

**An Assessment of Nigeria's Foreign Policy under President Ibrahim
Badamosi Babangida (1985-1993)**

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Abstract

Nigeria as a nation state gained her political independence in 1960. However between 1960 and 1999, Nigerian armed forces made incessant incursions into the politics and governance of the country. The overall implication is that no other national institution in Nigeria has influenced the country's foreign policy posture than the Nigerian military has done. This paper therefore, seek to examine the impact of the military regimes on Nigeria foreign policy, with specific reference to Nigeria foreign policy under president Ibrahim Babangida. The paper attempts an assessment of Babangida's regime in foreign policy initiative, which to a reasonable extent, left an enduring legacy on Nigeria's diplomatic history ever since, while at the same time left a yawning gap in Nigeria's foreign policy formulation and implementation.

Introduction

The regime under study falls under an era of military incursion into Nigerian politics. In the light of that, it is pertinent to first and foremost, have a full grasp of the foray of the military into Nigeria's political landscape, by examining the prevailing circumstances that ushered in the various military juntas after the demise of the first republic. When the British finally granted independence to Nigeria in 1960, there were high expectations that Nigeria would be an emerging great power, particularly in Africa, given its abundant human and natural resources. Clause Phillips (1964) notes that, "Nigeria is potentially the greatest power in Africa from the stand point of elements of national power"¹.

However, events of the post-independence Nigeria proved that Nigeria's political class lacked the ability to harness the abundant resources to bring about the expected greatness. Fawole W. Alade (2003) aptly captured it more succinctly,

Election rigging, arrogance and intolerance were the order of the day, and political intercourse had degenerated into a primitive enterprise where the use of thurggery and terrorism had become the norm. Examples include the Action Group (AG) crisis of 1962, the rigged general elections 1964, the rigged Western Regional elections of October 1965 and the bloodletting, arson and destruction that followed it, all of which eventually led to the January 1966 coup d'etate².

The above scenario provided the platform for the emergence of military regimes into Nigerian politics and governance. From the brief Ironsi regime (Jan 1966-July 1966) to that of Muhammedu Buhari (1984-1985), successive military regimes had made their imprints in foreign policy formulations and implementations.

Since the first coup of January, 1966, which ushered in the military into Nigerian politics, several military regimes had come up with varied

foreign policy outlines. Suffice to say that two major factors can account for the variation in foreign policy formulation of successive military regimes between 1966 and 1985. The very first factor is the unexpected oil boom of the 1970s which culminated in unprecedented national prosperity and prestige for Nigeria within the African region and beyond. It should be recalled that following the Arab –Israeli war of 1973, the Arab member-states of organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) imposed an oil embargo on the U.S and selected European countries. This action created a major shortfall in the World oil market, resulting in the hike in price of crude oil. Nigeria therefore, became a direct beneficiary of the imposed embargo and petroleum price hike. It now became a major source of oil supply to U.S and affected European countries with daily production pushed from 1 million to 2.3 million barrels per day. The wealth generated gave Nigeria the needed economic muscle to project her foreign policy into the global arena, where her voice became loud and respected at the international arena.

The second factor has to do with the personal idiosyncrasies of the successive military leaders. It is within the context of personal idiosyncrasies that such bold, assertive, informed and self-opinionated military leaders were able to stamp their authority and indelible imprints on Nigeria's foreign policy. Mention is often made of the Generals Murtala Muhammed and Olesgun Obasanjo's regimes spanning between 1975 and 1979. The period is often referred to as the 'golden age' of Nigeria's foreign policy. They recorded a number of foreign policy successes and achievements that are still being celebrated till today³.

