

NIGERIA : CLASS STRUGGLE AND FOREIGN POLICY 1960 – 78

By

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INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, like most African countries today, is a creation of Western imperialism. Its historical evolution as a state dates back only to 1861, the year when the British Government, at the instance of British Trading Companies along the coast, annexed Lagos and declared it a Crown Colony. The abolition of Slave Trade in 1807 had compelled the European Commercial bourgeoisie to turn to «legitimate» trade in such commodities as palm oil and ivory and by 1826 twelve British ships were reported to be in Bonny River at one time (1). The hinterland was not penetrable until after 1830 when it was discovered that river Niger (from which the country's name was derived), entered the Bight of Biafra. The seventy years that followed saw the gradual but steady incorporation of this vast expanse of land and people into the world capitalist system. Like many other colonial territories this incorporation took place in two stages. First there was the penetration of private commercial capital into the hinterland conducted, first, by individual European traders and companies and later (1886–1900) by the chartered Royal Niger Company. Following the balkanization agreement of 1884 among European powers, Britain empowered the latter to «administer, make treaties, levy customs and trade in all territories in the basin of the Niger and its affluents (2).

POLITICAL EVOLUTION

This phase of capitalist penetration was followed logically by the imposition of the colonial political super-structure, for in 1900 the British took over control of the territory from the Royal Niger Company, and proclaimed the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria. In 1906 the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria was proclaimed and eight years later (1914) came the historic amalgamation of the two protectorates endowed with the name of Nigeria. In 1939, partly as a response to the needs of the skeletal administration already established and partly due to a recognition of some fundamental differences among the major cultural components of the unit, the Southern protectorate was split into two – the Western region and the Eastern region, constituting half the total land mass as well as the people, was left intact. The evolution of Nigeria into statehood was to consolidate these administrative boundaries into political

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boundaries within which distinct political organizations were to develop. With approximately two hundred and fifty ethnic groups spread over the entire territory, it is not difficult to understand why conflict organizations (to use Professor Nordlinger's category) sprang up along the ethnic dividing lines. At Independence there were three major political parties: the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) based in the Eastern Region even though it had strong tentacles in the Western Region; the Action Group (AG) based in the Western Region; and the Northern People's Congress (NPC) whose stronghold and appeals were in the Northern Region.

CONSTITUTIONAL EVOLUTION

The constitutional evolution itself tended to have contributed in no small measure to the regionalization of politics as the British sought to protect the North with its traditional institutions. Thus the Macpherson Constitution of 1954, in spite of minor adjustments prior to and after independence, established not only the structural and the institutional frame-work within which political competition was to take place but indeed dictated the pattern of the competition. For by strengthening the periphery (the regions) at the expense of the center (the state) the constitution, drawn up by Nigerians but with the colonial overlords as active participants favourably disposed to maintaining the hegemonic position of the North, established a system which approximated more a confederation than a federation. The tenuousness of this structure coupled with the regionalization of the political parties have made analysis of Nigerian politics susceptible to the distributionist analysis in comparative politics. Hence such analytically obfuscating concepts as communalism, tribalism, ethnicity have been employed in the analysis of Nigerian politics, as is the case with many new states. Thus, Post and Vickers, in their recent analysis of the crises of the civilian regime assert that «political action at this juncture of Nigeria's history was determined by the ideology of tribalism rather than class consciousness» (3).

CLASS FORMATION

The proceeding paragraphs are intended to give an overview of the historical processes that have produced not only the political entity known as Nigeria but much more importantly, for our purpose, the determinate social formation at the time that overt colonial control terminated. By 1960, the year of Nigeria's independence, Nigeria's future evolution was to a considerable extent determined, in the sense that Marx conceived of the evolution of human society when he declared:

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please, they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past (4).

For by this date the dominant mode of production was decisively capitalist, even though primitive modes of production existed symbiotically, albeit, in the rural areas. The determinate social formation was therefore capitalist, even though interspersed with feudal formations in the North

and West and «primitive» social formations in the East and the so-called pagan areas of the North. Thus, contrary to the prevailing view on social formations in contemporary Africa, classes had developed in most African societies that experienced colonial rule, similar in characteristics to the classes that emerged during the formative stages of European capitalism. Even in pre-colonial Africa, classes existed, for social classes «are not a given with which certain societies are blessed and which other, more retarded societies lack. Social classes describe relations between producers and those in control of their production» (5).

FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS

One of the overt manifestations of political independence is a country's involvement through its institutionally designated leaders, in the global system of States. This involvement is achieved through a country's foreign policy defined as «a coordinated strategy with which institutionally designated decision makers seek to manipulate the international environment in pursuit of certain objectives through moralizing principles to guide their pursuit» (6). In conventional analysis the Foreign policy of a country is the result of the interplay of domestic and international environment within which states must operate. What goals or objectives are identified as national goals depends, according to this view, upon the structure of the domestic political process (7), the nature of the society – whether it is a «consociational» or a «conglomerate» society (8) – and upon the international constellation of forces or, what in the literature, is called the international environment. A third, but less important variable is the idiosyncratic variable according to which actions of individual statesmen are influenced considerably by their perception of the objective domestic and international environment. The conclusions from such methodological assumptions are obvious. Foreign policy is by and large an extension of the domestic political process. National goals and objectives are selected in the national interest – itself a most elusive concept – and are modified, at times dropped, as the realities of the international environment – political and economic – delimit what is theoretically feasible and what can be achieved in the concrete situation within which statesmen operate. The theoretical inadequacies of this approach are legion, but space would not permit our treatment of them here. Suffice it to say that it lacks methodological rigor and hence obfuscate rather than explain the phenomena it treats.

