

type de discours à éviter dans une construction scientifique, les dangers qu'il contient et la manière de le dépasser.

De ce point de vue, le livre est utile, surtout avec les généralisations plutôt hâtives effectuées à l'échelle africaine, voire du tiers monde de situations fort spécifiques et particulières en ce qu'elles ne concernent (souvent) qu'un pays (l'Algérie), voire une "communauté" née du processus d'immigration maghrébine en France (les "beurs"). D'autant que cette analyse traite des Etats, des paysans et des agriculteurs du secteur privé, comme s'il s'agissait d'entités homogènes et renvoyant à des réalités simples.



Diplomatic soldiering: Nigerian Foreign Policy, 1975-1979, Garba, Joe
Spectrum Books Ltd - Ibadan, Nigeria, 1987, p. 238.

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Nigeria's foreign policy from independence to 1975 lacked clearly defined objectives. In fact, the nation's external relations during the nine years of Gowon's regime were characterised by spontaneous reaction to events in the international arena. Thus it has been argued albeit not without some justification that Nigeria's external image received a boost, for the first time, during Murtala/Obasanjo regime. *Diplomatic soldiering* is, therefore, an attempt by Major General Joe Garba (rtd), one of the architects and first External Affairs Minister of that regime to document, clarify, react to criticisms and reflect on what transpired at the nation's foreign desk between 1975 and 1978. The author also comments on foreign policy issues after his "reintegration" into the Nigerian army before ending his 238 -page- book with the prescription of a role for Nigeria in African and World affairs as we march towards the 21st century

Watershed in Nigeria's foreign policy

In the author's view, the Foreign policy of the Murtala/Obasanjo regime was guided/aided by three but not disparate factors. One, the government

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had a very clear vision of its foreign policy objectives: Africa was the centre piece and "... Murtala made it clear to me from the beginning that he wanted a very activist foreign policy and that... Nigeria must be visible in the world... (p.9). Second, the leadership, both in words and action was very committed to the pursuit of the foreign policy objectives of the regime. Lastly, the country had a relatively sound economic base that enabled the government to match its words with action. "... Nigeria's economic fortunes so changed after the early 1970s that the potential for new stature and forceful initiatives was greater than ever before... (p.9). A fourth factor which the author probably did not add was the high degree of support that was accorded the regime by the citizens. Foreign policy issues such as the Nigerian government's recognition of MPLA as the sole and legitimate government of Angola, Murtala's calling of the bluff of the American President and the Federal Military Government's nationalisation of British petroleum among others were loudly applauded by the entirety of the Nigerian populace.

The liberation struggle in Southern Africa and the Angolan crisis in particular provided the litmus test for the African - centred objective of Nigerian foreign policy. Thus in a bold and unprecedented move, the Murtala administration did not only recognise the MPLA as the sole and legitimate government of Angola but went ahead to provide it monetary, material and diplomatic assistance. While Garba's call for a government of national unity made up of FLNA, MPLA and South African backed UNITA was antipodal to government's position, he nonetheless pursued the implementation of the Angolan policy with a seemingly high sense of dedication. A possible reason for this "dedication" could be that the author learnt fast on the job that foreign policy making after all, does not take place in the foreign Affairs ministry alone but even more outside of it: in the office of the Head of State. In fact, the author, in all 'modesty', stated later on that the Angolan and other Nigerian policies to liberation bodies took place in Dodan Barracks and not in the Foreign Affairs Ministry, (p. 3-4). And that was the whole truth. However, Garba's refusal or failure to implement the Angolan policy as directed could have put his portfolio and goodwill with the leadership of the government on the firing line. The Minister was probably hardly prepared for such a show down.

Furthermore, granted that Garba's opposition to Nigeria's recognition of MPLA was a genuine mistake by a jubilant external Affairs Minister, his latter pronouncements on the issue are suspect. For instance, Garba's insistence that the Angolan government and people ought to shower encomiums, say, show gratitude to the Nigerian government for the assistance in those difficult days, (p. 26); shows that he (Garba) did not seem to grasp what national interest and a nation's foreign policy objectives are all about. For instance, Nigeria had a clearly defined African - centred foreign policy and