Reminiscent of the Murtala and Obasanjo regimes, General Ibrahim Babangida's administration (1985-1993) also injected certain degree of dynamism and assertiveness into Nigeria's foreign policy. Prominent among the foreign policy initiative of Babangida's regime includes the convocation of concert of medium powers, convocation of All Nigeria's conference on Foreign Policy, introduction of Technical Aid Corps programme, introduction of a paradigm shift from political to economic

diplomacy among other foreign policy outlines. But how far did these foreign policy initiatives realize the set national objectives? How did it translate into real and practical enhancement of Nigeria's national interest? To what extent did they reflect the opinion of majority of Nigerians? And what are the overall implications on the wellbeing of average Nigerian citizen, both at home and in Diaspora. All of these provide a platform for a critical assessment of the regime's foreign policy initiatives.

Background to Ibrahim Babangida's Foreign Policy Initiatives (1985-1993)

The regime of Ibrahim Babangida is acclaimed one of the assertive regimes in Nigeria. This perhaps, is not unconnected with the national euphoria that greeted the regime at inception, arising from the weariness of Nigerians about the harsh and draconian excesses of the preceding Buhari regime. Babangida therefore, capitalized on public discontent about his predecessor to launch himself into national and international relevance. The first significant step taken by Babangida's regime was the appointment of Professor Bolaji Akinyemi as Foreign Affairs Minister. Akinyemi, apart from being a respected international relations scholar, was instrumental for the successes recorded in the foreign Affairs Ministry during Murtala and Obasanjo regimes. Therefore, during the Babangida regime, Akinyemi brought his wealth of experience to bear in the areas of new innovations, activism, assertiveness and dynamic imitative which repositioned and re-equipped the Foreign Affairs Ministry. A follow up to this was the April, 1986 convocation of all Nigerian conference on Foreign Policy which assembled Nigeria's brightest scholars and experts in the field of International Affairs to discuss, analyze and make recommendations that will improve on the conduct of Nigeria's external relations.

Within the period under review, several unresolved domestic and external issues during the preceding Buhari regime culminated in series of socio-political and economic upheavals in the succeeding Babangida regime.

These in turn informed the foreign policy agenda of the new government headed by Babangida.

Evidently, the country's economy was critically distressed due to the glut in supply which resulted in the collapse of the price of crude oil at the international market in the early 1980s. the spill-over effect of the above is the inability of Nigerian government to generate sufficient revenue to meet up its financial obligations. The reason for this is succinctly captured by Salami (2014) thus:

This is because crude oil revenue account for more than 90 percent to the nation's foreign exchange earnings and substantial part of government revenue in the 19i80, the economic crisis by extension, also affected other sectors of the country's economy. Several manufacturing companies closed down due to lack of raw materials and the huge cost of operation.⁴

With the above scenario in place, Nigerians groan under a heavy economic hardship, coupled with the draconian policies of Buhari's administration, little wonder then that Nigerians heaved a sign of relive and went into joyous mood when the news of the Babangida led coup spread throughout the nation. It is therefore, within the context of the enormous economic crisis that Babangida couched his foreign policy initiatives. For a better appraisal of Babangida's foreign policy agenda, it is pertinent to break it down into the following headings viz;

Concert of Medium Powers

The very first practical and bold step taken by Babangida's administration to re-inject activism and assertiveness into Nigeria's foreign policy was to launch in 1985, the concert of the Medium Powers. According to Akinyemi (1987), the principle behind the concert was to create a concert of medium power countries to act as a counter force to the ideological dominance of the then great powers in the global system. Therefore, as a

foreign policy initiative, the concept of medium powers was articulated by the Babangida's administration for meeting the objectives of giving a new burst of creativity to inform the definition of Nigeria's role in the global village⁵.

The essence of the above initiative is to foster a concerted cooperation among medium powers, mainly African and other developing countries like Brazil, Yugoslavia etc, with a view of enhancing their economic fortune. It was hoped that through such symbiotic arrangement, developing nations would jointly harness their economic potentials, in order to be self-reliant. Unfortunately, Babangida's administration could not realize in full the objectives of the concert of medium Powers as most developing economies were still caught in the web of western ideological dominance, thereby playing second fiddle in the world economic order. The bottom line is that due to the poverty level of most developing nations, they still rely on western powers for one form of aid or the other. The failure in actualizing the objectives of the concert of medium Powers become manifest when the initiator (Babangida) was compelled by prevailing harsh economic condition to apply for the controversial IMF loan at the later part of his regime.

