



# Nigeria's Foreign and Defence Policies During Babangida's Regime: An Assessment

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## Abstract

This article investigates the changes to and achievements of Nigeria's foreign and defence policies from 1985 to 1993. It also examines the economic, political, and sociocultural implications of these policies on the nation. The article argues that despite some identified failures of Ibrahim Babangida's regime, certain innovations and actions, especially the foreign and defence policies that were introduced and carried out by his government, were significant in nature. The article also addresses the interlocking relationship between defence and foreign policy execution and concludes with recommendations on how this can be managed to promote the effectiveness of Nigeria's external relations. The article depended largely on archival materials from the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, supported by scholarly journal articles, books and newspaper materials.

## Résumé

Cet article étudie les changements et les réalisations de la politique étrangère et de la politique de défense du Nigeria de 1985 à 1993. Il examine également leurs implications économiques, politiques et socioculturelles sur la nation. L'article soutient qu'en dépit de certains échecs palpables du régime d'Ibrahim Babangida, certaines innovations et actions, en particulier la politique étrangère et la politique de défense qui ont été introduites et mises en œuvre par son gouvernement, ont été importantes. L'article aborde également la relation d'interdépendance entre l'exécution de la politique de défense et de la politique étrangère, et conclut par des recommandations sur la façon dont cela peut être géré pour promouvoir l'efficacité des relations extérieures du Nigeria. L'article s'appuie en grande partie sur des documents d'archives de l'Institut nigérian des affaires internationales, que viennent appuyer des articles de revues savantes, des livres et des journaux.

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This article examines the foreign and defence policies of Nigeria from 1985 to 1993, when General Ibrahim Babangida was the military head of state of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It also examines the impact of these policies on the economic, political and sociocultural conditions of the country. A lot of research and studies have been done on the foreign policies of various Nigerian governments, including that of the Babangida administration, but few have shown the relationship of these foreign policies to the defence policy objectives of the government and the overriding effect on the nation. This research is a synthesis and reassessment of the foreign and defence policies of the regime.

Many scholars and researchers, including Iyayi (1989), Ake (1995), Falode (2019), Agbese (2012), McDikkoh (2010), Mimiko (1995a), Bamikole (1995), Ihonvbere (1995), Fawole (1995), G. Ajayi (1995), Sa'id (1995), Kolawole (1995), K. Ajayi (1995), Adekanye (1993 and 2005), Okafor (2006), Bamidele (2012) and many others, have condemned the Babangida government as a failure in terms of most of its policies. But this article shows that despite this being so, the administration's foreign and defence policies were meaningfully successful.

The article is divided into five sections. Section one reviews Nigeria's foreign and defence policies from 1960 to 1985, section two addresses the foreign policy of the Babangida administration, section three examines the defence policy, section four analyses the relationship between the foreign and defence policies and its impact on the nation, and section five assesses Babangida's foreign and defence policies.

## **Review of Nigeria's Foreign and Defence Policies, 1960–1985**

Before independence on 1 October 1960, Britain represented Nigeria's foreign and defence matters, as its colonising power (Ogunsanwo 1985). Even after independence, Britain continued to influence the country's foreign policy through the new ruling elites who inherited Nigeria's foreign policy from Britain. This is the reason why there were no immediate visible changes in Nigeria's external relations after independence (Ogunsanwo 1985).

According to a publication of the Federal Ministry of External Affairs, 1991, 'Nigeria at the United Nations: A Partnership for a Better World', the principles and objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy are:

1. Protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Nigerian state.
2. Promotion of the socio-economic well-being of Nigerians.
3. Enhancing Nigeria's image and status in the world at large.
4. Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other states.

5. Non-interference in the internal affairs of other states.
6. Promotion of the unity and solidarity of African states.
7. Total political, economic, social, and cultural emancipation and rejuvenation of Africa.
8. An unflinching commitment to the elimination of apartheid and racism.
9. Emancipation of countries still under colonial rule as well as the removal of the remaining vestiges of colonialism in Africa.
10. Promotion of international cooperation and understanding conducive to the consolidation of world peace and security.
11. Enhancing the dignity and promoting the welfare of African and people of African descent all over the world.
12. Contributing to efforts aimed at redressing the imbalance in the development and progress of developing countries.
13. Promotion of peace, prosperity, stability, and development of Africa.
14. Promotion of political goodwill and understanding among African countries despite the cultural, linguistic, and economic barriers erected by erstwhile colonialists.
15. The discouragement of international intervention and presence in Africa.
16. The promotion of rapid socio-economic development in Africa through regional economic integration, strengthening of sub-regional economic institutions and the reduction of economic dependence on extra-continental powers.
17. The development of cultural cooperation as a means of strengthening political ties with all African countries.
18. And the eradication of all forms of racial discrimination in Africa.

From independence in 1960, Nigeria had no well-articulated and documented defence policy, until 1979 when Major General Olusegun Obasanjo's administration finally documented its principles and objectives. This document remained in place until 1988, when General Ibrahim Babangida's administration reviewed it. According to Babangida (1988), Abacha (1992) and Osobie (1988), the following is what are generally accepted to be the principles and objectives of Nigeria's defence policy:

1. The defence and protection of the country's territorial integrity, her people, and internal peace.
2. The defence and maintenance of the country's independence.
3. The defence of the economic and social well-being of the people.
4. The defence, preservation and promotion of their culture and way of life, especially their democratic values.
5. Defence of the general development of the nation and the effective management of national energy.

6. Defence of equality and self-reliance in Africa and the rest of the developing world.
7. Promotion of necessary economic and political conditions in Africa and throughout the world that will foster national self-reliance and rapid economic development.
8. Promotion of social justice and human dignity everywhere, particularly for black people.
9. The enhancement of the country's standing and status in world capitals, especially Africa.
10. Ensuring peace and stability in the African continent through mutual collective defence and security system.
11. Commitment to the United Nations and the promotion of world peace and international security.

After independence, Prime Minister Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa presented some cardinal points of the principles and objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy, with Africa as its focal point (Gray 1965; Tukur 1965). The principles and objectives mentioned above still apply today, and most Nigerian leaders have pursued them one way or the other with variations only in style of leadership and implementation.

Under Balewa, Nigeria accepted and honoured all the treaties and agreements signed by Britain; this further increased British influence on the country's foreign policy. Although Balewa declared Nigeria a non-aligned nation, like most of the members of the Non-Aligned Movement, he did not respect the principle behind this statement. It was clear that he was pro-West, certainly because Nigeria was economically tied to Britain and the Western Bloc. When Nikita Khrushchev, the then prime minister of the Soviet Union, demanded that Nigeria should permit that nation to establish its embassy in Lagos in 1960, Balewa replied that 'Application for diplomatic exchange would be considered in order of receipts and would be judged on their merits.' However, the same request was immediately granted to the United States of America (Gray 1965:85).