Most analyses of the foreign policies of the new states have followed this tradition. Thus most studies of Nigeria's foreign policy focus on the so called domestic origins (determinants), one of which was the tenuous political structure negotiated prior to independence in which «three large regions with one conservative and less developed region not only large and more populous than the rest of the federation but also holding a «political veto» over the more developed and radical ones» (9). This structure violated a sacred principle of federalism, according to which

there should not be any one state (in the federation) so much more powerful than the rest as to be capable of vying in strength with many of them combined. (For) if there be such a one,...

it will insist on being master of the joint deliberations; if there be two they will be irresistible when they agree, and whenever they differ, everything will be decided by a struggle for ascendancy between the rivals (10).

In the specific Nigerian context, the Northern preponderance over the rest was a major source of conflict which was reflected in the conservative posture of Nigeria's foreign policy, a posture incommensurable with her resources — material and human — since these are major variables in the foreign policy equation.

A second domestic determinant of Nigeria's foreign policy in these analyses, was the differential incorporation of the regions into the modernization process — what within our analytical framework we would see as differential incorporation into the evolving capitalist system. There was also the problem of dual personality presented by each regional unit where, «instead of being an ethnic or linguistic unit, each consisted a «regional nucleus» occupied mostly by a dominant ethnic group». This fostered regionally or ethnically based parties. Thus, goes the argument,

The unique clustering of ethnic groups on a dominant minority basis within the regions; the excessive political power and autonomy enjoyed by the regions and the uneven character of the economic and political development of the various regions as well as the various ethnic groups were significant elements in the background of inter-regional and inter-tribal political tension and animosities in post-independent Nigeria. Their net effect was to distort and bedevil Nigerian politics and in turn the formulation of foreign policy (11).

Of course these analyses do not ignore the economic factors in foreign policy. They admit that the structure and nature of a country's economy as well as its external economic and financial relationships are important in both its domestic politics and its foreign policy behaviour. However the economic factors are «national» not class in nature. They relate to the domestic economy only, not the interests of any one particular group. Thus, for Nigeria, it was the fact that Nigeria's economy was tied to the economy of its former colonial master that dictated the foreign economic policies of its leaders. And again it is the national interest that was uppermost in their minds in the formulation of those economic policies. Thus goes the myth about the domestic determinants of Nigeria's foreign policy. Its international environment strand produces parallel conclusions. A corollary to the domestic variables thesis, it shares its assumptions by stressing that external constraints combined with the domestic variables to produce what emerged as Nigeria's foreign policy. The explanation for Nigeria's international behaviour in these analysis is aptly summed up in Idang's conclusions:

First, because of her unique federal structure and her ethnic and cultural diversity, Nigeria could not help projecting into the building of her foreign policy the same caution and verbal compromise that characterize her domestic politics. Second, a revi-

sionist or radical foreign policy... would, by tipping the balance or power against some tribal and cultural groupings, intensify tribal jealousies and inter-group tension... Third, Nigeria's own history of gradual political development... proved to her foreign policy elite the importance of discussions and negotiations in all inter-group relations. Fourth, because of her leaders' preoccupation with rapid economic development and political stability, ideological and aggressive policies that could detract from the task of achieving these goals were carefully avoided... (emphasis mine) (12)

Thus like most analyses that deal with the «form» rather than the «essence», Nigeria's foreign policy is divested of its class dynamics and endowed with a quality independent of its class origins. The result is an analysis that confuses cause with effect and mistakes one for the other. Whilst one cannot deny the importance of these domestic as well as external «determinants», it would be preposterous to assign them the degree of determinate quality these analyses do.

MATERIALIST METHODOLOGY

Our position in this analysis is that an accurate understanding of Nigeria's foreign policy since independence cannot be fostered by focusing on the structural variables of its domestic and international environment. Rather we must turn to materialist methodology to lay bare the contradictions that produce the specific policy orientations of the Nigerian political class. Only then can we pose the right questions which will lead to an understanding of Nigeria's domestic politics in general and its foreign policy in particular. Our point of departure then is to briefly discuss materialist methodology as founded by Karl Marx.

It would be recalled that Marx's great contribution to philosophy and hence Social Science, was his «turning Hegel, (who was «standing on his head») right side up» (13). Hegel had postulated that the material concrete world is but a reflection of ideas in conflict, that ideas are the cause not the effect of reality. Marx put it the other way round, showing that ideas are but reflections of the material concrete world. In what is generally known today as dialectical materialism, he posits the laws of motion, according to which every concrete situation contains within it the dynamics of its own evolution. This view of reality, this way of looking at things «as moments in their own development» (14) enabled him to treat things within a relational model, which treats the internal relations of a social category such as capital, as well as its inter-connections to other social entities. It is this that enabled Marx to conceive of social change in terms of a *continuum* in which the present «becomes part of a *continuum* stretching from a definable past to a knowable (if not always predictable) future», in which «tomorrow is today extended», as a «coming to be of what potentially is, as the further unfolding of an already existing process taken as a special temporal relation» (15). Thus the dialectics as a method is not only a way of seeing things but an approach to the study of problems «which concentrates on looking for relationships not only between different entities but between the same one in times past, present, and future» (16). In his critique of Political Economy, he tells us that:

In the study of economic categories in the case of every historical and social science, it must be born in mind that as in reality so in our mind the subject... is given and that the categories are therefore but forms of expressions, manifestations of existence and frequently but one-sided aspect of this subject (17).

In this statement Marx is making an important distinction between a subject and categories used to represent it, a recognition of the fact that our knowledge of the real world is mediated through the construction of concepts in which to think about it. It is to underline the fact that our contact with reality in so far as we become aware of it is contact with a «conceptualized» reality. Thus by the methodological procedure of abstraction from reality or, to borrow Paul Sweezy's restatement of it – the method of «successive approximations» which consists in moving from the more abstract to the more concrete in a step-by-step fashion, removing simplifying assumptions at successive stages of the investigation so that theory may take account of and explain an ever wider range of actual phenomena», we can arrive at a scientifically valid theory (18). «In the analysis of economic forms» he wrote, «neither microscopes nor chemical reagents are of use. The force of abstraction must replace both» (19). It is the explanatory power of this «force of abstraction» that endows it with the scientific quality which Marx and Engels claim for it. And we believe with them, that dialectical materialism is the only mode of analysis that can enhance our knowledge of man and his creation – society with all its artefacts.

