

# One Personality, Two Regimes: A Comparative Analysis of Nigeria's Foreign Policies under Olusegun Obasanjo

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## Abstract

President Olusegun Obasanjo holds the singular honor of being the only Nigerian leader to have ruled Nigeria twice first as a military Head of State between 1976 and 1979, and as a civilian president from 1999 to 2007. Under his two administrations, Nigeria's foreign policy experienced a lease of life and dynamism in both foreign policy formulation and implementation. However, one could notice a combination of continuity and change in Nigeria's foreign policy in his second administration compared to the previous one. This paper attempts a comparative analysis of both periods. Relying on content analysis of secondary material, the paper concludes that the role of leadership, as well as the domestic and external environments of the two periods account for the continuity and change witnessed in Nigeria's foreign policy.

**Keywords:** Nigeria, Obasanjo, Leadership, Personality Traits, Diplomacy

## 1. Introduction

President Olusegun Obasanjo is the only Nigerian leader to have ruled Nigeria twice first as military Head of State between 1976 and 1979, and as civilian president from 1999 to 2007. Under his two administrations, Nigeria's foreign policy experienced a lease of life and dynamism, and a golden moment in both foreign policy formulation and implementation. However, one could notice a combination of continuity and change in Nigeria's foreign policy in his second administration compared to the previous one. This paper attempts a comparative analysis of both periods. It summarizes the highlights of Nigeria's foreign policies in the two periods and explains what accounted for the continuity and change. Attention is given to the critical role played by Obasanjo's personality to give Nigeria's foreign policy the shape it took in the two periods. The role of leadership in foreign policy cannot be overemphasized. Political leadership of any country is important in the formulation and implementation of both domestic and foreign policies. As will be demonstrated in this paper, Obasanjo displayed the intellectual capacity, resourcefulness, political astuteness and judgment as military Head of State and civilian president crucial to dynamic foreign policies.

The paper relies on content analysis of secondary materials in accomplishing its tasks. Using actor-specific approach, and relying on Margaret Hermann's Leadership Trait Analysis, the paper concludes that Obasanjo displayed "high belief in ability to control events", and "high need for power" both as Military Head of State and as Civilian President.

While Obasanjo's leadership qualities had played a key role in determining Nigeria's foreign policy in the two periods thereby giving it a measure of continuity, obvious divergences in both the domestic and external environments of the two periods accounted for the change.

## 2. Conceptual Clarification

### 2.1 Foreign Policy

Even though, scholars differ on definition of foreign policy, they all agree that it is has to do with behavior of a state towards other states. According to George Modelska, "Foreign policy is the system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behavior of other states and for adjusting their own activities to the international environment". Therefore, Foreign Policy must throw light on the ways in which states attempt to change, and succeed in changing, the behavior of other states. (Modelska, 1962:6-7). Along this line, the objective of foreign policy is not only to change but also to regulate behavior of other states by ensuring continuity of their favorable actions.

To Joseph Frankel, "Foreign Policy consists of decisions and actions, which involves to some appreciable extent relations between one state and others." (Frankel, 1963:1).

From the above definitions, the following facts are conspicuous; foreign policy is a state's policy; it deals with the external environment; the core of foreign policy consists of achieving the national objectives of a nation by interacting with other states.

With the term "foreign", there is a clear distinction between foreign policy and domestic policy. "Foreign" applies to policy toward the world outside states' territorial borders, and "domestic" is meant to apply to policy

made for the internal political system. Hence, going to war with another country, signing an international trade agreement, aiding an anti-colonial movement or providing development assistance to another country are examples of foreign policy. Revenue allocation, school enrolment, labor policy and poverty alleviation are examples of domestic policy. However, the forces of globalization that have turned the world to a global village have blurred the distinction between foreign and domestic policies. This does not mean that there is no longer a difference between foreign and domestic policy and a distinction can be made based on the intended target of the policy. If the primary target lies outside the country's borders, it is considered foreign policy, and if the primary target is inside the country, it is considered domestic policy.

### **3. Theoretical framework and Literature Review**

There are basically two levels of foreign policy analysis with two classes of theoretical orientations focusing on the external and the internal factors. One set of theoretical orientation focuses on the international system with the argument that all states, regardless of their type of political system, their history, or their culture, reside within an international system that limits choices they can make. These theorists argued that states' foreign policies were solely a product of the international system—merely a reaction to external conditions and other actors.

Focusing on the international milieu are the realists, liberalists, and constructivists.