Balewa was anti-communist, and turned down scholarship awards to Nigerians from the Soviet bloc as well as delaying the opening of diplomatic relations with them. On the other hand, he invited apartheid South Africa to Nigeria's independence celebrations, being an advocate of a gradual approach to Africa's decolonisation. He also rejected the Organisation of African Unity's (OAU) plan to break diplomatic ties with Britain because of Rhodesia's (Zimbabwe) Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI). And only Balewa supported the unpopular Moïse Tshombe during the Congo crisis (Tukur 1965).

Balewa's administration believed that the West and Britain were Nigeria's best friends. This is seen in his independence speech: 'We are grateful to the British officers whom we have known first as masters and then as leaders and finally as partners but always as friends' (Tukur 1965: 24). Balewa's foreign policy was weak, inconsistent and contradictory. His government was overthrown in the first military coup on 15 January 1966 (Olusanya 1985).

Major General Thomas Aguiyi-Ironsi became the head of state after the overthrow and assassination of Balewa, following the failure of Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu's bid to take power with his co-plotters. Aguiyi-Ironsi was killed in a coup d'état on 29 July 1966, leading to the emergence of Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon as the new head of state (Ogunsanwo 1985). Foreign policy under Gowon was quite different from that of Balewa, but Gowon still maintained some of the essential characteristics of the Balewa government. For example, he held a moderate view towards foreign policy but strongly believed in 'personal diplomacy', that is, personal involvement or intervention in resolving diplomatic issues. His administration also moved closer to the Western Bloc and Britain (Olusanya 1985). The civil war of 1967–1970 brought Nigeria close to the Communist Bloc because Britain and the US refused to supply Nigeria with arms to fight the Biafran rebels, which the USSR did (Ogunsanwo 1985).

Gowon also immediately normalised relations with Gabon, Tanzania, Zambia, Côte d'Ivoire and France in 1971, despite the recognition and support they gave to Biafra during the civil war. With the support of President Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo, Gowon rallied other West African countries to form the Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS) in 1975 (Federal Ministry of External Affairs 1991). The leadership role he played at the first Lomé Convention, which was a precursor to ECOWAS, was quite commendable. However, it must be said that, more than any other Nigerian ruler before him, he had the opportunity to make foreign policy dynamic because of the enormous resources and goodwill at his disposal (Akinoyemi 1980).

Even though Nigeria received fighter jets and other weapons from the Communist Bloc, the relationship did not progress further after the war, and Nigeria reverted to her old friends, Britain and the West (Akinoyemi 1980). Gowon performed better than Balewa on foreign policy. He increased aid to freedom fighters like the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) in Namibia, the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan African Congress (PAC) in South Africa, and others in Zimbabwe and Angola and was committed to decolonisation, ECOWAS and the OAU (Akinoyemi 1980).

At the eight summits of the OAU in Kampala, Uganda in 1975, Gowon suggested the formation of the African Task Force to handle military problems in Africa. He warned: 'Let it be known to friends and foes that the historical tide is irreversible. From now on, we can only move forward. Those countries still under control of foreign powers must be liberated' (*The Sunday Guardian*, 2 October 1988). Unfortunately for Gowon, he did not have the chance to prove his words because he was overthrown in a coup d'état before the end of the summit, ending his nine-year rule. Brigadier Murtala Mohammed became the new head of state on 29 July 1975 (Aluko 1977).

Mohammed's administration effected a progressive change in Nigeria's foreign policy implementation, emphasising Africa as its centrepiece more than any other government previously. He pursued a focused and dynamic foreign policy. Unfortunately for Mohammed, he did not live long to execute his plans entirely. He was killed in a failed coup d'état on 13 February 1976 (Akinoyemi 1980). Lieutenant General Olusegun Obasanjo, Mohammed's deputy, succeeded him and continued with the administration's policies.

The most important achievement of Obasanjo's administration was decolonisation in Africa, unmatched by any other regime before and after it (Obiozor 1985). It contributed immeasurably to the independence of Angola, Zimbabwe and the struggle against apartheid South Africa, supporting the ANC and PAC, and SWAPO in Namibia (Akinoyemi 1980). For the first time in Nigeria's diplomatic history, the government took unilateral decisions without support from most African states (Garba 1981). Nigeria supported organisations and political movements that 'truly represented the true aspirations of African people' (Jemirade 2020: 129). Subsequently, Alhaji Shehu Shagari became the president, on 1 October 1979. He tried to continue the work started by Mohammed and Obasanjo, but the momentum weakened because of the moderate views of his administration (Garba 1981).

Nevertheless, Shagari's administration continued support for anti-apartheid groups and assisted Zimbabwe with funds before and after independence (Ogunsanwo 1983). It was during Shagari's administration that Nigeria witnessed some of the worst border attacks from its neighbours, particularly Cameroon, when Cameroonian troops killed a Nigerian contingent that was patrolling the border, in May 1981. Nigeria did not retaliate, even though Cameroon refused to apologise or pay compensation (Ogunsanwo 1983). Thus, in many regards, Shagari's foreign policy lacked focus and was uninspiring.

Shagari's government was overthrown in a military coup on 31 December 1983, when it was replaced by Major General Muhammadu Buhari's short-lived rule. In pursuance of the country's foreign and defence aims, Buhari introduced the Concentric Circle Policy, which he described as follows:

The pattern of concentric circles may be discernible in our attitude and response to foreign policy issues within the African continent and the World at large. At the epicentre of these circles are the National Economy and the Security interest of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which are inextricably tied-up with the security, stability, the economic and social well-being of our immediate neighbours (Buhari 1984).

It was later adopted by Babangida (Imobighe 1987), addressed in the next section. Buhari's foreign policy was antagonistic to the West, confrontational and reactionary. Because of his hard posture and the failed Umaru Dikko kidnap attempt, the regime fell out with Western powers, Britain notably, which led to the withdrawal of their respective High Commissioners (Olusanya 1985). Buhari rejected and refused to sign the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Brown Card System of free movement of citizens, goods and services within the sub-region. He also refused to host the 1984 ECOWAS Summit. His rigid attitude towards foreign policy only increased his unpopularity. Buhari was overthrown in a palace coup by General Ibrahim Babangida, his Chief of Army Staff, in 1985 (Olusanya 1985).

Babangida's period as head of state in Nigeria lasted from 27 August 1985 to 27 August 1993. The regime came to power when the economic, political, and social situation in the country had become intolerable under Buhari. Many Nigerians were happy to see the end of Buhari's draconian dictatorship and hoped for a new chapter in the affairs of the country (Osuntokun 2000).