Again, a concert of medium powers in the international system that already has in existence, the non-aligned group with similar aims and objectives, simply amounted to duplication of efforts. With obvious fundamental limitations to Nigeria's leadership in a world system dominated by powerful, industrialized state, it become very clear that Nigeria lack the socio-economic, political and military capabilities for such global leadership. Thus, Obi E.A. opined that public opinions was titled against the idea of Nigeria seeing itself as a medium power when it was obvious that the country was experiencing terrible hardships and the structural adjustment Programme (SAP) has already dealt a heavy blow on the Nigerian citizenry who were continually battling with the pains of adjustment⁶.

The underlying challenge to the concert of medium powers is the poverty level of the countries involved. The battered Nigerian economy, which has resulted in widespread disenchantment did not permit the nation to indulge in spearheading the creation of a new international organization like the concert of medium powers. It is in the light of the above that Atte (1990) opined that;

For any country in the international system, it is important that its foreign policy initiative be commensurate with the means of implementation at its disposal, including its power position in the international system. This is an old axiom in international relations but one that applies with exceptional relevance to an under-developed country like Nigeria, in consideration of its global role. A bold and coherent foreign policy initiative is desirable, but the policy posture is sensible only if it is in tune with the public interest and the material resources of the country⁷.

Technical Aid Corp Scheme (TACS)

The technical aid corp scheme as established by Babangida's administration marked the beginning of Nigeria's official development assistance in the country's foreign policy. It is a foreign policy initiative that was aimed at institutionalizing aid or assistance to needy, African countries as well as the Africans in the Diaspora⁸. The programme was designed to enable young Nigerian professionals in special fields like medicine, nursing, engineering, law, agriculture, education, surveying, architecture etc, to be sent to work for at least two years in Africa, Caribbean and pacific countries (ACP), to render technical services to assist the host countries in their development needs. According to Salami (2014), the provision of technical assistance by Nigeria to other countries especially on the continent of African was not a new phenomenon...what was new about Babangida's TACs programme was the fact that the federal government of Nigeria pays the complete salary of the technicorpers⁹. Unlike previous assistance

programme, TACs placed less financial burden on the recipient countries. There were also assistance of various grants, investments, donations and transfer of manpower. All of these according to Olusanya and Akindele (1986), were geared towards the creation of relevant political and economic conditions in Africa and the rest of the world, which will not only facilitate the preservation of the territorial integrity of all African countries but also foster national self reliance in Africans countries¹⁰.

Much as the above foreign policy imitative of Babangida's administration appear quite laudable, the overall implication has a trickle down negative effect on Nigeria's economy. In the first place, it takes a highly industrialized, technologically and scientifically, advanced country to provide technical assistance to a needy country and not a technological backward country like Nigeria. Most of these Nigerian professionals who were qualified to participate in such technical assistance were trained abroad and rather than return home to contribute to national development, were sent as expatriates to needy countries, when in actual sense Nigeria is the most needy. Such 'big brother' role was both industrially detrimental and economically unwise. The programme encouraged brain drain as most of the Nigerian professionals never returned at the end of the programme as they wandered in search of greener pastures.

Besides, the financial burden incurred by Nigeria in servicing the salaries and allowances of the technicorpers mounted heavy financial pressure in the nation's economy, even in the face of dwindling economic fortune of Nigeria. Apologists of the TACs programme argues that the TACs programme was designed to address the problems of graduate unemployment in Nigeria by providing highly qualified Nigerian professionals with opportunities for gainful employment abroad. They further argued that the programme aptly falls into the context of south-south cooperation which is a strategy for promoting African, and, by extension, third world development. To them, the TACs programme appeared to be an adequate response to the economic crisis that was

sweeping across Africa. Thus, the need for an inward looking for an African alternative in combating the perceived externally imposed economic woes.