The realist's position is that the international system is composed of self-interested states that compete constantly for power or security. (Morgenthau, 1948 & Waltz, 1979). Conflict is more likely because the absence of an overall system of law and enforcement means that each political actor must look out for itself. In addition, realists argue that power is a relative concept. In a condition of anarchy, any gain in power by one state represents an inherent threat to its neighbors. (Keohane, 1986). Policies aimed at demonstrating military capabilities and securing spheres of influence are most important. This position was very prominent during the Cold War when competition for allies and power diplomacy dominated the foreign policy agenda. It was a bipolar system in which small and middle powers faced strong pressures to submit to alliance partner of one of the major powers thereby giving up autonomy in foreign policy for the sake of security. Although realism captures the primacy of security interests and the drive for power among all states, it is often criticized for its excessive focus on military conflict at the expense of economic cooperation.

To fix this shortcoming, Liberal theories of international relations focus on the distribution of economic motivation as a primary characteristic that affects states' foreign policies. One strand of liberal thought argued that economic interdependence would discourage states from using force against each other because warfare would threaten each side's prosperity. A second strand saw the spread of democracy as the key to world peace. With the increase in global trade and financial relationships and the technological advances that have facilitated this increase, states have become more interdependent. (Keohane, 1986; Fukuyama, 1989). One variant of neoliberal institutionalism contends that states cooperate because of expected mutual benefits, and they are likely to form multilateral regimes to foster mutual gains and further their goals of economic wealth. Thus, liberalism views economic interdependence as the key characteristic of the international environment that states must consider when they make foreign policy.

Globalization trends and liberalization pressures intensify interdependence among nations. Hence, regional economic integration is a response to the pressure of globalization.

Focusing on the external milieu also is the constructivist perspective. Constructivists view norms of appropriate behavior as socially constructed international structures that constrain states' foreign policies. Norms represent shared expectations about appropriate behavior that derive from a combination of beliefs, standards of behavior, international conventions, and decision-making procedures. Hence, norms evolved in the international environment to establish standards of acceptable behavior, for instance to reframe the international slave trade as repugnant and immoral, and to prohibit the use of nuclear weapons. Norms are characterized as both regulative and constitutive in that they shape national interests and identity. (Walt, 1998; Koslowski & Krotowki, 1994). In sum, realism proposes that states who are motivated by self-interests seek military power and create alliances while weak states submit to more powerful actors. Liberalism suggests that an interdependent international system results in more cooperation, more support for organizations that help coordinate activities, and the submission of economically weak states to the forces of the international marketplace. Constructivist perspectives point to socially-created meanings that develop into international norms that serve to guide actors' behaviors.

In contrast to the externally based theories are those who dwell on internal sources of foreign policies, despite international circumstances. For these analysts, the great diversity of political systems, cultures, and leaders are the factors that point states in different directions, even though they are facing the same external forces. Domestically oriented theories argue that states sometimes make decisions that do not necessarily benefit them in international politics. These theories explain such “deviations from rationality” by pointing to the need of leaders to satisfy both domestic political goals and foreign policy interests or by examining the imperfect nature of the decision-making process. While those who focus on external sources of foreign policy assume an “Actor General” stand as if states were “unitary actors” whose politicians and citizens act with one voice for the sake of national security, domestic theorists highlight the many different voices and conflicts over foreign policy at the domestic level. These many voices come from the public, societal groups, government organizations, and leaders.

Domestic influences in foreign policy could include the military, Government Organization: Democracies and Bureaucracies, democratic institutions, with the assumption that more actors are involved and authoritarian establishments with the assumption that authoritarian leaders often make decisions by themselves.

As will be shown later on, it will be too simplistic to assume that democratic leaders are directly accountable to political parties and the public and thus must build a consensus for foreign policy, while authoritarian leaders do not face these constraints and may enjoy considerable latitude in choosing their own policies.

Rather, the personality of Leaders has been a core of foreign policy analysis. At the top of every government sits a leader, or leaders, who have the authority to make foreign policy. Characteristics of leaders are generally more important when they have significant latitude in shaping policy and the situation is ambiguous, uncertain, or complex. Under these conditions, which occur frequently in foreign policy making, a leader's personality and beliefs may shape what the state does.

Leaders' decisions may be shaped by their own personal history, their childhood, career and early political experiences building in them certain values and ways of handling problems.

Leaders' decision-making style and how they manage information and the people around them can also be important. Some leaders like Obasanjo choose to be quite active in foreign policy making. (Garba, 1987). They tend not to compromise on their vision and are less open to advice. Others are interested in keeping power or bridging conflicts. They tend to be sensitive to advice and are reluctant to make decisions without consultation and consensus.

Hence, the personal characteristics of the individual leader can become central in understanding foreign policy choice. (Herman, 2005).