### **Babangida's Foreign Policy Thrust**

The Babangida administration made several changes to the tone of Nigeria's foreign policy. For the first time in the country's history, the emphasis was shifted from Africa as the pivot of Nigeria's foreign policy to issues that were directly related to Nigeria. On coming to power, Babangida appointed people of proven integrity and knowledge in the field, such as Bolaji Akinyemi as the Minister of External Affairs and his adviser on associated issues, which helped in the successful lift-off of the administration's foreign policy (Adeniji 2000). Even after Akinyemi, other respective ministers, such as Ike Nwachukwu and Rilwan Lukman, all continued the active co-ordination of the country's foreign policy until the end of the regime.

By the time Babangida came to power, the relationship between Nigeria and the West, particularly Britain, its traditional friend, had become strained because of the disagreements with Buhari's administration, especially on the prosecution of corrupt politicians. Subsequently, the international community was well disposed to the Babangida regime mainly because of its competent advisers and the policies pursued by the administration. As a result, Babangida received unprecedented support from international financial institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) (Obiozor 1994).

The boycott of the Edinburgh Commonwealth Games in Scotland in July 1986 was a landmark moment in the success of the regime's foreign policy. The previous year, on 16 October 1985, at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Summit in Nassau, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had rejected sanctions against South Africa because she believed that the effect would be felt more by black people than white. As a result of the ensuing deadlock, the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group (EPG) was established to study the situation and make final recommendations. The EPG, co-chaired by the Nigerian former head of state, Olusegun Obasanjo, and Malcolm Fraser of Australia, later recommended sanctions, which Thatcher still refused to accept (Ogwu 1986) and Britain continued to relate to South Africa on sports and trading matters. Consequently, Nigeria led thirty-two Commonwealth countries out of the forty-nine members to boycott the games (Obiozor 1994), which was described as 'one of the high points of decision-making in Nigeria's foreign policy' (Olukoshi 1990: 448).

Nigeria intensified the struggle against apartheid and racial discrimination in South Africa and contributed immensely to the attainment of independence of Namibia on 29 March 1990. It renewed diplomatic relations with Israel on 4 May 1992 (Abiola 1999), a decision all previous governments of Nigeria had avoided because of the controversy it was likely to generate in the country. In the same year, President Frederik de Klerk of South Africa visited Nigeria, the South African leader to do so (Abiola 1999).

### ***The Concentric Circle Policy***

The Concentric Circle Policy first introduced by Buhari was continued by Babangida. The policy was applied to both the foreign and defence policies since the two are interrelated. Ekoko, described it as 'the most comprehensive, clear-cut and operationalisable Nigerian Defence Policy ever enunciated since 1960' (Ekoko 1990: 12). Babangida pursued the policy throughout his administration in his relationship with ECOWAS, the Organisation of

African Unity (OAU) and particularly the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), during Liberia's civil war, when Nigeria was not only involved in the peacekeeping/peace enforcement operations but led and financed most of them. Babangida restated this policy in his defence of Nigeria's involvement in Liberia, when he claimed that:

The foreign policy of Nigeria is built on three concentric circles. The first ring being Nigeria and the defence of its territorial integrity and sovereignty, the second ring comprising its immediate neighbours with contiguous boundaries and the third ring being the ECOWAS Subregion ... and the three elements are obviously interlocking and coterminous (Babangida 1990).

The Concentric Circle Policy was based on delimiting and prioritising the strategic boundaries of Nigeria's national defence. Inside the three concentric circles were three dimensions to note—strategic-military, economic and political (Ekoko 1990). The policy was also based on Nigeria's geographical situation and threat analysis. The threats included border clashes with neighbouring states, particularly Cameroon, French activities in the West African sub-region, and the possibility of a South African attack on Nigeria (Ekoko 1990).

The policy, to some extent, guaranteed Nigeria's safety with Chad, Niger, the Republic of Benin, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. It also worked, to some extent, to improve relations with other countries in the West Africa sub-region (Ate and Akinterinwa 1990). However, one cannot say the same thing of South Africa since Nigeria's foreign policy towards apartheid was not backed by a corresponding defence policy or defence capability. South Africa's defence forces were far more superior and advanced regarding capability and weaponry (Amin 1992).

### *Economic diplomacy*

One of the key themes in the change of focus in foreign policy was economic diplomacy. This was the active pursuit of foreign policy objectives that were designed to promote trade and investment and to complement domestic economic reforms, such as trade liberalisation and the commercialisation of public enterprises (Federal Ministry of External Affairs 1991). It gave backbone and strength to Nigeria's internal economic policy (Obiozor 1992).

Economic diplomacy, according to Osuntokun, means 'tempering our pre-occupation with political issues such as decolonisation and non-alignment with concerns about domestic development' (Osuntokun 2000: 5). Amongst other reasons, Nigeria shifted to economic diplomacy because the end of apartheid in South Africa was then around the corner and the independence of Namibia had been achieved, so it made little sense to continue with

anticolonial policies, previously the preoccupation of Nigeria's foreign policy. Also, the fall of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the USA as the only superpower made non-alignment irrelevant. All these changes made Nigeria decide that economic survival and development should be the focus of its foreign policy without abandoning its policies of the liberation of African people (Osuntokun 2000).

Although the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) pattern of the deregulation of the economy based on economic diplomacy drew much criticism internally, due to the hardship it caused, it also attracted international attention, particularly from Western countries and their investors (Abiola 1999). To facilitate and encourage foreign economic investment, and to aid the registration of foreign companies without the bureaucratic bottlenecks (Osuntokun 2000), the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC) was created. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs established a trade and investment unit to supervise the economic efforts of the embassies and high commissions abroad towards promoting the economic policies and development of the country. Ambassadors and high commissioners were told that their success or failure would be determined by the number of investors they brought into the country from their host nations (Osuntokun 2000). The Indigenisation Decree was abolished to allow foreigners to participate in all business activities within the country. The decree that made the Central Bank the only route for transferring money outside the country was scrapped. Bureaux de changes were licensed to trade in currencies at a controlled rate. This was all made possible to enable freedom of entrepreneurship and make the movement of capital and profit easy (*The Sunday Concord*, 1 October 2000).

The mantra of economic diplomacy was carried to all international forums, including the United Nations (UN), OAU, ECOWAS and bilateral sessions. As a result, the issue of Nigeria's debt was reconsidered; it was later rescheduled instead of cancelled, which Nigeria wanted (Obiozor 1994). However, at the same time, the country was offered a lot of financial facilities. Although the collapse of Communism and the opening of Eastern Europe and China's markets and investment harmed the policy of economic diplomacy pursued by the Babangida administration, it was a new and positive direction for the country (Obiozor 1994).

