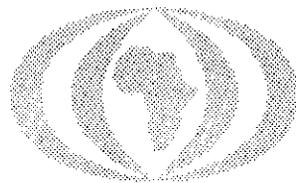


**NIGERIAN FOREIGN POLICY
and
THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF
WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS)**

Two essays
by
Keith Campbell

OCCASIONAL PAPER

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It should be noted that, as the Institute is precluded by its Constitution from expressing an opinion on any aspect of international affairs, the opinions expressed in this essay are solely the responsibility of the Author.

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Keith Campbell

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NIGERIAN FOREIGN POLICY

The aim of this paper is to provide an introduction to, and an outline of, the foreign policy of black Africa's most populous, most powerful and most influential state.

Nigeria's foreign policy is, in the words of Dr. Okoi Arikpo (Nigeria's Commissioner for External Affairs), "constructed in concentric circles", radiating outwards from Nigeria's immediate neighbours, to West Africa, to Africa as a whole and thence to the world. Each of these will be considered in turn.

Nigeria's policy towards it's immediate neighbours

Nigeria's foreign policy towards her neighbours (the states of Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Benin and Togo) has, since independence, been guided by and large by the following four principles:

- i) the sovereign equality of all African states;
- ii) respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of every African state;
- iii) non-interference in the internal affairs of other African states; and
- iv) a commitment to functional co-operation as a means of promoting African unity.

A further motivation is the perception that these states present no threat to Nigeria, but that, if Nigeria should threaten them, they might be driven into the arms of a powerful extra-African state; such a development, it is felt in Lagos, could threaten Nigerian security. This perception has been heightened by Nigeria's experiences during the Civil War of 1966-1970. Following the crash of an aircraft carrying arms to Biafra in the Cameroons in 1966, Nigeria advised its neighbours not to support Biafran secession and the advice was taken. This is seen in Lagos as one of the major reasons for the failure of Biafra's attempt at secession. As a result, Nigeria has come to see its neighbours as its special 'area of concentration' of diplomacy in the belief that Nigeria's security is tied to that of its neighbours.

Consequently Nigeria has developed an interest in the internal affairs of these states, in order to ensure that friendly Governments are not replaced by hostile ones. It has also attempted to strengthen its political and diplomatic links with its close neighbours, and has put a greater stress on economic co-operation than previously. For example, although Nigeria had joined the Lake Chad Basin Commission by 1964, nothing came of it until a summit meeting - the Commission's first - was held, at Nigeria's initiative, in July 1972 at Fort Lamy. In fact, in August 1970, Dr. Arikpo announced that it was Nigerian policy to establish a 'sub-regional' economic community, comprising Nigeria and its immediate neighbours, in order to promote their economic development and reduce their financial dependence on any of the great powers. To achieve this, Nigeria is engaging in joint agricultural and industrial ventures with its neighbours, even when this requires some sacrifices on her part.

Nigeria and West Africa

Nigerian foreign policy towards West Africa is centred on the Economic Community of West African States - ECOWAS. As the Community, which was established on the initiative of Nigeria in May 1975, is dealt with in the second half of this paper, nothing more will be said of it here other than to mention that

1. Quoted in: *West Africa*, no.2996, 18 November 1974.p.1416.

there are several possible reasons why Nigeria attaches the importance that it does to ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States). By expanding Nigerian influence throughout West Africa and strengthening local economies the Community could reduce great power influence in the area. It could also provide Lagos with a base for leadership throughout Africa, while simultaneously disguising the fact in order to reduce or even dispel African fears of Nigerian hegemony. Finally even though it is an economic organisation, ECOWAS could strengthen the OAU by forming a 'backbone' or core which would enable the Organisation to take effective action in future.

Policy towards Africa

Nigeria's foreign policy towards the whole of Africa is based on the same four principles that govern its relations with its neighbours. However, because of the existence of white minority regimes in the south of the continent, a fifth principle has been added, i.e. the total eradication of racialism and colonialism from the continent.