Among the most prominent in the study of the application of personality trait to foreign policy choices is Margaret Hermann's Leadership Trait Analysis framework, an approach which focuses upon politically relevant personality traits. Leadership Trait Analysis conceptualizes personality as a combination of seven traits: belief in ability to control events, conceptual complexity, need for power, distrust of others, in-group bias, self-confidence, and task orientation. An individual's score on these variables is measured through a content analysis of their verbal output. More specifically, the assumption is made that the more frequently leaders use certain words and phrases in their interview responses (and other verbal behavior), the more salient such content is to them.

Using this technique, Hermann and others have studied the personality and leadership style of a wide range of individual including political leaders and presidents.

Individual characteristics have been linked to factors such as the degree to which a leader challenges or respects constraints in the international environment, their openness to information, their motivation for leading, and their preferences over the structure and operation of advisory systems and decision processes.

Some of the traits identified by these scholars are as follows;

- High Belief in Ability to Control Events

This trait indicates the individual's subjectively perceived degree of control over the political environment. Leaders higher in this trait believe themselves to be efficacious in relation to the political environment on a personal level, and perceive that their state is an influential political actor. A higher belief in ability to control events leads to a more proactive policy orientation, and a perception that the barriers to successful action are surmountable. In applications of this trait to foreign policy outputs Hermann found that when combined with

need for power, belief in ability to control events predicted the extent to which a political leader would challenge constraints within the international system.

- Low Conceptual Complexity

Individuals higher in this trait operate with a more nuanced view of the political world, develop complex images of others, and perceive a wide array of factors as relevant to a decision. Individuals who are lower, by contrast, operate with a more black and white view of events and actors, are comfortable with relatively straightforward binary classification schemes (i.e., “good and evil,” “them and us”), and make decisions based on a more restricted calculus of significant factors. Higher complexity is therefore associated with a desire to obtain more information before making a decision, and a desire to carefully monitor the environment for feedback on the results of the initial

decision. Lower complexity is associated with a willingness to make decisions based upon limited information, and the possibility of a failure to perceive, or a propensity to discount, information which is indicative of a failing course of action.

In terms of linking complexity to foreign policy outputs, Hermann found that lower complexity can be associated with a more committed and aggressive foreign policy.

- High Need for Power

Individuals higher in the need for power require greater personal control and involvement in policy, and have an increased concern that the policy output reflect their preference, rather than be a consensual group decision. By contrast, the lower the need for power, the greater the willingness to delegate and to accept an outcome contrary to the individual’s desire. Hermann suggests that individuals high in the need for power will acquire a great degree of expertise in sizing up situations and people, such that they will be very skilled in ensuring that outcomes reflect their preferences.

They tended to concentrate debate and decision within tight “inner circles” of advisers who did not necessarily occupy positions of formal authority, but were of like mind and personally dependent upon the leader. By contrast, individuals lower in the need for power exhibited less activist leadership styles, and were more comfortable with delegating responsibility and working through regularized structures that diffuse authority to others.

While this paper relies on Margaret Hermann’s Leadership Trait Analysis framework, as recapped above, it deviates from her methodology. Her “at-a-distance” technique is dependent on content analysis of a leader’s verbal behavior to reach conclusions about the leader’s personality trait. Rather, this paper will rely on comments made by acquaintances and subordinates about President Obasanjo’s personality trait.

I will rely on content analysis of two books written by two of Obasanjo’s ministers when he was a military Head of State and a civilian president.

Obasanjo’s foreign minister when he was military Head of State between 1976 and 1979, Joe Garba in his book titled Diplomatic Soldiering gave a picture of Obasanjo’s personality trait as follows;

- Courageous and decisive: According to Joe Garba, (1997:11), “His (Obasanjo) courageous and decisive approach to asserting Nigeria’s interest over foreign convenience had dramatically emerged in May 1975, when as Federal Commissioner for Works, he forcibly took over a building occupied by the US Embassy”
- Intellectual and Energetic: “With the death of Murtala in February 1976, most people thought that our foreign policy would lose its dynamism. But that did not happen. Indeed, Obasanjo to my mind was particularly impressive in applying his intellect as well as his energy to our international interests.” (Ibid:15).
- Keen Interest in and Control of Foreign Policy: “However, like many Heads of State who have a keen interest in foreign policy, Obasanjo developed his own machinery as a counterpoise to the Ministry of External Affairs. This took the form of the Political Division of the Cabinet Office. In previous administrations it played no distinctive role at that time, and certainly not a separate one.” (Ibid:15).  
In another well-articulated book written by Nasir Ahmad El-Rufai (2013), Obasanjo’s minister of Federal Capital Territory, he identified Obasanjo’s personality trait as follows;
- Dual personality: “I always had difficulty understanding Obasanjo how Obasanjo could sit with us and preach about sacrifice and transparency one moment and then the next, sit with Gaius Obaseki, the GMD of NNPC, about how to get some payments to the PDP from some oil or LNG deals. I never understood how a person could do this and sleep well. How can one have Obasanjo’s complex personality and sleep well at night? Studying Bismarck, De Gaulle and the rest helped me make sense of this duality in leaders.” (El-Refai:389).