Apart from its commitment to the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which it belonged to for the protection of its oil interests, the primary foreign exchange earner for the country, Nigeria initiated the formation of the African Petroleum Producers Association (APPA) in Lagos, on 27 January 1987 (Adeniji 2000). Nigeria realised that other OPEC

members belonged to the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporters (OAPE) in the Middle East, the Organisation of Latin American Petroleum Exporters (OLAPE) in Latin America and Asian Countries Petroleum Exporters (ASCOPE) in Asia. Only Africa had no specialised regional organisation to protect its oil interests in the world (Adeniji 2000). This new organisation, with members like Libya, Algeria, Gabon, Angola, Benin Republic, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Congo and Egypt (as an observer), some of whom were not even OPEC members, increased economic co-operation among them, which was beneficial to all, including Nigeria because it gave them the opportunity to review the value of co-operation as a single bloc in protecting their mutual interests in oil revenue (Abiola 1999).

The controversial decision to make Nigeria a full member of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) in Fez, Morocco, on 6 January 1986, was defended based on economic diplomacy. Babangida argued that Nigeria stood to benefit economically and financially from the membership because of the access it would give to zero-interest loans from the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), financial assistance and insurance coverage, including technical and economic assistance from the richer members of the organisation (Abiola 1999).

Economic diplomacy was pursued based on the economic realities of Nigeria at that time. It was evident that the major world powers, with the USA at the apex, considered economic interests first in their relations with other countries. These went together with security interests and that is why, to date, Western countries control the financial institutions of the world like the IMF, World Bank and IFC, and are ready to defend their economic interests anywhere in the world. This was manifested when the USA led other Western powers to force Iraq out of Kuwait in 1990. General Babangida summed up his strong belief in the policy thus:

...it became obvious to critical observers that the ability of a country to attract substantial foreign aid and investment capital for its economic development depended very intimately on the foreign policy orientation of its government regarding many issues (Babangida 1985).

### ***Environmental Issues***

Environmental issues constituted one of the new concerns of the Babangida administration. In 1988, radioactive and hazardous toxic waste was dumped in the Nigerian port of Koko by the Italian importer Gianfranco Raffaelli, with the collaboration of some Nigerians (Osuntokun 2000). Later, it was discovered that similar waste had been dumped in South Africa and

the Republic of Benin, where they were told that it could be used for road construction. In reaction, Nigeria established the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) in 1988. With the support of other West African states, the country also established a dump-watch to monitor the movement of vessels suspected of carrying hazardous waste (Osuntokun 2000).

In taking this initiative the country proved its leadership in Africa; it persuaded other countries in ECOWAS to support the protocol against toxic waste dumping in the sub-region. Nigeria also presented its position to the OAU and then the UN. This led to an international treaty, the Basel Convention in Switzerland, which was finally passed and ratified in 1989. The protocol prohibited the transboundary transfer of hazardous and toxic radioactive waste to countries that have no mechanism for handling them (Osuntokun, 2000). The Basel treaty further led to the 1991 Bamako Convention in Mali, which finally prohibited the dumping or transfer of hazardous and toxic radioactive waste to countries. The issue of the environment was a significant foreign policy achievement for Nigeria, increasing its prominence in the international community.

### ***Concept of Medium Powers***

The concept of Medium Powers was introduced into Nigeria's foreign policy as 'the coming together of influential medium-income and resource-endowed countries into an informal association to influence the direction of world affairs, particularly the economic aspect of these relations' (Osuntokun 2000: 10). It was meant to be a counterforce by major regional powers, such as Brazil and Argentina in South America, Nigeria and Egypt in Africa, India and China in Asia, against the ideological and economic dominance of the two blocs led by the USA and the Union of Soviet and Socialist Republics (USSR).

Nigeria's foreign policy formulators believed that the non-aligned movement was too unwieldy to achieve this and the Commonwealth was too informal and unsuitable for the purpose. Some of their aims included making sure that the question of international peace would no longer be the exclusive preserve of the two world powers and their alliance system of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact (Osuntokun 2000). The idea was formally abandoned because of a lack of interest; the target countries did not take the idea seriously. The idea of medium powers was not new; there were too many organisations in the international system claiming or wanting to fight the political and economic dominance of the two blocs led by the USA and the USSR, respectively.

### ***Technical Aid Corps***

The Technical Aid Corps (TAC) was introduced into Nigerian foreign policy in 1987, designed to provide African countries with a technical workforce to assist their struggle for self-reliance and economic development (Akindele 1990). Internally, the government saw it as an opportunity to settle thousands of unemployed Nigerian graduates by sending them to countries where their skills and knowledge could be utilised adequately. The government believed that the TAC programme could make other countries confident in using Nigerian graduates, and in Nigeria's institutions of higher learning and educational system, by accepting assistance in that form. The foreign policy planners also believed that the programme would boost the country's leadership role in Africa, particularly in the West African sub-region.

The TAC was an expensive venture because people sent to foreign countries had to be paid in US dollars, but it was well regarded, and successive administrations continued it. Countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone and Gambia that benefited from the TAC were so enthusiastic about the programme that they started making specific requests for experts in some fields (Akindele 1990). Many Nigerian graduates applied to join it, including those who were gainfully employed.

### **Defence Policy Thrust**

Every modern nation requires a carefully structured plan of action on how to define its national interest. Babangida's administration did that with the defence of the country. Until 1979, there had been no documented Nigerian defence policy. The British did not leave or hand over any formal document on defence policy (Vogt 1990). The armed forces grew out of the British Colonial Army, which was the West African Frontier Force (WAFF), established in 1890 (Imobighe 1987). The first set of Nigerian officers was trained under the Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF). Even after independence, they continued with their inherited British traditions and all the officers were trained in British military institutions, namely Sandhurst and Aldershot. They were trained in British military traditions with British weapons, which made it challenging to eliminate Britain's influence on the country's defence policy (Vogt 1990).

Successive Nigerian leaders—Balewa, Aguiyi-Ironsi, Gowon and Mohammed—operated without a formal written defence policy. Obasanjo documented the first defence policy in 1979, the Principles and Objectives of Nigeria's Defence Policy, which Babangida reviewed in 1988 and gave more focus. Up till then, the full content of the document had remained shrouded in secrecy for security reasons (Vogt 1990).

Every aspect of Nigeria's defence policy and security was reviewed. Since independence, and until then, Nigeria's defence policy had been based on self-defence and defence of the territorial integrity of the country (Ekoko 1990), rather than on territorial expansion or aggression. Babangida continued this policy, but changed its thrust, from a sole or single defence mechanism to a Mutual Collective Defence and Security System (Ekoko 1990). The administration further added the concept of 'Regional Power' (Ekoko 1990).