the Angola crisis provided Nigeria the much needed opportunity to realise that objective. The question of gratitude, therefore, did not arise. America's entreaties to belligerent Khomeini's Iran or Thatcher's 1988 visit to Nigeria amidst tumultuous anti-British and anti-Thatcher's demonstrations in Lagos and Kano were done in the respective national interests of the United States and Britain. In addition, while it could be conceded that the implementation of the Angolan policy was done at great cost to Nigeria, it should also be noted that the policy boosted Nigeria's international image. Finally, it would seem that Garba's opposition to the MPLA was purely ideological. For the author later revealed rather haughtily that Neto, the Angolan leader "... did not... quite believe that a country like Nigeria was revolutionary enough to appreciate his Marxist - Leninist analysis of contemporary African issue... and that only those African countries who claimed to be socialist revolutionaries could be regarded as true friends of Angola...", (p. 133). Thus Garba, like his capitalist friends in Western Europe and the United States of America, dreaded 'communism' thriving in yet another erstwhile Portuguese colony in Africa. These fears were not without foundation, but the MPLA, the Angolan people and socialism triumphed.

Although the author claims that the Murtala/Obasango regime was committed to the policy of good neighbourliness especially in the West African sub-region, Nigeria's struggle with the Niger Republic over a United Nations Security Council seat, contrary to the position of the African bloc, tended to jeopardise Nigeria's claim to the policy of good neighbourliness. It also did some incalculable damage to Nigeria's claim to leadership on the African continent. Nigeria's claim to African leadership was further questioned in her attempt to mediate in intra-African crises especially during the Rhodesian struggle for independence. For instance, the inability of the Nigerian government to grapple with the intricacies of the Rhodesian crisis made her to rely on Nyerere and Kaunda for vital information with adverse political consequences for Nigeria. "... President Nyerere's very detailed description of the leadership situation almost misled Nigeria...", (p. 51). Since the mid 1960s, Nyerere has been tagged as the 'wiseman' of Africa, and he, with Zambia's Kaunda have been central to the liberation struggles in Southern Africa. Nigeria's attempt to play a leadership-cum-mediatory role in that sub-region without taking due cognisance of the duo cannot be anything else but tactless diplomacy. The inability of Nigeria to prevent Ethiopia and Somalia from embarking on the 1977 Ogaden war further demonstrates the ineffectiveness of the African leadership claim. Nigeria, therefore, requires aggressive diplomatic and military reconnaissance before she takes position on delicate foreign issues. Although the author rightly calls on Nigeria "... to

spearhead the effort to instal an African Security Force to defend the front-line states and keep in place the means to resolve intra-African disputes", (p. 222), this can only be done through consultations with other African States. Hence there is need for caution. Greater caution is even called for in contemplating the nation's relationship with countries such as Israel. Israeli technology particularly in the area of agriculture might be able not only to halt the advancement of the Saharan Desert but also turn Nigeria's drought-prone Savannah belt into one of the world's largest green belt and bread basket. However, Israel's romance with the Apartheid regime in South Africa and her recalcitrance over the Palestinian issue are real clogs in wheel of Afro-israeli relations. Finally, the country's romance with international financial institutions; IMF, World Bank, etc. with the attendant disastrous consequences: 'austerity measure', SAP, SFEM, devaluation, retrenchment of workers, privatization, etc., started when the author was at the centre of the nation's foreign desk. Yet, he tactfully evaded the discussion of these consequences throughout the whole book. In addition, the much published 2.8 billion Naira allegedly missing from the coffers of the NNPC - an issue that almost ruined relations between Nigeria and Uganda also escaped the author's attention.

What we have done so far is a selective commentary. But it should be stressed that the book contains a number of typographical errors. For instance, on p. Vil, line 3 from the top, the word of is spelt on, on page xviii, paragraph 2, line 7, the xord of is missing between one... ant them, page 204, paragraph 4 contains a mix-up as the first sentence there is unintelligible. On page 216, paragraph 2, line 4, steam is spelt stem. While the author's style is largely descriptive, he almost bores his readers with some unnecessary details.

On the whole, "*Diplomatic Soldiering*" has succeeded in sensitising its readers to that period when Nigeria's foreign policy was believed to have exhibited dynamism. Although the foreign policy of this regime was articulated essentially outside the Foreign Affairs Ministry, the task of executing it fell on the ministry that was headed by the author. Apart from a few pitfalls here and there, *Diplomatic Soldiering* is a must for diplomats, intellectuals and indeed any one who desires to know the excitements and frustrations of diplomats and the diplomatic process.