- Astuteness: “Obasanjo was a very hand-on president who wanted to know everything. Anything that ought to concern the president, Obasanjo wanted to be briefed on, and he worked 20 hours a day to make sure he did not miss anything”. (Ibid:374).
- Personalisation of power: “for many people like Obasanjo, loyalty means you do everything that they want or demand; that you are on their side all the time with little regard to other objective values. Accordingly, Obasanjo and his capricious views and opinions are the benchmarks of one’s patriotism. The constitution and the law are the secondary, not the primary standards.” (Ibid: lviii). El Rufai spoke of Obasanjo’s “consistency in putting his personal interest before that of the nation”. (Ibid:460).
- Control Freak: “my boss (Obasanjo) is uncomfortable with anyone he is not absolutely certain he could control” (Ibid:367).
- Intelligence: “In spite of all these deficits, President Obasanjo is an intelligent, hardworking, dedicated and competent leader.” (Ibid:367).
- Good schemer: At a meeting with the US Ambassador, Robin Sanders to discuss his , former EFCC boss, Ribadu said that Obasanjo was good at covering his tracks. “He (Obasanjo) really knew how to play the game. Although he created the EFCC and understood its importance for him with the international community, Obasanjo was a political machine and knew how to play the game for the international community, cover his tracks and for good or bad”. (Wiki leaks: 2011).

Deconstructing Garba and El Rufai’s thesis using Margaret Hermann’s Leadership Trait Analysis, one can conclude that Obasanjo displayed high belief in ability to control events, low conceptual complexity, and high need for power both as a Military Head of State and as a Civilian President.

#### **4. Highlights of Nigeria’s Foreign Policy: 1976-1979**

In the late 1970s when the then Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo became the Head of State after the assassination of Gen. Murtala Mohammed, he inherited a foreign policy that was virile, dynamic, and proactive as exemplified by the support given to the communist backed MPLA of Augustino Neto as opposed to the West-backed UNITA in 1975. Nigeria’s position in the Angola’s case was a study in independent foreign policy formulation and implementation. When Obasanjo became the Head of State, he followed the footstep of his former boss by continuing the foreign policy thrust of the administration which gave unflinching support to the liberation movements in different parts of Africa in countries that were still under white domination. The key points of his foreign policy then are as follows:

- Total support to all liberation movements in Southern Africa
- Proclamation of Nigeria as a distant frontline state in furtherance of this objective
- Open support for armed struggle against the white minority rule in Southern Africa including South Africa
- Denouncement of the apartheid regime in South Africa and subsequent refusal to have any relationship with that regime at a great cost to Nigeria estimated at about \$50 billion
- Forceful nationalization of the British Petroleum and renaming it African Petroleum, as well as Barclays bank because of Britain’s support for Apartheid system
- Assistance to a lot of indigent African States in cash and kind.

It cannot be over emphasized therefore that under his regime as a military Head of State, Nigeria witnessed a lot of pro-active initiatives which won the respect of the international community such that Nigeria’s input and participation were highly sought in the resolution of African conflict. For instance, Nigeria was part of the United Nations’ committee that saw to the resolution of the Rhodesian conflict. Obasanjo’s dynamism also earned him enduring friendship of world leaders like President Jimmy Carter of America and Chancellor Schmidt of Germany. This “golden age” of Nigeria’s foreign policy marked the true emergence of Nigeria as the giant of Africa.

These achievements were possible due to a number of factors which include Obasanjo’s personal dynamism, the oil boom which enabled Nigeria to back up its “power diplomacy” with financial muscle because a nation is emboldened by a strong and vibrant economy and stable polity to assert itself in the international arena. Besides, the military hierarchical structure which made policy decisions unencumbered because the Head of State’s actions could not be queried by his subordinates and he did not necessarily need the permission or even support of his subordinates in government to do whatever he deemed right aided a vibrant foreign policy.

According to Joe Garba, Obasanjo’s External Affairs commissioner between 1976 and 1979, “With the death of Murtala in February 1976, most people thought that our foreign policy would lose its dynamism. But that did not

happen. Indeed, Obasanjo to my mind was particularly impressive in applying his intellect as well as his energy to our international interests.” (Garba, 1987:15).