### ***Concept of a Regional Power in a Mutual Collective Defence and Security System***

After the defence policy review, it was decided that other West African states, particularly Nigeria's immediate neighbours, should be brought into the Mutual Collective Defence And Security System. The decision was based on a threat analysis that indicated the possible areas of conflicts that Nigeria could face as a country (Ibrahim 1988). It was also in line with the Concentric Circle Policy, which linked Nigeria's security and defence with that of its immediate neighbours—Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Benin Republic and Equatorial Guinea. This policy was based on the principle that any threat to Nigeria's immediate neighbours, politically economically or security-wise, was a threat to the country (Osobie 1988).

Nigeria had no territorial ambitions. This never manifested in any way in its foreign or defence policy implementation and practice. Abacha (1992), argued that:

Since Nigeria does not possess and probably will be unable to possess the means to defend herself in isolation against all forms of external aggression, she would have to rely, for strategic reasons, on military interdependence at least in the sub-region to provide security—and it is imperative that Nigeria's defence policy gives priority to the propagation and eventual establishment of a regional and mutually collective security system among African states with a view to warding off any threats to her political and economic independence.

The collective security system would take the form of a bilateral or multilateral arrangement, and would involve the joint deployment of troops from the countries participating at different periods of training and operations. The command would also have a structure, which Nigeria, with its population, wealth, size and geographical location, was able to establish.

This system was quite an innovation in Nigeria's defence policy. For the first time, it showed that there was indeed a serious effort to articulate and execute a national defence system for the country based not on the general notion of Africa as the focus of its foreign policy but on a threat analysis of

the country and other relevant factors. If defence experts formulated a mutual collective defence and security system because the country was not capable of handling her defence problems alone, then a formalised alliance would be the goal of the policy. Ekoko (1990:7) argued that, 'For states unable to achieve their foreign and defence policy unilaterally, alliance formation becomes a national necessity.'

According to Miller (1981:52), 'Alliance formation is based on need, expediency and pragmatism; alliance exists because they have more than compensating advantages because they are believed to add external power to the power of each member, because they deter potential aggressors and because they define the strategic frontier.' (Ekoko, 1990: 8) summed it up by saying, 'An alliance enhances national defence.' Looking at all the advantages mentioned above towards an alliance policy, one can see that to achieve the objectives of its new thrust in defence policy, Nigeria had to formalise it in an alliance.

The formation of ECOMOG forces in 1990 to solve the Liberian problem was an attempt to realise the aim and objectives of the Mutual Collective Defence And Security System. It was a step in the right direction and could be improved upon and adapted to form the nucleus of an alliance based on the new joint defence system in the West Africa sub-region (Olowo-Ake 1996). Nigeria was able to persuade the rest of the countries in the West African sub-region of the need to send troops to Liberia to bring peace and sanity to the war-ravaged country. Although some critics insist that Nigeria's 'misadventure' in leading the ECOMOG troops to Liberia took place because of the personal relationship between Babangida and President Samuel Doe of Liberia, the most important thing was that the decision fell within the Concentric Circle Policy and the Mutual Collective Defence and Security System and it helped to solve the problem in Liberia.

Through the ECOWAS standing mediation committee, Nigeria was able to persuade Gambia, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Ghana and Guinea to provide troops for the peacekeeping force, which later changed to a peace enforcement force. Later, even Uganda and Tanzania from East Africa provided troops for the ECOMOG forces (Olowo-Ake 1996). The success of these operations as a step forward in achieving the Mutual Collective Defence and Security System, which could lead to a formalised military alliance in the West Africa sub-region, cannot be underestimated. Babangida (1990) made this clear when he said:

There is no gainsaying the fact that when certain events occur in the sub-region depending upon their intensity and magnitude, which are bound to affect Nigerian politico-military and socio-economic environment, we should

not stand by as helpless and hapless spectator. We believe that if the events are such that have the potential to threaten the stability, peace and security of the sub-region, Nigeria, in collaboration with others in this sub-region, is duty-bound to react or respond [in an] inappropriate manner necessary to either avert the disaster or to take adequate measures to ensure peace, tranquillity and harmony.

Independent and objective observers were supportive of ECOMOG's efforts. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 'The ECOMOG remained the only example of a Regional Organization with a long term, truly multilateral peacekeeping operation underway' (SIPRI 1995: 77). Salim Ahmed Salim, the former OAU scribe, described it as, 'The first real attempt by African countries to solve an African conflict' (Vogt 1992). President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda praised Nigeria for its 'proper role as peace-maker by being the premier participant in ECOMOG' (Vogt 1992). David Rowson, the Director of the US State Department's Anglophone West Africa Affairs, stated that, 'The US is fully behind the West African states in what we think has been a very successful, though a very difficult and prolonged period of statesmanship and diplomacy' (Vogt 1992). Lieutenant General Teddy Allen, the Director of the US Security Assistance Agency, visited the ECOMOG headquarters and applauded them by saying, 'the World owed ECOMOG a debt of gratitude for rendering service above and beyond the normal call of duty' (Vogt 1992). US President George Bush, with the endorsement of the Senate and House of Representative, praised President Babangida for his efforts to resolve the Liberian conflict (Vogt 1992).

The benefits of ECOMOG, led by Nigeria, cannot be overemphasised given the peace it returned to Liberia. It brought Nigeria high regard and respect internationally and confirmed its leadership role in the sub-region. Although it cost the country material wealth and men, it was one of the sacrifices the country had to make to be a regional power and be successful in its defence policy objective.

### **External Defence System and the Nigerian Armed Forces**

The primary function of the armed forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is to defend the physical territorial integrity of the country and its people (Imobighe 1989). Babangida's administration completed the reformation and reorganisation started by Obasanjo's government. Nigeria witnessed unprecedented military training and courses at home and abroad for armed forces personnel, thus improving its quality and modernisation. There was a push to modernise equipment and weaponry, which led to the procurement

of new materials and the service and maintenance of the old equipment (Okolo 2000). The Nigerian Army Resettlement Centre (NARC) and the National Reserve Mobilisation Scheme (NRMS) were established, which dealt with retiring armed forces personnel and the personnel that remained in the strategic reserve (Imobighe 1989). According to Bali (1986: 9), the Minister of Defence, the strength of the armed force was reduced from 150,000 to 120,000 to improve quality in personnel and effectiveness. He noted that, 'Emphasis was now laid on a medium-size, effective, disciplined, educated and well-equipped armed forces than large, illiterate, ignorant and ill-equipped armed forces that lack discipline.'

