

Personality and Nigeria's Foreign Policy: A Comparative Analysis of Obasanjo's Foreign Policy as Military Head of State and Civilian President

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Abstract

This paper explores personality and Nigeria's foreign policy: a comparison of Obasanjo's foreign policy as military Head of State and civilian President. Utilizing Hermann's Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA) model, the paper tested the influence of Obasanjo's personality on Nigeria's foreign policy during his two different regimes: military (1977-1979) and democracy (1999-2007). The findings shows that Obasanjo's personality has approximate similarity with Hermann's personality typology of high level of nationalism, strong belief in one's ability to control events, strong need for power and low levels of conceptual complexity which had decisive influence on Nigeria's foreign policy during the two different era. The paper concludes that for Nigeria to operate an objective foreign policy, the process must be institutionalized through the revision of relevant laws, good governance, improving and strengthening legislative oversights and the observance of best practices.

Key words: Personality, Foreign policy, Democracy, Military rule, Nigeria

Introduction

Henry Kissinger once said that "as a professor, I tended to think of history as run by impersonal forces. But when you see it in practice, you see the difference personality make (Kesgin, 2012:29)

Human societies from time immemorial engaged in international intercourse to further their interests and survival. Today, with the growing complexity and dynamism of the world state system, inevitably aided by growing global interrelationship, interconnectedness and interdependency, relations among states whether small or big, rich or poor, strong or weak, democracy or non-democracy has become not only compelling but inevitable. Thus, the compulsive need to interact with one another has given rise to the imperative for states to consciously initiate, formulate and implement foreign policies for the purpose of attaining national objectives and projecting core values.

Whatever foreign policy nation-states seek to achieve; and whatever character and forms it takes, is usually explained by certain conditions that may be internal or external to the state making the policy. These conditions may include factors such as the nature and type of political organization, domestic political configuration, economy, geography, preferences and values of political elite and the prevailing international environment. Again, whatever constitute the environment and its relative influence on foreign policy, the decision and choice about what foreign policy course to take as well as when and how to pursue them are ultimately taken by individuals (in most cases the top leader), whose personal characteristics and values to a greater or lesser extent depending on the internal political structures and processes influence the content, direction and tempo of foreign policy. Byman and Pollack corroborate this point when they assert that "the goals, abilities and foibles of individuals are crucial to the intentions, capabilities, and strategies of a state" (Rourke, 2007:70).

Of particular interest is the decisive influence which top leaders exert on foreign policy in Africa irrespective of the system of government in place and the internal political configuration. This explains why foreign policies of African states tend to change dramatically whenever there is change in leadership and the tendencies to attribute successes and failures in foreign policy to the leaders who were in charge at the time they occur. In the specific case of Nigeria, the extent to which the personality of top leaders influence foreign policy cannot be overstated and traverses regime type. This has in recent times engaged the attention of scholars and keen observers of this trend to interrogate the phenomenon particularly in democratic regimes where democratic institutions and structures are supposed to serve as restraints or constraints to personal influence on public policy. It is in tune with this interest that this paper examines personality and Nigeria's foreign policy: A comparative analysis of Obasanjo's regimes as military Head of State and civilian President.

Conceptual Clarifications

Personality: the word personality originates from a Latin word *persona*, which means Mask. In ancient Latin-speaking world, the Mask was used to represent or typify a character rather than its conventional usage. The concept personality has so many definitions, for instance, the Britannica Concise Dictionary (2004) defines personality as the totality of an individual's behavioural and emotional characteristics. Personality embraces a person's moods, attitudes, opinions, motivations, and style of thinking, perceiving, speaking, and acting. It is part of what makes each individual distinct. Similarly, American Psychological Association (2011) conceives personality as individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving. One can go on and on with the various definitions, but for the purpose of this paper, Ryckman (2004) definition of personality as a "dynamic and organized set of characteristics possessed by a person that uniquely influences his or her cognitions, motivations, and behaviours in various situations" is relevant.

Nigerian Foreign Policy: the concept of foreign policy has no single universally accepted definition. Most of the definitions often reflect the background and context of the authors. In spite the varying definitions of foreign policy, some scholars have attempted to define the concept in a way that appeals to many. For instance, Kegley and Wittkopf (1999) define foreign policy as the action of states directed at the external environment and the conditions and factors which explain those actions. They added that these conditions can be both internal and external such as the nature and organization of the state, political configuration and interest groups, geographical location, economic strength, nature and preferences of the ruling class, national (if any) and the extant international environment.

There seems to be a growing consensus among scholars that in spite of the effect that all other domestic variables may have on foreign policies, the personal characteristics and preferences of top leaders often have an overriding influence. For instance, Akinboye (1999); Mingst (2008); Goldstein (1999); Kegley and Wittkopf (1999) and Rourke (2007) in their different works all agreed that the character and personal traits of the highest government official not only shape the way foreign policies are constructed but also affect the way they are implemented. More specifically, Kegley and Wittkopf (1999:70) argue that this tendency is reinforced "when we routinely attach names of leaders to policies as though the leaders were synonymous with the state itself". From the foregoing we can thus define Nigerian foreign policy as those objectives the country seeks to achieve in the international system and the domestic conditions that influence them particularly the personal characteristics and traits of the highest political leader.