During this period, Obasanjo also displayed a radical approach to foreign policy implementation and strong anti-colonial sentiment, while putting Nigeria’s national interest in the front burner. Garba further alluded to this when he wrote “As for Obasanjo, he had strong anti-colonial credentials. In 1974 he had written a thesis at the Royal College of Defence Studies contrasting the paucity of British economic assistance to Nigeria with what the British were gaining from Nigeria economically. His courageous and decisive approach to asserting Nigeria’s interest over foreign convenience had dramatically emerged in May 1975, when as Federal Commissioner for Works, he forcibly took over a building occupied by the US Embassy” (Garba, 1987:11).

## 5. Highlights of Nigeria’s Foreign Policy: 1999 To 2007

However when Obasanjo returned to power through the ballot box in 1999, twenty years after he left office as a military Head of State, the Nigerian State was in a state of comatose.

According to Julius Ihonvhere, “The General Olusegun Obasanjo government that was inaugurated in May 1999 has its hands full. It has inherited a run down economy, a culture of corruption, factionalized social formations, and a restless civil society. As well, the country is heavily in debt and Obasanjo’s government is saddled with several elements that had been part of the construction of the centralization of power. Most of them have been apostles of military dictatorship even openly campaigning for the misguided self-succession bid of the late General Sani Abacha. It will take a long time to wear out the culture of corruption, sycophancy, opportunism, violence, and insensitivity to the plight of disadvantaged and marginalized communities”. (Ihonvhere, 1999:20) With the above background, the regime had to focus on the core issue in contemporary international relations which is economic.

Some of the directional changes in foreign policy focus are as follows:

- To reintegrate Nigeria into the mainstream of the international community
- To shore up Nigeria’s image abroad
- To attract foreign investment
- To recover stolen public funds stashed abroad
- To secure debt relief or if possible outright debt cancellation for the country
- To reduce to the barest minimum Nigeria’s international financial commitment especially in Africa
- To strengthen Nigeria’s bilateral and multilateral cooperation with other countries for the purpose of reaping economic benefits

Hence Nigeria’s purely Afro centric foreign policy between 1976 and 1979 gave way to a more universal and economic oriented foreign policy as soon as Obasanjo took over in 1999. This new foreign policy thrust was implemented as follows:

- Nigeria’s troop in Sierra-Leone was removed and a quick peace accord was facilitated by Nigeria to end the civil war in the country, a move believed to have saved Nigeria about \$1 million per day
- Shuttle diplomacy by president Obasanjo to campaign for foreign investment and debt relief, a move which yielded results with the inflow of foreign investment especially in the telecommunication sector, as well as debt relief to the tune of about \$18 billion from the Paris club of creditors
- Prevention of conflict in Africa in countries like The Gambia, Togo, Cote D’ivoire, Sao Tome and Principe through personal diplomacy
- Leadership of the African Union on two occasions to push for an African reform agenda tagged NEPAD
- Assist in restoration of democracy to Liberia by granting asylum to Charles Taylor
- Hosting the secretariat of ECOWAS parliament and hosting of the Commonwealth Heads of State and Government meeting.

At this juncture, we will look in closer details the internal and external environments that determined the foreign policies of the two periods.

## 6. The Domestic Environments

### 6.1. The Economy

The Nigerian Economy was witnessing a very robust moment during Obasanjo's first government in the late 1970s. The oil boom, thanks to the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, was still on and the Nigerian Economy was in a great shape. The unemployment rate was imperceptible and Nigeria was a buoyant country that was relatively independent economically. Hence Nigeria was able to take an independent position on issues bordering on African liberation. However, in 1999 when Obasanjo returned as a civilian president, the Nigerian economy has almost gone under. This could be traced to the long haul of uninterrupted military regime exemplified by the institutionalization of corruption. The regimes of Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha were the worst culprit. While the Babangida regime could not account for billions of dollars in oil revenue accrued during the Gulf war, the Abacha regime was bedeviled by General Sani Abacha's insatiable thirst for personal enrichment leading to his looting of the State treasury to the tune of billions of dollars. Therefore, the unemployment rate went pretty high while Nigeria was highly indebted to the Paris and London clubs of creditors, among others. Hence the level of independent foreign policy witnessed between 1976 and 1979 has become history. Nigeria has become subservient to the dictates of the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and independent foreign policy was no longer affordable. The human rights record of the Babangida and Abacha's governments drew the ire of the international community and Nigeria had become a pariah state detested by the international community.