Since independence Nigeria has, because of its size, natural resources and manpower, seen itself as a - if not the - potential leader in Africa. However, it is only since 1970 that the country has actively begun to play a leadership role on the continent.

Nigerian self-perception of a leadership role in Africa is clearly demonstrated by the dispute late last year concerning which two African states should fill the two vacancies on the UN Security Council. The OAU and the African group at the UN wanted the seats to go to Gabon and Niger. Gabon was elected unopposed but Nigeria contested Niger for the remaining seat and refused to withdraw its candidacy in favour of the latter, the Nigerians believing (with good reason) that they would be able to represent Africa more effectively in the Security Council than their powerless and uninfluential neighbour. Finally, on the fifth and unrestricted ballot, Nigeria defeated Niger by 96 votes to 27.

Two important areas in which Nigeria has begun to exercise leadership are those concerning African relations with the EEC, and the question of the white-ruled portion of Southern Africa.

Nigeria seeks to increase economic co-operation throughout Africa in the belief that Africa will only be truly free when it adds economic independence to its political freedom. In this regard Nigeria campaigned against Africa's joining the EEC in another Yaoundé-type agreement, and urged African states not to engage in bilateral contacts with the EEC, but rather to negotiate collectively in order to increase their bargaining power--indeed, Nigeria extended this diplomatic campaign to include the Caribbean and Pacific states which were also involved in the negotiations leading up to the Lomé Convention. This was the first time that Nigeria had attempted to influence the external economic policies of other states, and it was successful.

Nigeria and Southern Africa

Nigeria has also taken a strong stand on the question of white supremacy in Southern Africa. Thus Nigeria, along with Ethiopia, induced the OAU to make a joint statement on the question of detente with South Africa; a statement rejecting detente. Nigeria also provides direct support to the "National Liberation Movements", and has made available scholarships for black South African students who fled into exile following the Soweto riots.

Here it must be stressed that South Africa is seen by Lagos as being an aggressive power, and a threat to the peace and security of Africa. This perception

is based upon South Africa's actions over the past 13 years, such as South Africa's support for Portuguese colonialism and especially Rhodesian UDI. Moreover, she refused to withdraw from South West Africa/Namibia, and provided arms and ammunition for Biafra during the Civil War. To add to all this, in 1975 South Africa invaded Angola, a move which Lagos interpreted as the most blatant act of aggression against Africa that South Africa had ever committed.

It was because of South African intervention in Angola that Nigeria actively supported the MPLA, by waging a diplomatic campaign to gain African support for the movement - a campaign that was largely successful - and, reportedly by dispatching some troops to Angola. Nigeria supports the presence of Cuban troops in Angola, maintaining that they are essential for the protection of Angola from further South African aggression. The recent SADF strike into Southern Angola will only strengthen Nigeria's belief in South African aggression, with the consequent need for the continued Cuban presence.

As part of its campaign against South Africa, Nigeria is now engaged in a policy of using its leverage as an important trading partner and site of foreign investment to exert pressure on Western states - especially Britain and the US - over their ties with South Africa, in order to be able to indirectly exert pressure on the Republic. Furthermore, Nigeria has also called for total economic sanctions against South Africa, considering the arms embargo to be a totally inadequate measure.

Support for African organizations

Nigeria is also a strong supporter of the OAU. Realizing that OAU support for the Federal cause in the Civil War prevented more states from recognizing Biafra than the four (Tanzania, Zambia, Ivory Coast and Gabon) that actually did, Nigeria has set out to strengthen the Organization, by, for example, pressing (with a certain degree of success) for the re-activation of the OAU's dormant specialist commissions. Moreover the Federal government has become of the opinion that any issue which is overwhelmingly supported by more than two-thirds of all OAU members immediately becomes morally (though not legally) binding on all member-states. Nigeria might also be intending to use ECOWAS to strengthen the OAU by providing the latter with a 'hard core' which would effectively support the OAU's decisions.