As a foreign policy initiative therefore, Babangida's administration used the TACs programme as a launch-pad to respond to prevailing domestic and external imperatives. At the external level, the programme as explained above, was expected to promote the image of Nigeria abroad in the face of widespread campaign of calumny against Nigeria and third world in general by the western media, while at the same time fostering national self reliance in African countries.

Afrocentrism

The Afro-centric foreign policy initiative instituted by the Balewa administration was retained and sustained by successive military regimes, that of Babangida was therefore, not an exception. However, lessons of the Nigerian civil war have necessitated the formation of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) during Gowon's regime. Since the West African sub-region has remained Nigeria's immediate and strategic sphere of influence and has thus been used as a lunch-pad to galvanized sub-regional unity in West-Africa. The Babangida regime did not only inherit such legacy, but build on it and from there, extend its hegemony to other parts of Africa.

It is in the light of the above that Nigeria mediated in the border war between Mali and Burkina Faso in 1986. When the border hostilities between the two countries escalated into a shooting war, Nigeria quickly intervened to nip it at the bud before it snowballed into sub-regional conflict. In doing so, Nigerian Foreign Affairs Minister took it upon himself to visit the warring states and some neighboring countries like Libya a Senegal to preach the need for a cease-fire and negotiations¹¹. The matter was later referred to O.A.U for resolution. This, to a great extent projected Nigeria's leadership role in West Africa sub-region and the whole of Africa in general.

In the same vein, Nigeria intervened in the Liberian crisis and that of Sierra Leone in the 1990s. It is on record that Nigeria initiated, funded and contributed about 75% of the personnel to ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) which eventually brought peace to Liberia and also reinstated the over-thrown government of President Tejan Kabbah to power in Sierra Leone.

Elsewhere in Africa, Babangida's administration spearheaded the liberation struggles in Africa, especially the dismantling of all racist regimes in Africa. The case of the apartheid regime in South Africa comes to mind here. The administration of Babangida received Nelson Mandela in Nigeria in 1990 after his release from prison, apparently to exhibit Nigeria's stance against the apartheid regime in South Africa. Also when president De Klerk visited Nigeria in 1992, Babangida used the occasion to stress Nigeria's desire for the enthronement of a multiracial democracy in South Africa and pressurized De Clerk to expedite the democratic process¹². As further proof of Babangida's strong and unflinching commitment to Africa's liberation struggles, his regime in 1986 spearheaded the boycott of the commonwealth games slated to hold in Edinburgh, Scotland, due to perceived support of Britain to the apartheid regime in South Africa. In a similar vein, Nigeria under Gen. Babangida had also intervened in the Chadian and Congo crises of the 1990s. Generally, Africa was a centre-piece of the foreign policy thrust of Babangida's administration.

However, a critical perusal at Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy under Babangida, which was particularly anchored on constructive engagement in peace-making, peace-keeping and peace-building mostly at regional level, it becomes evident that huge financial and material resources are expended on such peace initiatives. About 10 to 14 billion dollars was estimated to have been spent on peace keeping in Liberia and Sierra Leone¹³. Worst still, such huge investments have not yielded commensurate dividends to Nigeria. More worrisome is the fact that Nigeria had to part with such colossal amount all in the name of humanitarian intervention when Nigeria itself was immersed in serious economic crisis.

Beside, Nigeria's intervention in the Liberia crisis have been severally criticized by international relations analysts for what they termed Nigeria's lack of credibility in trying to prevent someone from seizing power by force since Nigeria itself was under the military junta headed by few military adventurers. Some are of the view that Nigeria has no business intervening in Liberia for any reason. Others accused Babangida of squandering the nations hard earn resources on Liberia crisis simply to save the regime of his personal friend, Samuel Doe.