"Basically, in terms of the domestic context of policy formulation, the following are the environmental raison d'etre: (a) The need for consolidation of the hard-won democracy (b) Transformation of Nigeria from its previous pariah status to a respected nation, governed according to democratic principles, embedded in the respect of fundamental human rights and the rule of law (c) A debilitating domestic economic situation requiring stringent and urgent rejuvenation (d) Recognition of the hydra-headed problem of corruption, and its impact on the country's economic predicament and debt burden (e) The proliferation of conflicts both intra and inter, in West Africa, and Africa in general and the need to avoid catastrophe. These imperatives, to a large extent influenced the new foreign policy direction of the democratically elected government of Olusegun Obasanjo" (Agbu, 2001:249)

### 6.2. The Political Environments

The period between 1976 and 1979 was a period when military rule was still fashionable in the world. In such a situation, decisions were easier to make because everything was done by military fiat and orders were carried out by junior officers without any complaint. Although there was a Supreme Military Council (SMC) which was the Armed Forces highest ruling organ, the Head of State, being the most senior military officer could dictate events at the SMC. Such a privilege made it easy for decisions to be made promptly without recourse to any quarters. There was virtually no checks and balances. However, as a civilian president, such a privilege is not to be taken for granted. There was the 1999 Constitution which prescribed the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy. The constitution ensured that the federal government is in full control of "not just the political and diplomatic relationships between Nigeria and the outside world but also of the economic, trade and financial dimensions of Nigeria's external transaction." (Akinede, 2000:63). However, "The problem is essentially how responsibility has been shared within the federal government, particularly between the President and the National Assembly, in such a way as to prevent, or at least minimize institutional conflict, unhealthy and antagonistic rivalry between the two arms of government". (Ibid:65). Even though the National Assembly made up of the Senate and the House of Representatives act as a watchdog on the executive thereby making it difficult for the president to take unilateral decisions, the actual conduct of foreign policy remains the exclusive responsibility of the President. Obasanjo as a civilian president has a team of tested career officers to work with as his ministers and advisers including his second Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Olu Adeniji who was a career diplomat and former permanent secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a UN undersecretary General and Special Representative of the UN Secretary General to Sierra-Leone before his appointment compared to the period of 1976 to 1979 when he had to work with a team of young military officers including Joe Garba, Henry Adefowope, Ibrahim Babangida, Musa Yar' Adua and Theophilus Danjuma. This did not however checkmate Obasanjo's overbearing influence in domestic and foreign policy between 1999 and 2007. Sule Lamido, Nigeria's foreign minister between 1999 and 2003 has this to say "Let me also state that as a Minister of Foreign Affairs between 1999 and 2003, I was privileged to work under a President that is highly experienced and who has a high profile in international politics. He is President Olusegun Obasanjo. Even before becoming Head of State in 1976 he has garnered some experience in international relations and foreign policy. Together with his colleague and bosom friend, General Murtala Muhammed of blessed memory, he participated in the United Nations Peace-Keeping operation in the Congo, in the early days of Nigeria's independence. He was a member of the Governing Board of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), the Think Tank of Nigeria's Foreign Policy. He became one of Africa's Eminent Personalities and thus, an African statesman, after leaving

office as Head of State. No wonder he got involved in foreign affairs in his first term so much that the public accused him of neglecting Nigeria. It should be understood that before he adjusted himself, he found the domestic environment too small for his attention. This is similar to Chairman Mao of China and Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, who, before the end of their life, considered global issues more of their personal concern than the domestic politics of their respective countries. They had become international statesmen who are more worried about international issues than trivial national politics" (Lamido, 2012).

Obasanjo's decision to grant asylum to Liberia's warlord and president, Charles Taylor in 2003 was one decision he was accused of taking unilaterally. In fact, in 2002, Nigeria's House of Representative threatened to open impeachment proceedings against Obasanjo for actions considered to be unconstitutional. The House of Representatives said Obasanjo authorised military operations at Odi, in the southern oil region, in 1999, and Zaki Biam, in central Nigeria, in 2001, during which hundreds of civilians were killed by rampaging troops without obtaining the consent of the legislature before ordering such military operations, as is required under the constitution. (IRIN Africa, 2002).

With such flagrant attitude in domestic affairs, Obasanjo unilaterally exuded so much latitude in determining Nigeria's foreign policy even as a civilian president thereby accounting for the continuity in dynamism experienced during the two periods. In fact Obasanjo's style of governance as a civilian president ignited the introduction of "militocracy" into Nigeria's political lexicon; a concept used to describe civilian president Obasanjo's tendency to act in his domestic and foreign policies as an autocratic ruler. This tendency sometimes incurred retaliatory actions from the legislators as well. "For example, in January 2003, some members of the House of Representatives visited Pakistan, apparently seeking to mediate in the dispute over Kashmir, without consulting the Foreign Ministry. We (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) wrote to the Chairman of the Committee, pointing out the risk of such a trip without background knowledge of the delicate balance of alliances. They reacted angrily, saying '...nobody is here as an appendage of Sule Lamido's Ministry. We are not his boys; we are not bound by his whatever foreign policy strategy'." (Lamido, 2012).