Nigerian policy towards the world

Nigeria is a proudly independent non-aligned country which is determined to uphold its national sovereignty against all challenges and which is not afraid to stand up to the Superpowers. Thus, Lagos' reaction to President Gerald Ford's circular to African Heads of State on the Angolan crisis in 1975, was to publish his letter in full along with a reply which sharply attacked the American President for trying to pressurize African states and for insulting the intelligence of African leaders. A similar concern for independence was manifest in Nigeria's position during the negotiations between the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states and the EEC, leading up to the Lomé Convention.

Relations with non-African States

The major non-African states with which Nigeria has close relations are the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom. Certainly one of the most important developments in recent Nigerian foreign relations has been the rapprochement between Lagos and Washington. This development is due to several factors. Firstly, there is the presence, in the White House, of a President who has proclaimed his concern for human rights and who has also initiated a new Africa policy which is considerably less friendly to the white South than were previous US Africa policies. The fact that President Carter appointed Andrew Young, highly respected in Nigeria, as US ambassador to the UN, was also a great help

towards a good relationship between the two countries. Then, of course, there is the matter of oil - Nigeria is the second largest supplier of this commodity to the US market. Thirdly, there is trade : due to it's oil wealth, Nigeria is a rapidly growing and developing country, and, as a result is a valuable trade partner. In two years, in the mid-seventies US-Nigerian trade doubled. Finally, the Nigerians have a great deal of admiration and respect for America, which held true even when relations between the two countries were bad, indeed, the proposed new democratic constitution is based upon the American system.

Nigeria also has good relations with the USSR, which stem from Soviet support for the federal cause in the Civil War. The USSR is at present engaged in assisting Nigeria to establish an iron and steel industry - which is seen by Nigeria's leaders as essential for the country's development - and has provided training for Nigerian Air Force personnel (the NAF's entire combat element is supplied by the USSR). Nigeria has inarguably benefited from its friendship with the USSR, which has made no attempt to direct, guide or unacceptably influence the policies followed by Lagos. Because of this, Nigerians are scornful of, and angered by, the fears expressed by some Western observers that close ties between African states and the USSR lead to Soviet control of those countries.

Nigeria's relations with Britain have been aptly described by Chief Anthony Enahoro as being the "love-hate" variety. Britain, which apart from the Soviet Union, was the only state to support Lagos effectively during the Civil War, has very close relations with Nigeria, on all levels - political, economic, cultural, professional and so on. The Federal Republic is Britain's leading trading partner in Africa, and is one of the two fastest growing markets in the world for British goods. A British Army mission is assisting in the training of Nigerian Staff Officers. But Nigeria is no longer sympathetic towards Britain's colonial problems in Africa in contrast to the period before the Civil War, and since 1970, has sharply criticized Britain over its handling of the Rhodesian dispute. On the other hand, Nigeria supports the (now stalled) Anglo-American plan for Rhodesia, and is prepared to send troops to that country as part of a UN peace-keeping force.

Nigeria has also, as previously mentioned, announced its intention of exerting economic pressures on Western businesses and Governments which trade, with, and in, both Nigeria and South Africa, in an attempt to force them to reduce their ties with South Africa. Following this policy, the Nigerian Government has withdrawn all of its public funds from Barclays Bank of Nigeria, and expelled one-third of the Bank's foreign staff, as a response to what Lagos sees as Barclay's collaboration with apartheid in South Africa.

The effect of the return to civilian rule

Under what Nigerians call the First Republic (the civilian democratic system that lasted until January 1966), Nigeria's foreign policy was increasingly hampered and finally paralyzed by the regional disputes which eventually resulted in the Civil War and the near disintegration of the Federation.