It is indeed ironical that those Africa countries who benefited from Nigeria's assistance failed to even show appreciation and gratitude in response to Nigeria's sweat, blood and toil. Of all Nigeria's efforts in the Liberia crisis, no Nigerian company or firm was considered for contract award in the post - crisis reconstruction programme of Liberia. Of all Nigeria's fight against the apartheid regime in South Africa, the later failed to support Nigerian's bid become a permanent member of the UN security council. Only recently several Nigerians have been subjected to xenophobic attacks in South Africa. Therefore, the foreign policy thrust of Babangida's administration, particularly as it concerns Nigeria's intervention in Liberia, South Africa, and other African countries were not rewarding in terms of reciprocity from such countries.

Economic Diplomacy and Relations with Great Powers

The concept of economic diplomacy was initiated and given meaning by Babangida's administration between 1985 and 1993. Against the backdrop of the country's economic distress during the period, which brought with it high rate of unemployment, leading to all kinds of social and economic vices like armed robbery, economic and other financial crimes with its attendance consequences of battered image in the international community, the Babangida's administration introduced economic diplomacy. The administration's economic diplomacy was designed primarily to articulate Nigeria's economic potentials and favourable investment climate and to explain the numerous incentive

Nigeria has put in place to encourage and induce the flow of capital for profitable investment.

Although Nigeria's foreign policy thrust before Babangida's regime had always reflected economic development as one of its objectives, it is however, glaring that such earlier foreign policy emphasized more on political matters like decolonization, apartheid, non-alignment, arms race and related cold war issues. Babangida however, introduced a shift from political diplomacy to economic diplomacy in which case, emphasis was placed more on desired economic development anchored basically on greater inflow of desired, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and expansion of foreign trade. To give bite to this initiative, the Nigeria government reopened the country's borders that were closed by the Buhari's administration. Similarly, Nigeria made effort to normalize diplomatic relations with Britain. It could be recalled that diplomatic relations between Nigeria and Britain went sour over the Umaru Dikko kidnap Saga, the detail of which is too obvious to detain us here. But suffice to say here that the Umaru Dikko affair resulted in the expulsion of major Hnalidu Halidu, the then Nigeria's high commissioner to Britain and Nigeria's retaliatory expulsion of the British High Commission from Lagos (Akinriade, 1985). In effect, the relationship between the two countries and between Nigeria and most western countries before Babandiag come into power was far from being cordial.

The above scenario left Nigeria's economy prostrate and limited its capacities for external adventures. It is in the light of the above that Fawole (2003) remarks that debt service obligations had increased, credit worthiness had dissipated and the country resorted to counter-trade to remain afloat. That was the dangerous legacy that Babangida inherited in August 1985. In the light of the above Babangida's economic diplomacy was also aimed at an enlarged image laundering abroad to encourage foreign investors with a promise that external investment would be protected against arbitrary government interference.

Embedded in the regime's economic diplomacy is the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). The objectives of the structural adjustment programme are as follows:

1. To restructure and diversify the productive base of the economy in order to reduce dependence on the oil sector and imports.
2. To achieve fiscal and balance of payment viability over the period.
3. To lay the basis for sustainable non-inflationary growth and
4. To reduce the dominance of unproductive investments in the public sector, improve that sector's efficiency and enhance the growth potential of the private sector.

However, as Otohagwa pointed out; these objectives could not be attained with poor financial base. There was the need for huge financing. Eventually, the regime decided to seek for loan from the international monetary fund (IMF) in spite of its stringent conditionalities which includes;

- Devaluation of Naira, the national currency
- Introduction of trade liberalization policy
- Removal of oil subsidy
- Deregulation of the national economy¹⁴.

Stemming from the above conditionalities, Nigerian media was awash with public resentment against the IMF loan. There was widespread fear that Nigeria would be further impoverished and later imperialized given the fact that the loan. There was widespread fear that Nigeria would be further impoverished and later imperialized given the fact that the loan has never helped any African country that obtained it. Contrary to public opinion which was against the loan, Babangida's administration obtained the loan and the implementation of the conditionality's left Nigeria's economy prostrate. The exchange rate of the naira became N4 to \$ 1 and later fell further to N10 to 17. Since then, the naira has not recovered from market forces. With SAP, Babangida's administration promptly instituted a ruthless economic restructuring in line with IMF standard prescriptions for debt – ridden economies. His economic policies received endorsement

from the US authorities. Thus, the regime was able to secure the rescheduling of its external debt in 1986. The highest point of Nigeria/US cordial bilateral relations during Babangida's regime was the cancelation of an existing \$82 million debt and rescheduling of another \$274 million official debt until 1995.