Another critical innovation towards the strengthening of the armed forces was the establishment of the National Guard. After the first threat analysis and review of the nation's defence policy the armed forces were established, trained and equipped for a large-scale campaign, the type of army needed for a full-scale invasion or defensive war. But it had no capability for small-scale operations like commando operations with swift and effective action and results. Neither were the Nigerian police equipped and trained to handle internal uprisings (Ndiomu 1996). The US has the Marines, Britain has the Special Air Service (SAS), Israel has Sayeret Matkal, France has the Special Operations Command (Commandement des Opérations Spéciales, or COS), Germany has Grenzschutzgruppe 9 (Border Protection Group 9, or GSG 9) and the Dutch have the Royal Marines. Nigeria needed a similar special force.

The National Guard was established under a commander who reported directly to the Commander-in-Chief. Its primary purpose or use was to protect strategic installations in the country and respond quickly to terrorism, mercenaries or commando invasion of any part of the country. Mainly a counter-terrorist force, its members were described as people 'who are supposed to be endowed with certain intrinsic capabilities, such as mental and physical stability, secrecy, speed, adaptability and above-average intelligence higher than the men of regular military units' (Nweze 1990:3).

To effectively handle and implement the new tactical doctrine and strategic planning, the Nigeria Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) was set up, as the think tank of the military. All these initiatives were achieved after the first-ever threat analysis was conducted as part of Nigeria's defence policy under Babangida. Votti defined doctrine as 'a body of theory which describes the environment within which the armed forces must operate and prescribe the methods and circumstances of the deployment' (Votti 1974: 3). Marshall Andrei Grechko (Grechko 1972:322), the former defence minister of the Soviet Union, defined military doctrine

‘as a national perspective, a product of national goals and objectives.’ He argued that a nation’s military doctrine must address the following issues:

1. Identification of the potential enemy and his capabilities.
2. The sacrifices the country is willing to make and the price it is ready to pay in a possible war.
3. The national aim and objectives and the force structure of the armed forces to be used in such a war.
4. Military and political mobilisation policy, the means, and methods to be used to prosecute a war.
5. Assessment of threat and the determination of the military measures to counter the threat (Grechko 1972:322).

According to Henry Kissinger (1969:166), ‘It is the task of strategic doctrine to translate power into policy whether the goals of a state are offensive or defensive, whether it seeks to achieve or prevent transformation, its strategic doctrine must define what objectives are worth contending for and determine the degree of force appropriate for achieving them.’ Summing up all these definitions, one can see that they are saying the same thing in different ways. Right from independence, Nigeria had not incorporated any strategic defence doctrine in her national interest, until the coming of Babangida’s regime. Now, for the first time, military commanders had what is known as an operational standing order—that is, instructions for the precise and exact action to take in case some things happened or in reaction to issues that were related to their command. Although the policy of Babangida’s administration might not have conformed entirely to the conditions laid down by Marshall Grechko and Kissinger, the effort was made to give the country the best it could afford at that time.

Babangida’s defence policy laid the basis for the formulation of strategic, tactical doctrines that were to form the structure and use of the armed forces (Osobie 1988). The office of the Chief of Defence Staff was consolidated and expanded to provide an adequate umbrella for effective strategic planning and action. It may not have been perfect or what could be expected from a country like Nigeria, but it was an improvement and a step in the right direction.

### ***Defence Procurement and Defence Industries Corporation (DIC)***

The issue of procurement was an area that the Babangida administration tried to sanitise in Nigeria’s defence policy. According to Amin (1998: 25), ‘there were two dimensions to acquisition in the armed forces: procurement and production.’ Procurement concerned buying directly from many

factories that were mostly foreign, while production related directly to the capabilities and the use of the Defence Industries Corporation (DIC). After independence, Nigeria had depended mainly on the importation of military hardware and software, mostly from Britain and other Western countries. The situation did not change until the outbreak of civil war in 1967, when Britain and the Western allies refused to sell some categories of weapons to Nigeria. This forced Nigeria to turn to the Communist Bloc for weapons that were used to prosecute the war (Amin 1998).

The civil war caused Nigeria's procurement to change from a single client to a multi-client policy. Afterwards, Nigeria possessed two different types of military hardware, one from the capitalist Western Bloc and another from the former Communist Bloc (Amin 1998). Eventually, Babangida's administration organised a procurement policy. Weapons and materiel were no longer acquired randomly without due process and due consideration of the national interest and objectives. The inter-service rivalry for weapons and other hardware procurement was eliminated (Amin 1998). Previously, the three armed services headed by the Chief of Army Staff, Chief of Naval Staff and Chief of Air Staff had usually channelled their demands directly to the Minister of Defence, but Babangida's administration changed this and made all three services send their requests to the Chief of Defence Staff who vetted and made final recommendations to the Defence Minister for proper harmonisation before budget consideration and final approval (Amin 1998). This restructure helped considerably in proper co-ordination, harmonisation and prioritisation to conform to the defence policy and national interest.

The Babangida administration also introduced weapons and ammunition standardisation, to eliminate a situation whereby troops under the same command had different weapons and ammunition utterly different from their colleagues (Ibrahim 1988). With the fall of Communism, the administration decided to concentrate on the Western powers for its weapons procurement. Emphasis was laid on repairs of weapons instead of procurement; new procurement was allowed only under extraordinary circumstances (Amin 1998). The role of intermediaries or defence contractors was abolished and the country decided to buy directly from manufacturers.

The administration encouraged the local manufacture of military hardware for the armed forces. The Defence Industries Corporation, which was established in 1964, had never been utilised for hardware acquisition. It had been entirely neglected in favour of procurement (Ibrahim 1998). The Babangida administration did not do much to change the situation, but an attempt was made to encourage research and development of local

weapons production through DIC; an attempt was also made to encourage indigenous repairs of the hardware acquired through procurement (Ibrahim 1998). 'Despite its failure to ultimately develop DIC, it was the Babangida regime that has shown strong determination to put it on a good footing as a complement to weapons procurement' (Amin 1998).

### ***Defence budget***

There was no significant difference between Babangida's overall defence budget and that of his predecessors. Right from independence, the budget had always received a substantial percentage of the total federal budget. Regarding allocation, the defence budget was among the top three, competing mostly with education, agriculture and health (Aderinto 1990; Budget Speeches of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1986—1993). The only noticeable difference in policy change was that the three heads of the armed forces—army, navy and air force—now channelled their various demands to the Chief of Defence Staff for proper harmonisation and control (Imobighe 1987).

Imobighe (1987) argued that 'Even though the vast amount was always budgeted on defence, most of the allocation always goes to recurrent expenditure and welfare for the officers and men at the expense of capital expenditure for military hardware and software.' Despite its attempts to present a well-articulated and planned budget, Babangida's administration lacked financial discipline, in implementation and transparency. Cars were purchased and given to officers of the armed forces, but this was not reflected in the defence budget (Imobighe 1987). Also, ECOMOG expenditure of more than USD eight billion was never reflected in the federal defence budget throughout that period (*The Nigerian Tribune*, 9 October 1999), nor in the federal government budget, even as a security vote. This activity was not useful for strategic planning and the administration of defence policy.