In this study we want to analyse Nigeria's foreign policy since independence. We posit that an understanding of Nigeria's foreign policy can only be fostered through an analysis of its class origins. The central conceptual category for our analysis would therefore be the class-struggle as conceived in Marxism.

It is generally not appreciated that Marx was not the first student of society to recognize class-struggle as a phenomena of class society. Plato, for instance, was one of the first to observe that societies at least those with which he was familiar are divided into antagonistic classes. «Any city, however small» he declared, «is in fact divided into two: one the city of the poor, the other, the rich; these are at war with one another» (20). Here Plato had his finger on the central theme of dialectical materialism – the struggle of opposites which is inherent in all class societies. In his own statement of the matter, Marx makes class struggle the one major characteristic of all societies where class distinction exists:

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle. Freeman and slave, patrician and Plebeian, lord and serf, guild - master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large or in the common ruin of the contending classes... The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but

established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones. Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses however this distinctive feature, it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great battle camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat (21)

Of course Marx's observation was made in reference to nineteenth century Europe; at a time when capitalism was at its ripe stage; when England, about which Marx's analysis was mostly concerned, manifested the class structure that he so vividly portrayed in his analysis. The two-class Marxian model cannot apply to most of contemporary Africa. But this is not to deny the existence of antagonistic classes either, as the theories of social and cultural pluralism claim. True, the social structure of most African societies today presents a «fairly complex kaleidoscope», and Nigeria is no exception. However we contend that in so far as the historical incorporation of Africa and its precapitalist systems into the evolving capitalist mode of production produced a «complex system of class relations» our understanding of these societies can only come through an analysis of the political struggle between the classes, for «the separate individuals form a class only in so far as they have to carry on a common battle against another class, otherwise they are on hostile terms with each other as competitors» (22). Thus social class as a category cannot but remain «a theoretical concept» until actualized in the political struggle. It should be emphasized that our conception of social class is not merely juridical but derives from Marx's notion of what constitutes a class, when he wrote:

In the social production of their existence men inevitably enter into definite relations which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material sources of production. (emphasis mine) (23).

In other words, we conceive of class in this analysis not in the bourgeois interpretation of ownership of the means of production by a group but in the broader sense of an individual's class position as a function of the social relations of production; that is, relations of man to man (rather than man - thing relationship) within the production system. In essence this is to make an important distinction between the direct producers of surplus value and those who control the disposal of this surplus, which may or may not, but in our context does include, juridical ownership of the means of production. We argue that it is this relation of production that constitutes the class dynamics and that class struggle is its political manifestation. As Marx puts it

The combination of capital had created for this mass (workers) a common situation, a common interest. This mass is thus already a class as against capital, but not yet for itself. In the struggle of which we have noted only a few phases, this mass becomes united, and constitutes itself as a class for itself. The interest it defends

becomes class interests. But the struggle of class against class is a political struggle. (*emphasis mine*) (24).

It is a political struggle because it involves «the instruments of political power of one class over another», in this instance the state apparatus. Thus class struggle manifests itself most dramatically in the contest for the control of the state apparatus most especially in a dependent relationship within the global capitalist system. As Lewis Lorwin puts it «since the power of the ruling class is always concentrated in the organization of the state, the oppressed class must aim directly against the mechanism of the state. *Every class struggle is thus a political struggle*, which in its objectives aims at the abolition of the existing social order and at the establishment of a new social system» (25). This is because, of all the organizations within a given society only the state possesses the instrumentalities of coercion and whoever controls it certainly controls his destiny. An added reason for this in the underdeveloped states of Africa is the crucial role of the state as «the factor of cohesion of a social formation and the factor of reproduction of the conditions of production of a system that itself determines the domination of one class over the other» (26). Thus the state, whilst claiming a certain degree of autonomy, in its actions remains, and in a class society cannot but remain the protector of the economically and socially dominant class. The central thesis of this analysis is that the general international posture of the various regimes in Nigeria since independence and the specific policies pursued to articulate this posture was the result of the internal class contradictions.

In discussing the class structure of most post-colonial states in Africa and elsewhere one cannot ignore the historical circumstances that produced it. For as Magubane rightly points out «the analysis of the distinctive features of Africa's integration into the world (capitalist) economy is fundamental for the study and specific features of its class structure». The colonial state produced its own class structure but, there is no gainsaying the fact that «the historical specificity of imperialism in Africa lays in the fact that although it integrates Africa within the world capitalist economy, it did not create in Africa a wholly capitalist social milieu» (27) And for Nigeria, as for most of Africa, this means there was no «national bourgeoisie» because, unlike their European predecessors they (the African bourgeoisie) «lack both the historical maturity of their metropolitan counterpart and the latter's objective economic base» (28). It is to create the economic base which they lack that makes the control of state coercive apparatus their primary objective in the struggles that characterized post-independent Nigeria.