Is this likely to happen again, after the return to civilian rule, due by October 1979? The answer is almost certainly no; many things have changed in Nigeria since 1966. Firstly, the number of states has been increased from four to nineteen, none of which is large or powerful enough to be able to threaten the supremacy of the Federal Government. Secondly, certain key powers have been removed from the States and given to the Federal Government. Thirdly, the states depend on the Federal Government for an important proportion of their financial resources. Fourthly, the army would not allow all its good work to be undone (the Army is itself guarding against its own possible future disintegration by ethnically mixing all army units and altering the boundaries of military regions, so that none coincide with political divisions, such as states, in order to prevent any army unit being identified with any particular ethnic group or region). Fifthly,

the minority tribes, who rose to prominence during the Civil War, benefit from the Federation and are determined to preserve it; and sixthly, there is the deterring example of Biafran failure.

What of the general outline of Nigerian foreign policy, is this likely to change? Again, the answer must be no; the stance of the Military Government on Nigeria's independence, on African affairs, on Nigeria's leadership role in the continent, and on its strong opposition to South Africa etc., reflects, and is strongly supported by, public opinion. Indeed, under civilian democratic Government - and the momentum towards this is now almost unstoppable - public pressures may lead to an even stronger policy line on South Africa.

At the beginning of this paper it was stated that Nigerian foreign policy is built up of several 'concentric rings'; it is hoped that some illumination has been cast on Nigeria's aims and attitudes at each of these levels, which interact with, and reinforce, each other. Since 1970 Nigeria has developed a coherent and increasingly far-reaching foreign policy; its influence, both within Africa and beyond the continent, is steadily increasing.

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THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS)

The Economic Community of West African States was formally established in Lagos on 28 May 1975 with the initialling of the ECOWAS Treaty; the protocols annexed to the Treaty were ratified in November 1976, allowing the Community to commence functioning. The founder-members were Benin, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo and Upper Volta; Cape Verde joined later.

Background

The roots of ECOWAS can be traced back to three main sources:

Firstly, to the inspiration and precedent supplied by the European Economic Community. All regional economic organizations owe something to the E.E.C.

Secondly, and more importantly, the heritage of Pan-Africanism. In their hey-day, Pan-Africanist beliefs took two main forms: a 'hard' or 'strong' form, as advocated especially by Dr.Kwame Nkrumah, which demanded immediate political unity of all African states in order to ensure their independence and economic development; and a 'soft', or 'weak' form, preferred by most African leaders and stressing limited (especially economic) regional co-operation among African states. The 'strong' form is long dead, but the 'soft' form is still very much alive, and remains an ideal for most African states - despite the failure of the East African Community. Examples of regional and limited co-operation are the Central African Customs and Economic Union (U.D.E.A.C.) and the Common African, Malagasy and Mauritian Organization (O.C.A.M.).

Thirdly, and most importantly, ECOWAS is rooted in post-Civil War Nigerian foreign policy. Prior to the Civil War, Nigeria had not supported regional co-operation, partially as a result of the Nigerian federal experience with the centrifugal forces of powerful regional governments, and partially because Nigerians believed that their country was strong enough to survive without regional linkages.

This perception changed, however, during the Civil War, and following almost immediately on the conclusion of that conflict in 1970, the Lagos Government launched a foreign policy initiative aimed at achieving a West African Economic Community. The first fruits of this policy were harvested in 1972 when Nigeria and Togo formalised what Togolese President Eyadema described as the 'embryo' of a West African Economic Community (W.A.E.C.). By May 1973 nearly all West African states agreed, in principle, to the creation of a WAEC.