### **Relationship between the Foreign and Defence Policies and their Impact**

It is agreed by scholars, experts and defence personnel, such as Osuntokun (2000), Akinyemi (1980), Aluko (1988), Garba (1981), Oyebanjo (1989), Jackson and Sorensen (2003), Sutch and Elias (2007), Webber and Smith (2002), Ojanen (2006), Smith (2003), Palmer (1990) and many others, that foreign and defence policies are interrelated. For the success of all, one cannot be separated from the other. According to Okolo (2000: 162), 'Defence policy is that aspect of foreign policy that deals with the national security because it deals with the very survival of the nation; it is the most important

aspect of foreign policy.' He goes further to say that 'it is the branch of foreign policy which not only anticipates the antagonistic dimensions of inter-state relations but rationalises and prepares the nation's resources especially the military component to ensure the national objective'. For a nation to be prosperous in her foreign and defence policies, the two must be adequately harmonised for maximum results (Okolo 2000).

The inability of Nigeria's foreign policy to be strengthened by its defence policy was a minus for the country. The Concentric Circle theory and the Mutual Collective Defence and Security Systems in the West African sub-region corresponded with each other, and foreign policy was adequately backed by the country's defence policy and capability (except in the case of South Africa, which happened to be one of the main areas of possible threat at that time because of Nigeria's stance on apartheid) (Okolo 2000).

All of Nigeria's donations and contributions to fighting apartheid and colonialism in Africa could not be supported by any credible defence policy towards South Africa, which made the country's activities and speeches look like mere ranting. However, its defence policy was more successful in backing its foreign policy towards its immediate neighbours and the West African sub-region. A good example was the ECOMOG Peacekeeping Operations (Olowo-Ake 1996). Good or bad, the foreign and defence policies of Babangida's regime one way or the other affected the nation.

### **Assessing Babangida's Foreign and Defence Policies**

The foreign and defence policies of Babangida's government had certain impacts in terms of national interest and external relations, which could be considered from multiple dimensions. National interest in foreign policy reflects the interplay of domestic demands and external circumstances (Northedge 1969). In summarising the success or otherwise of these policies, it is necessary to assess its major thrusts, which included Economic Diplomacy, the Technical Aid Corps, the Concentric Circle Policy and the Mutual Collective Defence and Security System.

First, Economic Diplomacy was a great departure in the right direction in the articulation and pursuit of Nigeria's foreign policy. As noted above, through it, liberalisation and other international economic relations were promoted with positive effects on economic diversification. Aside from moving economic interests to the front burner of foreign policy to complement domestic economic reforms, the thrust also encouraged various foreign investors and international partners to engage with Nigeria during this period. The administration used the mechanism of economic

diplomacy to tackle the problems of inefficiency, mono-production, autarky and distribution that seem to be the bane of economic development in the country (Falode 2019: 46).

The effect of economic diplomacy on the country was reasonably positive because of the foreign investment it attracted, which helped in the rescheduling of the country's debt. However, the trade-off was to go along with the internal economic reforms recommended by the Western powers and the world financial institutions they control. The introduction of the SAP, devaluation of the currency, the removal and reduction of subsidies on essential commodities and the streamlining of the civil service (retrenching) had a devastating effect on the poor masses of the country, who did not support these reforms (Mimiko 1995b).

The SAP did not provide the necessary socioeconomic and political cushions that would have made it less disagreeable. For example, among its painful effects were a fifteen-month economic emergency period, a 92.2 per cent economic recovery levy on workers, the removal of 80 per cent of the subsidy on petroleum, a wage freeze, and the rationalisation of parastatals, which led to the loss of jobs. The resulting dissatisfaction provoked widespread revolt against the Babangida government in 1989 (Akinyeye 2003a: 128). Even so, it was under this unfavourable socioeconomic domestic environment that Nigeria gave aid and economic assistance to many African states that cried for help. For instance, Babangida's administration bought Liberia's external debt of USD 313.5 million in December 1989, when Nigeria's external debt was about USD 36 billion (Akinyeye 2003a: 129).

Second, the Technical Aid Corps (TAC) scheme has been judged to be one of the important and long-lasting innovations of the Babangida government's foreign policy, so much so that his successors have continued to implement it as a core instrument of Nigeria's external relations. Fage (2012: 199) notes that from the inception of the programme in 1987, up to the year 2010, 'more than 2000 had volunteered and have been deployed to serve in over 32 countries' under the TAC's arrangements. Among other attributes, it is a testament to Nigeria's contribution to global development. In addition, the programme has contributed greatly to facilitating bilateral relations between Nigeria and other countries in the African, Pacific and Caribbean regions since then.

Despite its praise as a foreign policy instrument, the TAC scheme was not flawless domestically. At its launch, the scheme aimed to pay USD 500 per month and cover other expenses to aid Nigerians working abroad, at a time when the average workers' salary in Nigeria was hardly above USD 50 per month (Lawal 2003). Through the TAC programme and other

elaborate African ventures, Nigeria continued to incur huge costs. Also, many Nigerians questioned the wisdom of sending abroad scarce skilled labour in vital areas, at a time when the country needed them most. On this point, Ogunade argued at the onset of the programme that, 'right now, Nigerians are daily dying from the different epidemics ravaging our fatherland—yellow fever, meningitis, etc, —yet we are busy planning to send to other lands our doctors, who are grossly not enough to meet our basic health needs' (1987: 37).

Over the years the scheme has turned out to be an encumbrance on Nigeria's national budget because of the huge amount of money spent on it annually without immediate visible returns (Fage 2012: 206). Irrespective of its challenges, this tool of foreign policy has brought global recognition to Nigeria. In terms of personal development, it has exposed Nigerian volunteers to the world and to international best practices and has enhanced cultural exchanges among citizens of the participating countries.

The foreign and defence policies of the Concentric Circle and the Mutual Collective Defence and Security System helped to shape many international engagements during Babangida's era. Their impact was felt politically, economically and socio-culturally. Politically, through these initiatives, Nigeria was able to lead other countries in solving Liberia's problem, projected the country as a regional power, and confirmed its leadership in the West African sub-region. The ECOMOG peacekeeping and, later, peace enforcement troops served as a deterrent to any country in the West Africa sub-region wanting to disturb the peace of the area. Babangida was seen as a confident president projecting his nation's power abroad (Vogt 1992).