In pursuit of this policy of economic diplomacy, the Babangida administration undertook various diplomatic shuttles, especially to Britain and US. The then foreign affairs ministers, Gen. Ike Nwachukwu, led a delegation of chieftains of both private and public sectors to Britain, and Japan as part of efforts to strengthen the economic and technical co-operation between Nigerian and those western countries. The result of such diplomatic romance is that Britain pledged 200 million dollars towards Nigeria's economic recovery, while Japan had earlier provided a 23 million dollars non-project grant and equally signed a bilateral agreement with Nigeria on the utilization of the 200 million dollar assistance¹⁵.

No doubt, the economic diplomacy of Babngida administration opened up new markets for Nigeria in Africa, Asia and Europe. Nigeria's industrial sector began to show sign of growth as Nigeria's industrial productions like furniture and electrical appliances became visible in foreign markets. Nigeria also started to export tyres, soap detergents, fruits and fruits drinks to Nigeria's neighbours.

Above all, the Babangida administration made Nigeria proud and greatly boosted Nigeria's external image, when it gave solid backing to two prominent Nigeria's candidacy for external positions in intergovernmental organizations, and were elected accordingly. The first was major General Joseph Garba who was elected president of UN General assembly. Secondly, Chile Emeka Anyaoku was elected as the secretary General of the Commonwealth of Nations. Nigeria's victory in these elections, no doubt open up a new vista of hope, and indication that Nigeria was beginning to assume its rightful place on the world stage.

Much as the Babangida's administration have recorded huge successes in foreign policy formulation and implementation, it has also

received some criticism. In the first place, its economic diplomacy has been faulted for being short-sighted and very limited in scope because it failed to set out specific guidelines on how to safeguard Nigeria's national interest. Infact, it has been argued that the policy merely opened up Nigeria's economy to external manipulations by the western world, who manipulated Nigeria's economy for the benefits of their transnational companies in Nigeria (Akinboye, 1999).

Besides, given the fact that foreign policy is a reflection of a country's domestic policy, the annulment of June 12, 1993 presidential election by the Babangida's administration sundered whatever good diplomatic relation that existed between Nigeria and the western powers. The annulment of 1993 presidential election by Babangida marked a turning point in the regime's erstwhile cordial relations with western powers. From the point of this annulment, public opinion within and outside Nigeria turn out against the Babangida's administration because it has become clear that the regime does not want to hand over to a democratically elected regime. The pressure and protests from both Nigerians and international community forced Gen. Babangida to step aside and hand over to an interim government headed by Earnest Shonekan.

Critique of Babangida's Foreign Policy Initiatives

A critical appraisal of Babangida's foreign policy initiative reveals that though, practical, assertive and pragmatic steps were taken to revamp the conduct of Nigeria's external relations, the regime's foreign policy initiatives still lacked certain ingredience which unarguably inhibits full realization of the country's foreign policy objectives and diplomatic goals.

In the first place, the concert of medium powers which Babangida initiated was an over-size shoe for Nigeria. As mentioned earlier, Nigeria does not possess the power and industrial base required for such global leadership role. Nigeria was already wobbling with economic crisis and lack of infrastructure, coupled with its disadvantage power position in the international system. Spearheading such a grandiose international

organization was not in tandem with the economic reality of the moment. Nigeria as a nation basically lacked what it takes to spearhead such concert of medium power.

