the

Murtala/Obasanjo regime was concerned about restructuring Nigeria's foreign policy to make the country become the "Giant of Africa", Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's was faced with the challenge of maintaining friendly ties with Commonwealth countries.

Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's inherited the ethnic problem of Nigerian unity since 1960 up to 1966 when he was removed from power. Between 1960 and 1966, the government faced serious ranging from inability to conduct free and fair election, inability to conduct a population census, massive corruption, and grievous financial problems which occurred as a result of corruption and over-dependence on the British government for aid. Despite the limitations in the foreign policy of Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, he played a dominant role in defining the path of Nigeria's foreign policy.

This study therefore seeks to examine the Murtala/Obasanjo regime and Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, regime by looking at the

various factors that influenced their decision to pursue the country's foreign policy objectives differently; give a comparison of their foreign policy objectives; discuss the domestic and external influences on the conduct of external relations; and look at the instruments used in pursuing their foreign policy objectives. The formation of Organization of the African Union and subsequently, Economic Community of West African States are examined in the light of the two various governments in Nigerian that serve as the driving force in their formation.

Statement of the Problem

From 1960 to 1966 (under Tafawa Balewa), Nigerian foreign policy was characterized by British dominance and thus, restricted the country's policy to the commonwealth. This made Nigerian foreign policy to be conservative and timid. When compared to the military era of 1975 to 1979 (under Gen. Murtala Muhammed and Gen.

Olusegun Obasanjo), Nigerian foreign policy took a radical u-turn and was confrontational in its approach. The causes for this sudden change in Nigerian foreign policy posture are worth studying. Moreso, the long term implications these two governments had on the foreign image of the country are to be studied.

Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- (i) Provide a detailed background to Nigerian foreign policy with emphasis on Alh. Tafawa Balewa and Murtala /Obasanjo foreign policies;
- (ii) Review the domestic and external factors shaping Nigeria's foreign policy during the administration of Alh. Tafawa Balewa and Murtala /Obasanjo respectively;

- (iii) Examine the factors responsible for the change in foreign policy from a conservative to a confrontational one under Murtala /Obasanjo; and,
- (iv) Analyse the instruments used in advancing Nigeria's foreign policy under the administration of Alh. Tafawa Balewa and Murtala /Obasanjo respectively.

Literature Review

In a broad sense, Nigerian scholars in the field of history, international relations, Political Science and Diplomatic Studies have given attention to the evolution of Nigeria's foreign policy since 1960. While few have made attempt to give a comparative analysis of the Tafawa Balewa and Murtala/Obasanjo governments, many of them have written or said much about successive governments in Nigeria and their foreign policy objectives.

For the purpose of clarity, a comparative subject like this demand that the literature review be grouped into two areas: those

covering the Tafawa Balewa era and those covering the Murtala/Obasanjo regime.

Review of literature on Alhaji Tafawa Balewa era shows that Nigerian foreign policy was pro-Western which sometimes cast doubt on the country's independence from Britain.

For instance, E.E. Osaghae (1998), *Crippled Giant: Nigeria Since Independence*,⁴ noted that the pro-Western posture of Nigerian foreign policy during the Balewa administration was based on the policy of non-alignment which invariably made Nigeria to maintain a hostile external relations with the USSR and other members of the Eastern Bloc. Osaghae links this hostile policy to Balewa who feared the assumed dangers of communism. Balewa refused to open an embassy in Moscow; refused to recognize the People's Republic of China and rejected aid bilateral agreements with all communist countries. In contrast, Osaghae argued that Balewa government supported British missions in Congo, and also supported Britain in

Rhodesia despite the criticism leveled against British activities in Rhodesia. Though, Osaghae's work provide a detailed background to Balewa's government, his works did not made any attempt to compare Tafawa Balewa's government with the Murtala/Obasanjo led administration.

I. U. Bassey (2001), *Foreign Policy Decision Making in Nigeria*,⁵ remarked that the personality of Tafawa Talewa reflected in the foreign policy decision making. Bassey argued that conciliatory, moderate, calm and placating attitude of Balewa paved way for him in Nigeria's First Republic. As the Prime Minister, he was in firm control of the foreign policy framework. He had the portfolio of the external affairs ministership. According to Bassey, Balewa used his great influence as Prime Minister to recreate the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth Relations in 1960 and conducted foreign relation based on British dictates. Balewa used his office to bring about the formation of Organization of Africa Unity which was

channeled towards economic integration of African countries. In short, Bassey provides a comprehensive study on the achievements and shortcomings of the Balewa government. He also worked on providing detailed analysis of the Murtala/Obasanjo era but made no attempt to compare nor contrast the two governments under study.