NIGERIA'S CLASS STRUCTURE

As pointed out earlier, Nigeria's class formation was a function, first of British imperialism in its colonial phase and, secondly, of the critical role assumed by the state after formal independence was proclaimed. At independence the class structure consisted of the petty bourgeoisie — those who as in many African states, «led the independence struggle and came to control the state apparatus, thus becoming a *ruling class albeit* in a subordinate place to the international bourgeoisie» (29). Of course this

class includes elements from the remnants of feudal social formations in parts of the Northern and Western Regions but it was made up primarily of the lower stratum of the intelligentsia – teachers, lawyers, doctors, civil servants and petty traders. Next to the petty bourgeoisie in rank was the commercial bourgeoisie – small in size but sufficiently articulate in their support of the nationalists. They were closely followed by the proletariat and their closest ally – the lumpen proletariat, the army of unemployed – many of them unemployable-primary school graduates who had deserted the villages for the towns in search of the «new life» promised by the nationalists during the mobilization phase of the independent struggle. At the bottom rung of the ladder peasants who constituted (and still constitute) the largest single and homogeneous class. One of our hypotheses in this study is that by the time colonialism was abruptly terminated, the British had groomed a stratum of the petty bourgeoisie to take over from the erstwhile colonial administrators. Indeed their last few years were spent in the training of some of these successors to the «throne» to ensure that Nigeria was «safe for democracy». «More or less consciously» wrote Basil Davidson «the British and the French were eager to hand their power to elites who would keep the African world safe for capitalism, *above all their own* capitalism» (30). As in most colonies where independence came without revolutionary struggle, the British were correct in their judgement as to the «safety» of Nigeria for Western capitalism. In no area of Nigeria's post independence politics was this demonstrated than in the foreign policy posture of the coalition government that took over the reins of power from the British on October 1, 1960.

FOREIGN POLICY : Principles and objective.

The Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa made his maiden foreign policy statement in the Federal House of Representatives on August 20, 1960, a few months before formal independence was proclaimed. In it he outlined the general principles that would constitute the cornerstones of Nigeria's foreign policy under his leadership. First, Nigeria would follow an independent policy, «founded on Nigeria's interest», and «consistent with the moral and democratic principles on which our constitution is based». The policy would, on each occasion, «be selected with proper *independence objectivity*» (emphasis mine). Nigeria would apply for membership of the United Nations and the Commonwealth, he told the House, for Nigeria would benefit «from the free interchange of ideas and consultation between members of the Commonwealth and from their experience within the framework of the United Nations». However, his government would have «a free hand to select policies which it considered to be most advantageous for Nigeria». On the ideological bifurcation of the world into East and West, he declared, «We consider it wrong for the Federal Government to associate itself, as a matter of routine with any of the power blocs». Nigeria would not «blindly follow the lead of anyone». On Pan-Africanism his strong commitment to functional Pan-Africanism was unmistakable. His government would adopt:

clear and practical policies with regard to Africa. It will be our aim to assist any African country to find a solution to its problems and to foster the growth of a common understanding among all nations and especially among the new nations of this continent (31).

These themes were further elucidated and amplified in the Prime Minister's address to the General Assembly of the United Nations on October 7, 1960. Noting with pride Nigeria's admission into both the U.N. and the Commonwealth, he deprecated the ideological polarization of the world and reaffirmed his country's determination not to «align herself as a matter of routine with any particular bloc». In what appears to be an attempt to establish the philosophical basis for the declared policy of non-alignment, he asserted:

One great advantage which we new nations have is that the accession to independence makes a clean cut with our past and presents us with the opportunity to enter the field of international relations untrammelled by prior commitments. It is probably the one occasion in the life of a nation when it is possible to choose policies for their inherent qualities of goodness (32).

On his return home he reiterated his stand to his country men and stressed that Nigeria «as a country will not join either the Western or Eastern or any other bloc». In response to some critics of his government's conservative approach to African unity he again stressed that Nigeria's approach would be gradualistic functionalism. «To talk of a political union first» he warned, «before the necessary understanding and before knowing exactly what our problems are, ... is too premature ... It is unrealistic to expect countries to give up the Sovereignty which they have so recently acquired, and I am quite sure that it is wrong to imagine that political union could of itself bring the countries together; on the contrary *it will follow as the natural consequence of co-operation in other fields*» (33). (emphasis mine).

This then, sums up the foreign policy posture of the Balewa regime. As can be inferred, Nigeria was to pursue an independent policy in its interaction with the global political system. No sooner were these principles of action enunciated however, that the regime found itself embroiled in internal wranglings over the specific application of the principles. This was due, we argue, primarily to the secondary contradictions of the alliance of the petty-bourgeoisie of the then Eastern Region represented by the NCNC party and elements of the feudal «barons» in the North represented by the NPC party. It was an alliance of factions of the Northern and Eastern bourgeoisie fostered by a common disdain for the ambitious leadership of the Yoruba dominated Action Group party of the then Western Region. This marriage of convenience in the face of a common enemy was to suffer serious setbacks within the first few months of independence as the contradictions within the coalition began to unfold in the struggle for the control of the state machinery became more intense (34).

We contend that these struggles produced the incoherence that characterized the Balewa Regime's foreign policy positions on various international issues. As Idang put it quite succinctly «...his (Balewa's) foreign policy postures were nothing but a wretched bundle of compromises obviously intended to placate all political groupings during the seminal years immediately before and after independence» (35).

It is our contention that it was through these postures that the Balewa regime, and the military successor regimes, in spite of their occasional anti-imperialist policies, ensured, Nigeria's integration into global capitalism. To illustrate this point we shall select for analysis some major policy issues in the three phases of this progressive consolidation of the capitalist mode of production and its attendant social and political order.

THE CONSOLIDATION OF NEO-COLONIALISM:

The most glaring example of a policy inconsistency between principles and actual policies pursued after formal independence was proclaimed, was the decision to sign a defence pact with Britain early in 1961. Called the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact, the agreement provided for military training for Nigerian officers, the acquisition of weapons «necessary for the defence of Nigeria» and the supply of military personnel to Nigeria. In introducing the motion in Parliament of November 19, 1960, Alhaji Ribadu, the Defence Minister, assured members of the house that nothing in the Pact derogated from the full sovereignty and independence of action of Nigeria. In exchange for these facilities, Nigeria would provide Britain «with facilities for tropicalisation trials of aircraft both above land and sea and overflying and airstaging facilities» (36) — a euphemism for a military base in Nigeria. Needless to say that the majority of the members of the House supported the provisions of the pact. After all they shared the Prime Minister's sentiments when, in the independence broadcast he declared: «We are grateful to the British whom we have known first as Masters then as leaders and finally as partners, but always as friends» (37). It was to reciprocate British «friendliness» that the government agreed to go into a defence alliance, notwithstanding the principle of non-alignment as a cardinal principle of its foreign policy. To Balewa and his ministerial colleagues however, this was no violation of that sacred principle. It was in Nigeria's national interest, for after all, Nigeria's commitment to the United Nations required it to have «forces trained and equipped in the modern way» and this was merely a step towards the realization of that modest goal! Unfortunately for the government the articulate public led by the opposition party would not listen to the rhetorics of the situation. In an unprecedented march on the Federal House of the Nigerian students, together with other mobilized groups, prominent among which were the lumpen-proletariat, broke the barricade and entered the chamber where the Representatives were debating the Pact and overturned the tables as the members escaped through the windows in panic. It was a gallant demonstration of student power the like of which has never been seen since. In the midst of this hostility Britain unilaterally offered to rescind the Pact, to save the Balewa Government the embarrassment of having to capitulate before an unarmed but potentially violent mob.

If the Defence Pact was the overt expression of the British attempt to consolidate its neo-colonial grip on Nigeria, the structure of the Nigerian economy provided a subtle means of achieving its objectives without the publicity that bedeviled the former. Through its domestic economic policies designed to build, through state involvement, a national bourgeoisie, the Balewa regime opened Nigeria's doors to international capital. This was made possible not only by the dependent nature of the economy but much more decisively, by the series of investment policies evolved by the receding colonial power as part of the bargain for independence – to ensure that British capital in particular and Western capital in general would find a most hospitable climate for exploitation. As far back as 1952 the Aid to Pioneer Industries Ordinance was passed, according to which an industry declared a pioneer industry would be protected from foreign competition through a number of measures. One of these was to relieve the industry from payment of company or profit tax for a period ranging from three to six years depending on the amount of fixed capital expenditure of the company. In the same year, the income tax (Amendment) Ordinance which allowed companies, both public and private, to write off from profits, for purposes of computing taxable income, a large amount of their capital investment in fixed assets during the early years of trading. The effect was to allow such companies to amortise their capital quickly and to build up liquid reserves at an early period thereby facilitating further investment. Then followed the 1956 policy statement titled «Opportunities for Overseas Investments in the Federation of Nigeria» which outlined what would be Nigeria's post-independence policy on industries set up in any part of the country, and detailed a number of inducements and safeguards. Similar ordinances were subsequently passed, for instance, the Industrial Development (Import Duties Relief) Ordinance (1957 and 1958), the Customs Duties (Dumped and Subsidized Goods) Ordinance 1958, all designed to attract Western Capital (38). To assure foreign investors that the Government was not in accord with group calling for nationalization of foreign industries after independence, the Minister of Finance declared in the 1958/59 budget speech:

...we are in earnest in our determination to do all in our power to attract investment which we so badly needed. As a further measure of our earnestness in this matter...the rate of the company tax is to be reduced from nine shillings to eight shillings in the pound and it will be possible to carry forward losses indefinitely instead of for only ten years as at present. (my emphasis) (39).

By independence the guidelines for Nigeria's foreign economic policies had been established. The ideology of free enterprise had been imposed and the state was to play a critical role in the progressive intensification of the integration of the economy into global capitalism. By January 1966 when the army stepped in to prevent the convulsive class struggles that characterized Nigerian politics since the federal elections of December 1964, Nigeria was trailing closely behind Ivory Coast as Africa's most promising bastion of capitalism. Western capital was clearly dominant in all sectors of the economy except in the distributive trade where a small

merchant class had developed in alliance with the foreign managerial bourgeoisie. In the currently dominant petroleum industry all but one of the companies prospecting for oil are from western countries of advanced capitalism. The only exception is a Japanese company – The Japan Petroleum Company – but the distinction between Japan and the West in this respect is, to all intents and purposes, an academic distinction.

In the area of external trade the government's trade policies were consistent with the undeclared goal of making Nigeria safe for capitalism. As the table below shows, 86% of Nigeria's exports in 1965 went to the west whilst 73% of her imports came from the same markets. As with trade, so it was with aid, with the Balewa regime refusing at first any form of contact with the East to the extent of denying passports to Nigerians who wished to travel to the Eastern countries. Indeed countries to which Nigerians could travel were listed in the passport and these excluded the Soviet block – the clearest evidence of «non-alignment».

Table I

The Direction of Nigeria's Trade

a) Principal Buyers of Nigeria's Exports

	1960		1963		1965	
	Annual Value in Fm.	Per Cent of Total Exports	Annual Value in Fm.	Per Cent of Total Exports	Annual Value in Fm.	Per Cent of Total Exports
United Kingdom	79.9	48.1	74.0	39.1	101.5	38.5
EEC	51.3	30.9	69.1	37.0	96.3	36.6
U.S.A.	15.9	9.6	17.4	9.5	26.2	9.9
Japan	2.5	1.5	2.4	1.3	3.2	1.2
Others	16.2	9.8	22.0	13.1	36.1	13.8
Total	165.8	100.	184.9	100.	263.3	100.

b) Principal Suppliers of Imports to Nigeria

	1960		1963		1965	
	Annual Value in Fm.	Per Cent of Total Exports	Annual Value in Fm.	Per Cent of Total Exports	Annual Value in Fm.	Per Cent of Total Exports
United Kingdom	91.4	42.3	70.8	34.1	85.0	30.9
EEC	31.7	14.7	41.3	21.2	56.4	20.3
U.S.A.	11.6	5.4	17.9	8.1	33.1	12.2
Japan	27.8	12.8	25.9	12.4	25.6	9.6
Others	53.4	24.8	51.7	24.2	75.2	27.0
Total	215.9	100.	207.6	100.	275.3	100.