In the same way, the Babangida regime instituted the Technical Aid Crop Scheme (TACS). As noted earlier, the scheme was aimed at providing a more sustainable assistance to African states, thus underlying the big brother role of Nigeria in the African region. However, apart from the huge financial implication of this scheme, the young Nigerian professionals which were taken outside the states of Nigeria to render services abroad were indeed urgently needed in Nigeria. For instance, within the period under review, many Nigerians did not, and still do not have access to Doctors or Medicare, yet Babangida's administration deemed it fit to send Nigerian doctors to work in foreign lands at her expense. Nigeria was still importing engineers as expatriates to execute most road projects, refineries and other infrastructure. Yet, Nigeria is busy exporting her own engineers. It was indeed a case of someone cutting his nose to spice his face, and that of charity beginning abroad. All efforts, energy and resources expended on TACS would have been channeled into Nigeria's industrialization and other critical sectors of the economy to consolidate our economic power, which will in turn greatly enhance Nigeria's power position in the international system.

Another major area of criticism on the Babangida's foreign policy initiative is the area of peace-keeping effort both within and outside Africa. Nigeria's commitment to OAU and UN during Babangida never reduced. Little wonder he was elected the chairman of OAU in 1991. During his regime, Nigeria championed the course of de-colonization of Africa, the eradication of apartheid regime in South Africa, championing of peace-keeping operation in Liberia, Sierra-leone and other countries in Africa and beyond. Considering the enormous financial commitment on such humanitarian interventions without a corresponding advantage accruing to Nigeria, one would say that such humanitarian ventures were mere grandiose display of "big brother", whereas at the home-front Nigerians

were groaning under harsh economic situation. The failure of benefiting countries to show reciprocity or even appreciation to Nigeria for her peace-keeping efforts in their country makes nonsense of the big brother role of Nigeria. It was a case of public success, but private failure.

As the economy of Nigeria nose-dived from bad to worse, Babangida introduced the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in line with IMF standard prescription for debt-ridden economies. Thus, Nigeria had access to more loans with stringent economic conditionalities attached. As Babangida's regime was busy using IMF loan to fund its numerous humanitarian interventions and big brother roles, Nigerians were battling with the pains of adjustment.

The true nature and intention of Babangida became more evident when he annulled the June 12, 1993 presidential election which was adjudged the freest and fairest ever in the history of Nigeria. It became apparently clear that all his political moves, the banning, unbanning and re-banning of different categories of political activities and politicians, the constant alternation in the handing over time-table were all aimed at truncating the transition programme. This was than the turning point in the regime's erstwhile cordial relationship with the western powers, particularly U.S. This signaled the imposition of several political, military and economic sanctions on Nigeria by the U.S. and other western powers.

Earlier in his regime, Babangida had unilaterally concluded plans to put Nigeria into membership of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1986. This decision apart from dividing the nation into sharply opposing camps of muslims versus Christians, it also attracted global reactions, particularly the pro-zionist states. Generally, it was evident that Nigeria's foreign policy posture during Babangida administration does not reflect the wishes and desires of Nigerians, rather, it reflected the personal interest of Babangida and his cohort.

Conclusion

General Babangida relaxed the radical and draconian posture of Buhari administration's foreign policy. He engaged a seasoned expert in international relations, Professor Akinyemi as the nation's Foreign Affairs Minister, who for a start, organized an all Nigeria conference on foreign policy in order to examine the various perspectives of the country's foreign policy. Various areas of foreign policy initiatives were given a touch viz; Concert of Medium Powers, Technical Aid Corp Scheme, Afrocentrism, and Economic Diplomacy. Apparently in response to the economic crisis of that era Babangida's administration attempted to reduce the country's economic dependence on the west, with the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programme. Unfortunately the same SAP was tied to the manipulation of western power and as such the programme failed to restructure the Nigerian economy in line with the envisaged target. In the same vein, other foreign policy initiatives of Babangida's administration have been faulted for failure to foster Nigeria's national interest. Generally Nigeria's foreign policy posture can hardly reflect the opinion of average Nigerians. It is usually reflective of the wishes, desires and personal interest of those in power. This is the bane of Nigeria's foreign policy during the period under review.

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