To be sure, it is not the position of this paper that a democracy will naturally democratize its foreign policies and make it an all-comers affair for its citizenry to make input. Obasanjo did not make any pretense to that when he became president in 1999. He had carried on with his foreign policies the way he deemed best and the involvement of the National Assembly committees have been nothing more than advisory.

According to Segun Johnson, "The art of formulating and implementing foreign policy by any state has been once cloaked in secrecy for reasons ranging from tactics and strategy to diplomacy and security; hence the inability to allow for a true democratic process in arriving at any particular policy. It is customary for democratic states to advertise the input of the masses into their decision-making process in order to achieve credibility and respectability both at home and abroad. Unabashedly, however, states sometimes do not seem to care much about their reputation on the input of their citizens in the formulation of foreign policy. At best, cosmetic conferences and allowance of pressure groups to air their feelings and preferences are allowed to a moderate extent. Indeed, while the military regimes of some twenty years may not owe any apology for not exhibiting any form of democratization in either domestic or foreign policy decision-making process, the need to identify with the governed for possible acceptance and perhaps legitimacy has arisen over the years to show that some elements of democracy are still acceptable to them". (Johnson, 1990: 507). Researchers have concluded that foreign policy is marginalized even in democratic systems like America. As Wendzell put it "most people don't know much about foreign policy matters and don't care (unless they feel it affects them directly). Furthermore, inconsistency of views, contradictory ideas and lack of coherence and direction abound. Actually, instead of influencing the policy maker the general public usually looks to him for guidance. In most cases, the public is more of a follower than an influence". (R.L. Wendzell, 1977 cited in Johnson: 1990:510).

However, in the age of globalization, most people all over the world have access to the internet for information about developments beyond the shores of their country. Even then foreign policy cannot be left to everybody to be involved in its formulation because it is believed that only a government can speak usefully and responsibly in foreign affairs. As Johnson further posited, "The truth is that Nigeria lacks the culture of debating foreign policy as a national and vital issue for political practitioners to reflect upon, thereby eliminating the fundamentals of democracy." (Ibid: 513).

Since 1999, even though scholars like Akindele had predicted that the introduction of democratic governance will have ripple effects on the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy (Akindele, 1993:28), this may not be necessarily so in the area of the institutional mechanisms for foreign policy which continues to revolve around

the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Information, Commerce, Defence, and the presidency. The committees on foreign Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives have been more relevant in approving the appointment of ministerial nominees which in any case did not specify which ministry the nominees will be appointed to as well as Ambassadorial nominees. Foreign policy continues to remain largely an executive prerogative since 1999.

On the other hand however, there was a measure of more internal cohesion in the period between 1976 and 1979. Nigeria had just come out of a 3-year civil war 6 years earlier and the citizenry was more apathetic except for a few students' unrest witnessed during the period. The Niger Delta region was not volatile as it was during Obasanjo's second coming.

## 7. The External Environments

In the period between 1976 and 1979, the world was polarized between the West led by the capitalist United States and the East led by the communist USSR. Nigeria's adherence to the principle of Non Alignment gave room for a measure of independence. Some African countries, especially in the Southern African sub-region like Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Namibia, and South Africa were still suffering under colonialism and white minority rules.

The global environment has since changed. The cold war has ended and every African country has become independent.

There is now more focus on the economy in the international milieu. The International Financial Institutions have come up with a number of economic and political conditionalities that have made independent policies by a debtor nation like Nigeria almost unrealistic. Equally, the western industrialized nations no longer needed an ally as in the days of the Cold War and the language in the international environment is that of free trade and nothing more. "In the context of globalization, foreign policy of necessity must become an instrument to access or influence redistribution at the global level. There is no doubt that Nigerian foreign policy has to be re-shaped to respond to the politics of globalization with particular reference to the distribution of its benefits and moderation of its negative effects". (Agbu, 2001:250).

Globalization indeed posed both an opportunity and a challenge to all the countries of the world, none the least developing countries of the periphery like Nigeria. "On the one hand, there is the opportunity to fully integrate into the emerging global capitalist order to exploit the developments in science and technology, the new information revolution, and the expansion of the global market. Such an integration, it is argued will open up extensive opportunities for trade, investment, foreign aid, and support for other developmental objectives. On the other hand, the changes in the global market hold out the risks of further marginalization, and the redirection of investments and aid to other parts of the world, for a variety of reasons". (Ihonvhere, 1996:345). Hence foreign policy must be jeered towards empowering Nigeria to take advantage of current and future changes in the global order. In fact, former Secretary General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros-Ghali spoke about the post-Cold War environment and how states should cope with it: "The time of absolute and exclusive sovereignty has passed and states must find a balance between the needs of good internal governance and the requirements of an ever more interdependent world" (Ibid:348). The post-Cold war international milieu has witnessed a decline in sovereignty, new relationships with IFIs like the IMF, the World Bank, and other UN agencies. Scientific, economic, and social factors have come to the front burner of international relations at the expense of political developments. "The triumph of the market has not only narrowed ideological positions but has also drawn nations together in the struggle to permeate markets, attract foreign aid and investments, and attract new technologies". (Ibid:349).