The change in perception on Nigeria's part was due to a number of factors. In part, it was the result of renewed Nigerian confidence on the successful conclusion of the Civil War, buttressed by the newly found oil wealth. In addition there was the desire to increase West African economic independence, and so reduce Great Power influence in this area. This was both a desirable end in itself (post-War Nigeria being a strong believer in national independence and non-alignment) and also aimed at increasing Nigerian national security - the Lagos Government having witnessed the manner in which France, the Ivory Coast and Gabon assisted Biafra during the Civil War; (although Nigeria has since become reconciled with these particular countries). ECOWAS would also increase Nigerian influence throughout the region, with similar effects, and allow Nigeria surrounded by Francophone states, to escape her political and cultural isolation. Furthermore, ECOWAS would open a vast market for Nigeria's developing economy.

Finally, the Community would also provide Nigeria - the most powerful African state - with a base for leadership throughout Africa. Equally, by working quietly through ECOWAS, Nigeria would reduce or dispel any African fears about a Nigerian hegemony. A characteristic of Nigeria's external policy since 1970 has been the quiet manner in which it has been conducted, in order to allay the fears of other African states, especially Nigeria's neighbours. ECOWAS could also serve as a powerful bloc to strengthen the OAU and help to make that organization's decisions more effective.

It is clear from this brief account that many of the reasons behind the establishment of ECOWAS were political. However, this is not unusual, and also applied in the cases of the EEC and ASEAN.

The Aims of ECOWAS

The aims of the Community can be summarized as follows:¹

- a. The advancement of economic co-operation and development, especially in the fields of industry, telecommunications, transport, energy, agriculture, natural resources, trade, monetary and financial affairs.
- b. In the realm of cultural and social affairs, ECOWAS aims to raise the standards of living of the peoples of the member states; to maintain and increase the economic stability of, and to strengthen relations between member states.
- c. To contribute to the progress and development of the African continent as a whole.

These aims are to be achieved in five main stages:

- i) All customs duties, or other import or export taxes, will be eliminated between member states: the members have agreed not to increase existing taxes, nor to create new ones, in the two years after the Treaty comes into force; eight years after this trial period they will begin gradually to eliminate all dues.
- ii) The gradual abolition of quantitative and administrative restrictions on trade between member states; the process to be completed ten years after the Treaty comes into force.
- iii) To cover relations with non-members, a joint trade policy will be established; this process to be completed fifteen years after the Treaty comes into force.
- iv) All barriers to the free circulation of people, services and capital between member states will be dismantled; citizens of member states will be regarded as Community citizens, and will thus not require visas or residence permits when travelling to other member states; they will be able to work and conduct business in all Community member states.
- v) The member states will harmonize their agricultural policies; joint projects between them will be encouraged, especially in marketing, research and agro-industrial projects.

As a long term goal it is hoped to introduce a common currency for the Community.

The Community has made a gradual and careful start to the implementation of these aims and the five protocols were ratified on November 5, 1976, in Lomé.

The first and most important of these concerned the formula for contributions to the Community's budget. The Council of Ministers which discussed the matter proposed that contributions would be based on 50 percent of GDP and 90 percent of per capita income for each member state. Nigeria, however, proposed instead one-third of GDP and two-thirds of per capita income. The Heads

1. See: *Africa Research Bulletin*, vol. 13, no. 10, November 30 1976, p. 4055b

of State summit came to the decision that the contributions to the Community budget be assessed on the basis of a coefficient calculated "as one-half of the ratio of the GDP of all member states plus one-half of the ratio of the per capita income of each member state".²

The other four protocols produced less discussion and covered the creation of a Fund for Co-operation, Development and Compensation (see below); The question of the loss of revenue which some ECOWAS members will suffer as custom tariffs are progressively reduced between members; re-exporting facilities within the Community or goods imported from non-member countries; and criteria to be applied on rules of origin.

Structure of ECOWAS

The structure of the Community reflects the wide-ranging differences between the members.

The chief decision making organ of the Community is the Supreme Authority of Heads of State and Government. This body decides on policy and meets once a year, commencing on May 28, the anniversary of ECOWAS' foundation. The chairmanship rotates according to alphabetical order. All states have the same vote - there is no weighted voting procedure which might favour economically stronger members.