Source: *The Review of Nigeria's External Trade, Lagos, Federal Office of Statistics.*

FOREIGN POLICY UNDER THE MILITARY

If Balewa's foreign policy succeeded in preparing Nigeria for capitalist exploitation, Gowon's successor regime, initially facilitated the consolidation of the gains made by capital under Balewa. Of course the Nigerian Civil War exposed the hypocrisy of the west and could have served as the catalyst for a revolutionary foreign policy. However, the accession to power by the military had also enhanced the power of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie in the determination of state policies. With the vacuum created by the displacement of the civilian governing class, the senior cadres of the state bureaucracy, especially its administrative component, assumed the role of the political class in dictating the direction of Nigeria's external relations. Capitalising on the political inexperience of the military, they became the single most powerful fraction of the petty bourgeoisie and used their newly found power to strengthen their international connections. Under General Gowon, Nigeria's foreign policy moved from a clearly pro-western position to a slightly more anti-western posture. The civil war had forced the decision-makers to diversify Nigeria's external relations. However, the fruits of western capitalism on Nigerian soil, even during the armed struggle, were too sweet to lead them to a rejection of the system. Indeed, none of them ever thought that the struggle itself was rooted in the system and no sooner was the «enemy» (i.e. Biafra) liquidated than they embarked on policies that were geared towards greater involvement of the state in the development of capitalism, and through this, the consolidation of their own links with the international bourgeoisie that dominated the economy.

ANTI-IMPERIALIST MOVES

In February 1972 the Government announced the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree which sought to transfer ownership of certain categories of business enterprises to Nigerians. The objective was to «ensure that Nigerians had a greater share in the growth of the economy» (40). It was the first time that the growing commercial bourgeoisie succeeded in using state power for their class interest. The decree also paved the way for further demands on the state for the nationalisation of foreign businesses by the small group of revolutionary intellectuals, students and workers. However, the policy-makers never intended to scare foreign investors. On the contrary the decree was promulgated to assuage the growing unrest within the indigenous commercial bourgeoisie who founded themselves increasingly losing out of their foreign counterparts in an economy in which fortune could be made overnight if one knew the rules of the game.

Phase two of the decree brought businesses with higher share capital within the purview of the decree but instead of complete ownership of such business by Nigerians, the decree stipulated that not less than 60% equity interest should be owned by Government or private Nigerian citizens. These include huge supermarket complexes, financial institutions such as the banks and Insurance, mining and quarrying, construction, wholesale distribution of imported goods etc. These are enterprises the Government considered as of strategic importance to the economy. All

other businesses not categorized under either of these schedules should, according to the decree, have 40% Nigerian participation. The first phase was expected to be completed by March 1976 whilst the second phase was scheduled for realization before the end of 1978. In practice, however, the decree opened up vast opportunities for the bureaucratic bourgeoisie to establish its economic base in alliance with the commercial bourgeoisie. As the report of the Enterprises Promotion Board – the body charged with the implementation of the decree has shown, there were two principal failures: downright evasion and dishonesty on the part of foreign investors whose businesses were affected by the decree (41).

These evasions were not without the knowledge of those who were charged with the implementation of the provisions. Indeed there is evidence to suggest that evasions were encouraged by these elements in exchange for kickbacks. Thus a network of alliance has developed between many foreign investors and the bureaucratic bourgeoisie. The result has been a non-antagonistic struggle within the bureaucracy for the control of those structures of state power that facilitate enhanced opportunities for the accumulation of wealth. Indeed one student of this phenomenon has argued that the increased involvement of the state, under the military, in the development of capitalism has produced such intense struggle within the bureaucracy that it led to the coup that ousted General Gowon. As she puts it: «The tendency towards monopoly of power and advantage within the state leads to suspicion and hostility from the out-groups of civil servants and military officials who are not privy to decisions» (42). Whether or not Gowon's deposition was the result of such struggle within the military – bureaucratic alliance needs further empirical research. What is obvious, however, is that by its active participation in the economy which required it to move against fragments of foreign capital, it opened up the Pandora's box for greater demands on it in the interest of the commercial bourgeoisie as well as providing the opportunities for fragments of the petty bourgeoisie including the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, to establish its economic base through shareholding in the indigenized businesses.

ANTAGONISTIC STRUGGLES

Most of the class struggles that characterized post independent Nigerian politics were non-antagonistic. This is because they have occurred as a result of secondary contradictions within the classes. They have been struggles concerned primarily with the «manner of disposal» of the surplus value, rather than with changing the system. It is true that the control of the state was the objective of the various fractions of the ruling bourgeoisie but the purpose for such control was to ensure that each fraction received what it considered its fair share of the surplus. Whilst these non-antagonistic struggles were going on the proletariat failed to mobilize in opposition to the ruling class. In spite of sporadic confrontations with the state, the proletariat never developed revolutionary consciousness. In 1964 it succeeded in paralysing the economy through a general strike and forced the Government to capitulate in its proposals for wage increases that the unions considered unacceptable to the working class. Once the Government struck a bargain with the union leaders, however, the workers

relapsed into their «economistic» mentality. Nigerian workers, like their counterparts in advanced capitalist countries, have yet to see themselves as a class locked in an antagonistic battle with its exploiting class. The most recent manifestation of antagonistic class struggle was the peasants' confrontation with the military government of Western Region in December 1969, during which they rejected the taxes proposed by the government. Most of the studies done of the violent attack on government and functionaries reveal a consciousness on the part of the peasants that they had been exploited by the ruling class for too long. It is instructive to note that the workers failed to join in this struggle and in due course the peasants put down their arms as the government capitulated. Thus one can conclude with Shivji that «in non-revolutionary situation much of the class struggle is latent and even unidentifiable as such at any particular moment. Talking about class struggle at such times is really registering the fact of class struggle ex-post facto» (43). Yet these struggles have shaped to a considerable degree Nigeria's foreign policy.