Another important work is O. Abegunrin (1993), *A Survey of Nigerian Foreign Policy, 1960 to 1998*,⁶ gave a balanced sheet of Balewa's government. Abegunrin not only unveils the pro-western nature of Nigeria foreign policy under Balewa but also provided information on the anti-West moves of Tafawa Balewa. For instance, he made Nigeria to break diplomatic ties with France in 1963 over the nuclear testing of the latter in the Sahara. Balewa government also defied Britain in 1961 over the request by the British government to champion the expulsion of South Africa from the commonwealth. Balewa's government also tried to reduce her

dependence on Britain by diversifying her trade relations with other Western countries such as the United States of America. Despite Abegunrin's realistic approach to analyzing the Balewa era (1960 to 1966) and also the Murtala/Obasanjo era (1975 – 1979), he did not give a comparative study of the two governments.

Review of literature on the Murtala/Obasanjo regime shows that there are plethora of works providing comprehensive information on individual government, that is, on Gen Murtala Mohammed's era and another on Gen. (Rtd) Olusegun Obasanjo's era.

The period 1975-1979 laid the foundation for an active Nigeria foreign policy. During this period there were more publication on Nigeria's external relation than the previous years. According to Robert (1991) *Nigeria, Africa and the United States from Kennedy to Reagan*:

Nigeria has never exercised any significant degree of control over its neighbours; it has never played a decisive role in the affairs of any other state; it has never played a dominant role in any international issue area; and with the exception of a few extremely minor skirmishes on its borders, it has never used military force against another state... Nigeria did play an important role in mobilizing support for popular movement for the liberation of Angola in 1975.⁷

Robert presents a true picture of Nigeria's presence in the international community prior to the period of our study. It means therefore that apart from the Nigerian Civil War which generated hot debate from around the world, no other period prior to 1975 received more attention in Nigeria external relations than from 1975 to 1979. Robert's work makes a good introduction to Nigeria external relations and will be useful to this study in the area of Nigeria's foreign policy towards other states between 1975 and 1979. However, Robert's work only emphasized the each regime in the US

as they relate to Nigeria, the work did not give a comparative study of Murtala/Obasanjo and Tafawa Balewa administrations.

Another important work is N. Davies (1978) *The Angolan Decision of 1975: A personal Memoir*.⁸ This work provides a detailed information on Nigeria perception of the Angolan crisis. To him, the Angolan crisis laid the foundation for the policy of confrontation which Nigeria adopted towards the United States and other world powers from 1975 to 1979. In essence, the memoir helped in shedding more light on the Angola crisis and its impact on Nigeria external relations. Again, the work does not relate to Balewa's government and did not compare it with Murtala/Obasanjo's regime.

A. Basse (1987) *Decolonization and Dependence: The Development of Nigeria-US Relations, 1960-1984*,⁹ is a good contribution to the study. The work systematically analyses the development of the relationship between Nigeria and the world powers particularly the

United States during the dynamic era of decolonization. This study serves as a basis for analyzing Nigeria's stand on some key issues within the period of our study. However, the work did not give a comparative analysis of Balewa's government and Murtala/Obasanjo led administration.

A. Ogunsanwo's (1980) *Nigerian Military and Foreign Policy 1975-1979*,¹⁰ focused on Nigerian military leaders: The Mohammed/Obasanjo regime and discussed the foreign policies pursued during 1975-1979 military government. This work is useful to this present study because the personality of the people involved in foreign policy formulation were analysed by the scholar. Although, Ogunsanwo did not compare the best policies pursued by Murtala/Obasanjo and Tafawa Balewa, he however made a concrete analysis of the policies sought after by the two governments.