Since foreign and defence policies reflect the domestic policies or situation of a country, to some degree, Babangida's policies portrayed Nigeria as a country with a strong domestic base. The policies attracted attention and respect for Nigeria internationally; praise was showered on Nigeria and Babangida for his leadership role in ECOMOG's peacekeeping operations (Vogt 1992). For the first time, defence and foreign policies were harmonised concerning the West African sub-region. This enabled Nigeria to successfully project its military power outside its territory and showed that 'a little bit of sabre-rattling does no regional power any harm as long as this ultimate weapon of diplomacy is rarely and wisely used' (Osuntokun 2000).

The two policies also reduced the level of threat to the country from some of her immediate neighbours, particularly Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea (Vogt 1992). The countries in the sub-region realised that Nigeria was the main force to be reckoned with and that its opinions on any issue could not be ignored. The policies increased the influence and prestige of

Nigeria in the sub-region and the whole of Africa. They also meant that troops were kept in shape and acquainted with modern tactics and warfare strategy. They gave some soldiers combat and field experience, which most had not had before ECOMOG (Vogt 1992). Through them, Nigeria acquired new military hardware, updated equipment, and could identify the inadequacies in the armed forces.

On the other side of the spectrum, the deployment of troops to restore peace in Liberia also had a negative effect in the West African sub-region. It led to the coup d'état and change of governments in Gambia in 1994 and Sierra Leone in 1996. Both Lieutenant Yahaya Jammeh of the Gambia and Captain Valentine Strasser of Sierra Leone were part of ECOMOG troops on routine rotation when they decided to use their military and field exposure to take over their home governments (Olowo-Ake 1996).

Economically, the ECOMOG operations cost the nation more than USD 8 billion and more than 500 Nigerian soldiers' lives, excluding other losses that cannot be quantified. (Olowo-Ake 1996). Granted, the foreign and defence policies were well articulated, but how the funds allocated to them were disbursed lacked transparency. Substantial amounts went into the pockets of corrupt officials. Some said it was the price of being a regional power, but there should have been accountability for the source of the funds and how they were spent. A great deal of it would have solved many other problems in the country.

The social impact of the policies could be seen in the influx and acceptance of refugees into the country, which increased pressure on the already inadequate social amenities available to the populace (Olowo-Ake 1996). Both soldiers in active service and innocent Nigerians living in Liberia lost their lives. Many soldiers came back infected with the HIV virus and some even with full-blown AIDS, which increased its spread in the country (Vogt 1992). Finally, the loss of lives led to an increase in the number of orphans.

The nature and impact of the Babangida government's major participation in the ECOMOG peacekeeping operations in Liberia through these policies have attracted criticism from various scholarly points of view, too. A central issue is the question of Nigeria's national interest with reference to the Liberia project. Akinyeye (2003b: 249) has argued, for instance, that 'it is difficult to sustain any thesis of national interest as motivating Nigeria's championing peacekeeping exercise in Liberia under the ECOMOG.' While it could be argued that some Nigerians resided in Liberia, Nigeria's interest could have been better protected at a cheaper cost. In essence, the financial and human resource costs were too enormous against the harsh economic

realities in Nigeria during that period. For example, Nigeria contributed 15,000 out of the 17,000 troops deployed to Liberia by 1993 of whom about 500 were killed or missing in action. Financially, Nigeria spent the whopping sum of over USD \$8 billion on the Liberia peace-keeping mission alone (Bukarambe 2000: 114-116; Akinyeye 2003a: 129). The *Guardian* newspaper protested at the incongruity between Nigeria's poor economic situation at home and its peace-making effort in Liberia: 'The cost of our intervention is high. A considerable number of soldiers have died ... not to protect our people or territorial integrity but to help a brother African state ... The financial cost had been enormous at a time when people at home cannot feed' (*Guardian*, 1992).

While committing human and financial resources in the peace-keeping effort, what national interests did Nigeria pursue through her foreign policy in Liberia? Some people said that it was to obtain Big Brother status in Africa and as a result of Babangida's personal friendship with Samuel Doe, the then Liberian leader. In comparison, unlike the United States (US) which participated in peace-keeping either to maintain the balance of power in a particular region or to ensure the uninhibited flow of oil in order to safeguard America's interests, Nigeria's efforts in Liberia did not achieve either of these targets. For example, during that period, the US government under the UN mission invaded Iraq in 1990 during the Gulf War so as to protect its oil investments in Kuwait. But Nigeria's participation in Liberia had nothing to do with that country's diamond business or other economic interests in the area. Also, although Liberia had direct historical links to the US, America abandoned Liberia at its greatest hour of need because it had nothing to gain from the exercise. But Nigeria committed vast resources in the pursuit of the foreign policies of Concentric Circle and the Mutual Collective Defence and Security System with nothing to show by way of its national interest in the conflict (Akinyeye 2003b: 249-250).

Nevertheless, from a regional security perspective, the Concentric Circle Policy and the Mutual Collective Defence and Security System really helped to stabilise Liberia during its first Civil War, through the leading role played by Babangida in the ECOMOG project. This minimised the chance of the Liberian conflict spilling rapidly to other neighbouring and distant countries in the West African sub-region and beyond. Even after General Babangida left power, his successors have used ECOMOG and other peacekeeping operations to rise to the challenge of playing a leading role and assert Nigeria as a regional power. Such efforts have further assisted in promoting Nigeria's foreign policy and projecting the country's image at different levels.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, one can see clearly that there was a complete change of focus in the foreign and defence policies of Babangida's regime. The previous policy preoccupation with political issues such as African unity, anti-colonialism and opposition to apartheid was jettisoned and replaced with policies such as economic diplomacy, environmental issues and the concept of medium powers. The Technical Aid Corps also had pride of place in Nigeria's foreign policy. The focus of the defence policy changed to the Mutual Collective Defence and Security System based on the Concentric Circle theory, which also supported the foreign policy.

Summing up, one can say that Babangida's foreign and defence policies were successful to a large extent. The administration gave the two policies new direction from their hitherto moribund positions. For the first time in Nigeria's history, the foreign and defence policies were overhauled for proper articulation and redefinition, which projected Nigeria internationally as a respected regional power to be reckoned with. In comparison to his predecessors, Babangida's administration made great improvements to the foreign and defence policies thrusts.

One of the reasons for these achievements was his choice of officials. President Babangida chose to work with intellectuals and scholars of high integrity to assist him in formulating and implementing these policies. He also allowed his ministers a free hand in the running and operation of their various ministries. Osuntokun (2000) argues that 'One of the hallmarks of the Babangida administration was the freedom and latitude ministers were given to shape the affairs of their ministries.'

Finally, in reassessing the foreign and defence policies of Babangida's administration, it is evident that the implementation of these policies was counter to the national interest in some regards. In spite of this, the policies were really unique in nature. Even though there were lapses and shortcomings in some aspects of their administration, the theoretical underpinnings and practical implementation were sound. These policies were not only a landmark in the Babangida period, but also set the pace for his respective successors to follow.

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