MURTALA MOHAMMED: Revolution or Reform

Most analyses of Nigeria's foreign policy since the military came into power have noted a progressive movement towards militant anti-imperialism. The most spectacular of this posture was Nigeria's support for the MPLA in Angola, shortly after General Murtala assumed power in 1975. It was under his leadership also that a more rigorous implementation of the indigenisation decree was pursued. His reaction to President Ford's letter to African Heads of State endeared him to the revolutionary groups within the country and it has been suggested that had he lived, he might have transformed the Nigerian society and made Nigeria unsafe for capitalism. The fact that his assassins accused him of going communists is cited as evidence for Western imperialist involvement in his assassination.

From the little evidence at our disposal however, the claim that Nigeria, under Mohammed, would have witnessed a structural revolution cannot be substantiated. One glaring example is his warning to the Constitution Drafting Committee charged with the responsibility of drawing up a new constitution for Nigeria, that members should avoid introducing any ideology into Nigeria. «Past events», he told the committee, «have... shown that we cannot build a future for this country on a rigid ideology. Such an approach would be unrealistic... until our people or a large majority of them have acknowledged a common motivation» (44). Of course, ideology for him and others within the ruling class, means socialism, which is anathema to all the bourgeoisie.

There is certainly no doubt that Mohammed did a lot within the short period of his leadership. Externally he carved a new image for Nigeria, an image which certainly led some western powers to wonder whether the new direction is not decidedly anti-west. Yet in retrospect, the difference between Balewa in 1965 and Mohammed in 1975 is a difference in degree not in kind. Both represented the interests of international capital in spite of the latter's anti-imperialist posture. Mohammed's successor has assured Nigerians that he would not deviate from Mohammed's programme. If what was contained in the 1977/80

budgets is any guide, it confirms what Nigeria's former Ambassador to the United States told his audience in his address to the Annual Colloquium of the Nigerian Students Union in the Americas in which he observed that what distinguishes the present regime from its predecessors is not a fundamental change in Nigeria's foreign policy but «the manner in which our interests have been perceived and the manner in which our policies have been executed» (45). It has never been the intention of the ruling class to disengage Nigeria from global capitalism. This much is clear from Obasanjo's 1978/79 budget speech (46). Thus progressively the state has become «the factor of social formation and the factor of reproduction» of classes. And foreign policy has been one of the instruments for the actualization of this role.

CONCLUSION:

Nigeria today remains a valuable prize for western capitalism. The British, by inculcating in their successors, the bourgeois values of freedom- especially political freedom - have succeeded in making Nigeria safe not so much for democracy as for capitalism. The neo-colonial state that has emerged since independence has, through its bureaucracy, acted at the behest of the international bourgeoisie using fragments of the ruling class, thus validating Poulantza's thesis that «the capitalist state best serves the interests of the capitalist class only when the members of this class do not participate directly in the state apparatus, that is to say when the ruling class is not the *politically* governing class» (47). Nigeria does not as yet have a capitalist class, but the ruling class has, since 1966, ceased to be the politically governing class. The bureaucracy, which we regard as a fragment of the ruling class constitutes a «specific social category» as Marx and Engels saw them because they function according to a specific internal unity. As Poulantzas puts it:

Their class origin – class situation – recedes into the background in relation to that which unifies them – their class position; that is to say, the fact that they belong precisely to the state apparatus and that they have as their objective function the actualization of the role of the state. This in turn means that the bureaucracy as a specific and relatively «united» social category is the «servant» of the ruling class, not by reason of its class origin...or by reason of its personal relations with the ruling class but by reason of the fact that its internal unity derives from its actualization of the objective role of the state. The totality of this role itself coincides with the interests of the ruling class (48).

This raises the vital question of the relative autonomy of the state from fragments of the hegemonic class. In the specific situation of present day Nigeria, the state is subordinated to the military component of the hegemonic class understandably because this fraction monopolizes the state instruments of coercion. It is the subordination of the state to this fraction that facilitates the military-bureaucrate alliance in the formulation of Nigeria's foreign policy, whose primary objective remains making Nigeria safe for capitalism. There are signs however, that this alliance may not

last much longer. Antagonistic class struggles, though non-revolutionary at the moment, continue to surface periodically as workers seek to alter the system of exploitation from which they see no way out. With the increasing number of revolutionary intellectuals and labour union leaders, it may not be long before the process of disengaging the Nigerian economy from global capitalism is set in motion. The recently concluded program of transition from military to civil rule, which ensured the enthronement of the right-wing faction of the bourgeoisie is evidence of the military's determination to integrate Nigeria's economy into global capitalism. As Terisa Turner rightly observes:

Workers and peasants have so far demonstrated their capabilities to resist oppression. What is required is that they organize themselves to transform the system which exploits them (49).

The task of transforming the system «which exploits them» is a formidable one, given the new face of imperialism in Africa. But as the Iranian revolution has demonstrated, guns are ineffective where revolutionary consciousness is attained by the exploited class. Herein lies the hope for the transformation of the Nigerian social system.

NOTES

- (1) James S. Coleman *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1971) p. 41.
- (2) Dame Mergery Perham: Quoted in Coleman, *Ibid*.
- (3) Kenneth Post and Michael Vikers: *Structure and Conflict in Nigeria* (London Heinemann, 1973) p. 6.
- (4) Karl Marx: Quoted in *Monthly Review* No. 6 (November 1975) p. 46.
- (5) Bernard Magubane: «The Evolution of the Class Structure in Africa». In Peter C. W. Gutkind & I. Wallerstein eds. *The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa* (Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications 1976) p. 171.
- (6) Wolfram F. Handrieder: «Compatibility and Consensus: A Proposal for the Conceptual Linkage of External and Internal Dimensions of Foreign Policy». In Wolfram F. Handrieder ed. *Comparative Foreign Policy: Theoretical Essays* (New York, David McKay Co. Inc. 1971) p. 242.
- (7) «Consociational» refers to societies with crosscutting cleavage.
- (8) Henry A. Kissinger: «Domestic Structure and Foreign Policy», in Harold K. Jacobson and William Zimmerman: *The Shaping of Foreign Policy* (New York Athert Press, 1969) p. 141.
- (9) Idang op.cit. p. 36.
- (10) J. S. Mill: Quoted in Idang op.cit. p. 36.
- (11) *Ibid*, p. 38.
- (12) *Ibid*, p. 18.
- (13) Bertell Ollman: *Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society*: (New York, Cambridge University Press) p. 54.
- (14) *Ibid*, p. 52.