Ray Ofoegbu's (1979) *Foreign Policy and Military Rule*,¹¹ x-rayed three military governments in Nigeria and played much emphasis

on the third Military Government (1975-1979). To Ofoegbu, it was the third Military Government first led by General Murtala Mohammed that brought radicalism into Nigeria's foreign policy. The radicalism which was introduced into Nigeria's foreign policy led to confrontation with major powers which invariably caused diplomatic conflict especially with the United States in 1975. Lieutenant General Olusegun Obasanjo, being the new leader of Nigeria, renewed Nigeria's radical foreign policy and once again, began to make close ties with other countries. Ofoegbu's work will be of immense value to this study. It laid much emphasis on the domestic policies under the Murtala-Obasanjo military government that affected Nigeria's relation with other countries but did not compare Balewa's government and Murtala/Obasanjo led administrations.

Significance of the Study

This study is very important for certain reasons.

First, it historicizes Nigeria foreign policy between 1960 and 1979 thereby shedding more light on the dynamics that characterized her external relations.

Secondly, it helps to re-affirm the bold attempt made by the military government under the leadership of the General Murtala Ramat Mohammed (and later the Retired General (now Chief) Olusegun Obasanjo) to give a u-turn to the country's foreign policy. And also, it discusses the domestic factors that influenced the foreign policy decision making of Alhaji Tafawa Balewa.

Thirdly, it is useful to scholars' especially diplomatic historians, political scientists, economists and international relations experts in their research.

Finally, the political and military class will learn, through this study, the need for them to be patriotic like the former Nigerian leaders who acted as Nigeria's arrow head in the international arena.

Research Methodology

Historical research method is used in carrying out this study. However, a critical examination of Nigeria's foreign policy from 1960 to 1966, and from 1975 to 1979 will be analysed using primary source such as interviews, government publication and newspapers. Added to these are letters, memoirs, archival materials and documentaries.

Furthermore, this research work will make use of secondary sources that provide detailed information regarding the two regimes under study. Books, journals, conference proceedings and internet sources will be explored to enrich this work.

End Notes

1. B. Bukarambe, "Nigeria's Foreign Policy in Africa, 1960-1999" in R.A. Akindele and B.E. Ate, *Selected Readings on Nigeria's Foreign Policy and International Relations*, NIIA Enlightenment Course Series, Vol 1, Number 1, 2000, p. 100
2. B., Roberts *Nigeria, Africa and the United States: from Kennedy to Reagan*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University press, 1991, p. 57
3. *Ibid*, p. 57
4. E.E. Osaghae, *Crippled Giant: Nigeria Since Independence*, London: C.Hurst & Co. (publishers) Ltd, p. 51
5. I. U. Basse, *Foreign Policy Decision Making in Nigeria*, Massachusetts: Rosemont Publishing and Printing Co., p 44
6. O. Abegunrin, *A Survey of Nigerian Foreign Policy, 1960 to 1998* in *Problems and Prospects of Sustaining Democracy in Nigeria, Voices of a Generation*, New York: Nova Publishers, 1993, pp 106-107.

7. B.S. Robert, *Nigeria, Africa and the United States from Kennedy to Reagan*, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1991, p 36
8. N., Davies, *The Angolan Decision of 1975: A personal memoir*” *Foreign Affairs* 1978, Fall 1975, p. 13
9. A., Bassey, *Decolonization and Independence: The Development of Nigerian-US Relations, 1960-1984*, Colorado: West view Press Inc., 1987, p. 1993.
10. A., Ogunsanwo, *Nigerian Military and Foreign Policy, 1975-1979* Unpublished Manuscript, University of Lagos Pol Science Dept. 1980, pp 190-201.
11. R. Ofoegbu, “Foreign Policy and Military Rule” in O. Oyediran (ed) *Nigerian Government and Politics under military Rule*. London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1979, p. 135

BUY THE COMPLETE PROJECT

CALL

08077447220

08074472654

+2348 077 4472 20

PRICE

NIGERIA: N3000
INTERNATIONAL: \$20

CONTACT

5, Kikelomo
Shopping
Complex,
Ijagun, Ijebu-
Ode, Ogun
State, Nigeria.

PAYMENT OPTIONS

NIGERIA

Cash Deposit



Bank: Guaranty Trust Bank
Account Name: Omotere Tope
Account No: **0050329679**
AMOUNT: N3000

INTERNATIONAL

E-Payment



Account Name: Omotere Tope
omoteretope@gmail.com
AMOUNT: \$20

NIGERIA

E-Payment



Account Name: Omotere Tope
omoteretope@gmail.com
AMOUNT: N3000

INTERNATIONAL

E-Payment



Account Name: U7941256
Account No: U7941256
AMOUNT: \$20