Assisting the Supreme Authority is the Council of Ministers, which meets twice yearly, and irregularly, as required. Each member is represented on the Council by two delegates, the function of Chairman being taken on a rotating basis.

The legal body of ECOWAS has still to be established. This will be the Tribunal of the Community, which will interpret the Treaty, ensure the observation of law and justice, and settle disputes referred to it when direct agreement has failed. The Tribunal will be set up by the Supreme Authority of Heads of State, who will also decide on the Tribunal's composition and competence.

The Secretariat of ECOWAS, which sees to the implementation of decisions is headed by an Executive Secretary-General - (at present M. Aboubakar Diaby Quattara, of the Ivory Coast) - who has a term of four years, assisted by two deputy Secretary-Generals; there is also a Financial Controller and an External Auditor. These appointments are equitably divided among member states, provided this does not detrimentally affect efficiency. Secretariat officers will be responsible only to the Community.

The Secretariat presently consists of at least four special Commissions including the Trade, Customs, Immigration, Monetary and Payments Commission, a Capital Issue Commission, whose function is to ensure the interlocking of capital markets and stock exchanges of member states the harmonizing of interest rates, and removing controls on the movement of capital among member states; and the Fund for co-operation, Development and Compensation. This latter fund, headed by Dr. Romeo Horton of Liberia, and with its headquarters in Lomé - (the headquarters of ECOWAS as a whole are in Lagos) - will finance projects in member states, especially in the less developed ones; it will compensate members who suffer from the effects of trade liberalization, or from the location of Community enterprises; guarantee foreign investment made in pursuance of the Treaty's provision for harmonizing industry; and facilitate the mobilization of internal and external finance for member states and the Community. The Fund will be financed from contributions by member

2. See: *Africa Research Bulletin*, vol.13, no.10, November 30 1976.p. 4054a

states, income from Community enterprises, receipts from outside the Community, and subsidies and contributions from all sources. It is interesting to note that Nigeria alone will provide 31.9 percent of the financial requirements of the Secretariat and of the Fund.

With the exception of the Tribunal all the ECOWAS institutions have commenced operation. Recently, for example, The Supreme Authority passed a Protocol of Non-Aggression, under which the member states agree not to attack each other and to recognize as definitive the present borders between them. This is of great significance because it is the first purely political decision made by ECOWAS. The Supreme Authority has also begun to give consideration to the very difficult and delicate matter of freedom of movement within the Community.

Problems

Undoubtedly, ECOWAS faces severe obstacles in its path. The economies of the member states are not complementary, but competitive - only a minute proportion of their trade is with each other. There are severe communication problems within many, and between all, the member states. (It is worth noting that virtually the first operation of the Secretariat was to commission a study to aid transport development within the Community, from the UN Economic Commission for Africa). There is a tremendous range in the levels of development of the member countries, in their production, wealth, GDP, etc. (From Gambia, the poorest, with a GNP of \$50m, to Nigeria, the richest, with a GNP of \$9 250m). They also differ in population size, natural resources, and political, economic and social systems. ECOWAS embraces Marxist states (Guinea-Bissau, Benin), democracies (Gambia), Capitalist states with few restrictions on foreign investment (Ivory Coast), capitalist states with nationalization and local participation schemes (Nigeria), military dictatorships (Togo), countries in a state of political transition to democracy (Nigeria, Upper Volta etc.) . However, the Community has, arguably, got off to a solid start. It has been responsible for the reconciliation between Sekou Touré and his neighbours, for example. But probably most important, ECOWAS came into being at the initiative of the state that, regionally, commands overwhelming political, economic and military power - Nigeria. As long as the Nigerians do not lose the necessary political and economic will - and this, at present, seems an extremely remote possibility - they will provide ECOWAS with a support, a core, a leader, possessed by no other African regional grouping. At the very worst, fear of annoying Nigeria might keep the Community together at times of great stress.

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