Nigeria's debt burden was a major challenge to her foreign policy implementation right from 1999. The Obasanjo administration took the crusade for debt relief seriously using both bilateral and multilateral platforms to demand for debt cancellation from creditors, so as to free resources for improving the material condition of the people. This diverted a lot of attention and energy away from other policy objectives. Negotiating the debt relief on a largely bilateral level meant that Nigeria had to be sensitive to the interests of her creditors. "Part of the consequences of our diplomacy for debt cancellation was that the country had to also be sympathetic or at least not be out rightly antagonistic to the foreign interest of the creditor countries" (Lamido, 2012). A second challenge was that Nigeria had to engage the leading global financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF with the consequence that she has to entrench free market economy which brought about a "confused agenda" between what the government wished to do to alleviate the suffering of the populace and what it had to do to please her creditors. (Durotoye, 2000).

Unfortunately absolute free market model is not always successful in bringing direct tangible benefits to the ordinary people. In addition, to restore confidence in the economy and attract direct foreign investment, the

Obasanjo government had to put in place a sound economic management system and institute reforms that would eliminate corruption. This forced the Obasanjo administration to institute several reforms, among which were anticorruption initiatives that resulted in the setting up of both the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC).

Another constraint brought about by the international environment during Obasanjo's second coming was the intra and inter-regional group competition and tension encouraged by the influence of former colonial powers such as France, as well as incipient competition between Nigeria and some African countries especially South Africa as demonstrated during the impasse in Côte d'Ivoire following the election which Alassane Ouattara won but President Laurent Gbagbo refused to vacate office. South Africa decided to support Gbagbo by stationing military ships on the West African coast, even after ECOWAS had supported that Gbagbo leave power. This was not new though except that new actors like independent South Africa have come on stage.

The internal democracy deficit brought about by flawed election in Nigeria also made it difficult for a strong advocacy for the demand for democratization of the UN system especially membership of the Security Council which Obasanjo vehemently canvased for during his civilian presidency.

In sum, the key challenges to Nigeria's foreign policy making between 1999 and 2007 centred around four key themes, namely: the economy; difficulties in securing favorable consensus within the African countries; security; and the inability to muster the necessary strength to lead to the logical conclusion the reform of the UN system. (Lamido, 2012).

## 8. Conclusion

This paper attempts a comparative analysis of the foreign policies of Olusegun Obasanjo as military Head of State between 1976 and 1979, and as civilian president between 1999 and 2007.

The article highlights critical issues in Nigerian foreign policies in the two periods under examination. It examines the style of foreign policy making and implementations in the two periods as well as the domestic and global foreign policy environments while not losing sight of the different foreign policy challenges in the two periods.

The paper concludes that although Africa remains the cornerstone of Nigeria's foreign policy as was the case in the 1970s, new challenges have emerged in the continent and beyond thereby refashioning the methods of implementing Nigeria's foreign policy. No doubt, the scope of Nigeria's foreign Policy and the challenges have increased because Nigeria's foreign policy has had to respond to the demands of changes in the domestic and global environments. Put in another way, the principles of Nigeria's foreign policy which include respect for the sovereignty and independence of nations, non-alignment, and non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations, multilateral diplomacy, and decolonization remained unchanged although some of these principles such as decolonization and non-alignment have become extinct unlike the prime of place they took in the 1970s. Whereas the anti-colonial and anti-apartheid focus dominated all considerations of Nigeria's foreign policy including but not limited to her economic interests in the 1970s, a prioritization of interests and means of achieving them have pointed in the direction of a more economic-oriented diplomacy during Obasanjo's second coming.

The study shows that the introduction of democracy in 1999 did not automatically rub off on the formulation and implementation of Nigeria's foreign policy. Obasanjo's personality largely influenced by his credentials and exposure played a role in the continuity witnessed in Nigeria's foreign policy in the two periods. In conformity with Margaret Hermann's Leadership Trait Analysis, Obasanjo displayed a "high belief in ability to control events thereby preferring proactive policy solutions with a less deliberative decision process; and a "high need for power" indicating the impulse to gain, maintain, or restore the individual's control over people, policy process, and outcomes both as Military Head of State and as Civilian President. (Hermann, 2005).

Diversities in the domestic and international environments of the two periods accounted for the change.

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