
Book Reviews

Continuity and Change in Nigerian Foreign Policy by Paul P Izah
(Ahmadu Bello University Press) 1991, 153 pp.

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Given the fact that since the mid-1970s no book on Nigeria's foreign policy has attempted to analyse the domestic context and its linkage to the international environment, the appearance of a book on this subject matter is most welcome. The central issue of the book is an 'examination of the influence of domestic factors (social, political and economic) in Nigeria on the formation and implementation of Nigerian foreign policy between 1960 and 1979'. It also seeks to demonstrate that while the basic principles, goals and objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy have remained largely the same, the changes that can be discerned are in the areas of emphasis and style. Essentially emerging as a critique of previous works (Idang 1973; Akinyemi 1974),¹ the attempt has been made to establish how domestic factors such as the lack of political consensus, an acceptable single leadership and absence of a powerful government control have had immense influence on the content and direction of foreign policy.

The methodology utilized in the book is the chronological approach to the analysis of events which has looked into the various foreign policy positions of various regimes in Nigeria since 1960. Utilizing the chronological approach has made comparison of foreign policy positions of the various governments possible. Hence the point is succinctly made that foreign policy principles, goals and objectives have remained largely the same.

The influence of domestic factors on foreign policy are succinctly brought out. The federal structure in which the regions were paramount prevented the emergence of a solid domestic unity needed for a vigorously assertive foreign policy (p. 45-72). For instance, on the question of the need for the nation to attract foreign investment needed for economic development, the federal government did not have serious control over the regions.

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1 Idang, G J, *Nigeria: Internal and Foreign Policy, 1960-66*, Ibadan University Press, 1973; Akinyemi, A B, *Foreign Policy and Federalism*, Ibadan University Press, 1974.

The lack of domestic unity allowed the regions leeway to search for foreign investment on their own. The effect was that the regions 'acted as if they represented the whole country with the result that Nigeria seemed to speak with many voices' (p. 28). Foreign policy was therefore in disarray for much of the lifespan of the First Republic.

The basic foreign policy principles of Nigeria as from 1960 are amply discussed (p. 43-72). The point that foreign policy goals and objectives have remained largely the same is amply demonstrated through a comparison of the Ironsi and Gowon regimes (p. 73-97). It was clearly demonstrated that these regimes merely continued the foreign policy goals of the first civilian administration. The only change was perhaps the 'process of foreign policy formulation' which shifted to the hierarchical military command structure rather than the parliament and cabinet as under the previous civilian administration.

In a similar vein, while the civil war taught Nigerian leaders some bitter lessons, it did not radically alter the basic tenets of its foreign policy. Rather it reinforced Nigeria's belief in continental unity, economic cooperation, anti-colonialism and non-alignment (p. 93-113). Not even the emergence of the assertive regime of General Murtala Mohammed could alter the cardinal principles of Nigeria's foreign policy.

While the argument that the elements of continuity and change do exist in Nigeria's foreign policy pursuit, perhaps the snag is that the point has not been well made. A cursory look at the discussion of the Murtala/Obasanjo regime (p. 117-128) did not bring out the difference in style of foreign policy pursuit which clearly differentiated it from previous regimes. The nationalistic, assertive and bold actions of the regime over the recognitions of the MPLA in Angola and the nationalization of the assets of Shell-BP over the issue of Zimbabwe's independence are not depicted as varying from the style of previous regimes. For instance, previous regimes relied heavily on building consensus among African states - particularly within the OAU - before pronouncing foreign policy positions. The Murtala-Obasanjo regime for most of the time announced foreign policy positions and then latter sought support from African states. These differences in style ought to have been clearly brought out.

This point is linked to a second issue raised in the book, namely, that there was a need to have seriously updated the work right from the mid-1970s when it was submitted as an M. Sc. dissertation. With the benefit of hindsight, further research and updating, some of the gaps found in the entire work could have been filled. This is in addition to the fact that some typographical errors are found in the book, a problem which publishers of the second edition need to address.

These few problems apart, the book is interesting and provocative. It certainly would be of immense value not only to students of Nigeria's foreign policy but also to analysts and practitioners of foreign policy.

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