- (15) Ibid, p. 18.
- (16) Ibid, p. 52.
- (17) Karl Marx: Introduction to *The Critique of Political Economy*, p. 302.
- (18) Paul M. Sweezy: *The Theory of Capitalist Development* (New York Monthly Review Press, 1970) p. 11.
- (19) Karl Marx: Quoted in Sweezy p. 12.
- (20) Plato: Quoted in Oliver C. Cox: *Caste, Class and Race*: (New York Monthly Review Press 1970) p. 152.
- (21) Karl Marx: Quoted in Cox op.cit., p. 154.
- (22) Karl Marx: Quoted in Isaa G. Shivji: *Class Struggles in Tanzania* (New York Monthly Review Press 1976) p. 7.
- (23) Ibid, p. 6.
- (24) Karl Marx: Quoted in Shivji op.cit., p. 7.
- (25) Lewis L. Lorwin: Quoted in Cox, op.cit., p. 155.
- (26) Nicolas Poulantzas: «The Problem of the Capitalist State», in Robin Blackburn, ed. *Ideology in Social Science: Readings in Critical Social Theory*. (New York: Pantheon 1972) p. 24.
- (27) Magubane: op.cit., p. 177.
- (28) Shivji, op.cit., p. 21.
- (29) Ibid, p.23.
- (30) Davidson: Quoted in Gutkind, op.cit., p. 187.
- (31) This and the preceding quotations are from Sam Epelle (ed.) *Nigeria Speaks: Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa – Speeches made between 1957 and 1964* (London Longmans 1964) p. 60 – 3.
- (32) Ibid.
- (33) Quoted in Idang, op.cit., p. 9.
- (34) Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe leader of the banned NCNC party claimed later that his party went into alliance with the Northern People's Congress to avoid a north-south confrontation. This has, however, been disputed by those who are familiar with the personal animosity between him and Obafemi Awolowo, leader of the banned Action Group, which ruled out an alliance between them.
- (35) Idang, op.cit., p. 15.
- (36) Alhaji M. Ribadu, Minister of Defence: Quoted in Claude S. Phillips, Jr. *The Development of Nigeria Foreign Policy* (North Western University Press 1964) p. 43.
- (37) Idang, op.cit., p. 49.
- (38) Ekundare, E.O. «The Political Economy of Private Investment in Nigeria» in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 10, 1, 1 (1972) p. 41.
- (39) Ibid.
- (40) Businesses affected are those whose share capital is less than 15,000 U.S. Dollars.
- (41) Alan Hutchison: «Tension between Indigenization and Foreign Investment» in *African Development*, (December 1976) p. 1283.

- (42) Terisa Turner: «Multinational Corporations and the Instability of Nigerian State. *Review of African Political Economy* (January – February 1976) p. 66.
- (43) Shivji, op.cit., p.8.
- (44) General Murtala Mohammed: *Selected Speeches of General Murtala Mohammed* (Yaba. Pacific Press 1976).
- (45) E. O. Sanu: «Nigerian Foreign Policy Through The Looking Glass» in *Federal Nigeria* (Embassy of Nigeria – Washington October–November–December 1976, Vol. 1, No. 1) p. 4.
- (46) West Africa, April 11, 1977 p. 695–7, April 10, 1978 and April 9, 1979.
- (47) Nicolas Poulantzas in Blackburn ed. op.cit., p. 246–9.
- (48) Ibid, p. 246–7.
- (49) Terisa Turner: *Review of African Political Economy* No. 5 (January – February 1976) p. 79.

RESUME

L'objet de cet article est d'analyser la politique étrangère Nigériane en fonction des tensions politiques internes et des luttes de classes. Après une brève ébauche de l'histoire pré-coloniale et la constitution de l'état contemporain l'auteur procède à une élaboration de ses concepts théoriques. Une telle démarche est plausible car selon l'auteur le Nigéria était déjà à l'aube de son indépendance «un pays où le mode de production dominant était déjà capitaliste malgré le fait que certains modes de production primitifs coexistaient en symbiose». L'état était déjà ancré dans un faisceau de liens de dépendances économiques quoique dans certaines régions il existait des poches de production d'auto-subsistance. Les antagonismes qui en ont résulté ont jusqu'à présent été examinés à la lumière des conflits tribaux plutôt que dans le cadre des différences de classes. L'auteur s'évertue à offrir une analyse plus précise de la structure de classes dans le Nigéria post-colonial et des intérêts particuliers de la bourgeoisie nationale (et ses fractions). Il explique qu'à des stades historiques marqués par des régimes différents, (Tafawa Balewa, Gowon pendant la guerre civile et le régime militaire de Murtala Mohamed) les principes fondamentaux de la politique étrangère coïncidaient avec les intérêts politico-économiques de la classe dirigeante, malgré les déclarations des responsables politiques (citons un exemple parmi tant d'autres : «Le Nigéria ne s'associerait jamais à bloc quelconque, que ce soit de l'Est ou de l'Ouest»; cette déclaration fut faite au moment de l'indépendance mais un an après le Nigéria adhéra au pacte de défense mutuelle anglo-Nigériane). Si l'on examine de près ces antagonismes ne sont rien d'autre que l'expression des contradictions secondaires à l'intérieur des classes. L'auteur emploie alors cette expression malheureuse de «luttes non antagoniques», qui dit-il, ont influencé la politique étrangère du Nigéria rendant celui-ci encore plus dépendant.