Review of Related Literature

For centuries philosophers and political scientists have speculated about the relative influence of personality of individual leaders on public policies. This leads to the question as to whether leaders merely carry on the waves of history, or whether they actively create the circumstances of historical change through individual skills and force of will. When political scientists examine the presidency, some focus on the effect of the individual president and some emphasize the web of forces surrounding the presidents and their historical circumstances. Some argue that important decision makers are so tightly constrained by their roles that they have little discretionary power. Others argue that there often remains considerable room for individual preferences and styles to influence policy choices (Teclock, 1981:1). It is from the latter perspective that this literature review is anchored.

Kegley and Wittkopf (1999:66-7) did an extensive general work on personality and foreign policy. They argue that state action is nothing but the preferences, actions and initiatives of the highest political office holder. This explains why name of leaders are attached to policies that were initiated and implemented at the time they rule.

They argued that for the same reason also, failures and successes in foreign policy are ascribed to the leaders at the helm of affairs at the time they occurred. Consequently, the 'equation of U.S. foreign policy with Nixon Doctrine in the 1970s, the Regan Doctrine in 1980s, and the Clinton Doctrine in the 1990s' all attest to the role of personality in determining foreign policy. Kegley and Wittkopf (1999) assert that leader-driven policies are often irrational and such decisions are motivated by 'temptation, lack of self-control, anger, fear of getting hurt, religious conviction and bad habits. Similarly, Goldstein (1999:152) held that individuals are the only true actors in international relations. To him, decisions do not just occur; they are made by individuals on behalf of the state. Goldstein systematically analyzed how the U.S. dropped an atomic bomb in two cities in Japan and how the decisions that arrived at the military action against Japan in 1945 was solely the choice of President Harry S. Truman. Goldstein (1999) argued that decisions made by individual citizens may not carry much weight as they are taken one by one, but they create great force that shape world history.

For Rourke (2007) to understand the impact of personality on foreign policy, it is important to examine the leader's attitude about himself, about others and towards authority. He identified four categories of personality along "active-passive scale" and positive-negative scale". He argues that the active leaders are more innovative with policies while passive ones are more reactionary or reactors; and that those with positive personality are more tolerant of criticisms while negative leaders are more likely to feel upset by criticism. Rourke (2007) explains that while these four types of personalities have their shortcomings; most people would prefer the active-positive combination personality president and consider active-negative as worst. However, Rourke concludes that these personality types are on the whole determined by factors such as (a) physical and mental health (b) ego and ambition (c) political history and personal experience (d) perception and operational reality (Rourke, 2007:70-5).

Tetlock (1981) in his study on "Personality and Isolation" examine the extent to which "personality variables influence high level political decision" he contend that while some have argued that key decision makers are often tightly limited by rule governing the exercise of power which allows for little discretion, others favour the argument that there is considerable room for the preferences of leaders to affect and influence the policy choices of a state (Tetlock, 1981:737).

Similarly, Ziv (2008) identified two psychological factors which are important in explaining foreign policy orientation of leaders, namely; cognitive openness and cognitive complexity. For him, cognitive open leaders are receptive to new information and are prone to changing their beliefs than cognitively closed leaders. In the same vein, cognitively complex leaders recognize that distinct situation possess multiple dimensions and so are more likely to engage in adaptive behaviour than their cognitively simple counterparts. He used the cognitive theory to explain Shimon Peres of Israel cognitive structure and how it was instrumental to his ability to wield influence on Israeli foreign policy from 1953-1977. Richards (2008) did not hesitate to corroborate the views that leaders' personalities have very important influence on the foreign policy of their states. He compared the personalities of two European leaders-Tony Blair (Britain) and Jack Chirac (France) and examines how their different personality despite operating in similar environmental and historical background influenced the foreign policy each pursued in the Gulf War against Iraq in 1990 and 2003 respectively. While the former played important role in mobilizing international coalition against Iraq the latter acted contrarily. He attributed the variation in foreign policy behaviour of the two leaders to difference in their perception of reality.

Assessing the influence of personality traits on foreign policy attitude of German public opinion, Schoen (2007) argues that personality traits such as motivations, goals, and values have important effect on leaders' judgment and perception of external stimuli which in turn shape the leaders foreign policy opinion and attitude. He developed a taxonomy in which he identified five personality traits namely neuroticism, extroversion, openness, conscientiousness and agreeableness which play decisive roles in shaping individual characteristics and environmental perception of goals and response to external stimuli. Schoen (2007) concludes that the kind of personality an individual leader possesses determines his attitude towards foreign policy.

Comparatively, Schrodtt et al (2009) using discrete sequence pattern recognition examined the effect of personality, popularity and prosperity on Israeli Prime Ministers' strategy towards their Palestinian opponents from 1979-2008 and found that personality rather than popularity and prosperity had more profound effect on successive Israeli P.M's in their foreign policies towards Palestine. Their personality traits were instructive on whether they follow a procedural rule-based pattern of foreign policy or otherwise. However, the study also found that situational circumstance sometime force Israeli P.M's with different personality traits to act in a similar ways.

Khuhro and Chandio (2009) posit that in Third World countries, the charisma of leaders is important and vital in foreign policy process. The study illustrated the charismatic personality of Pakistani leader Z.A. Bhutto in reshaping the Pakistani foreign policy decision making process through bilateralism. Khuhro and Chandio (2009) identified three factors which influenced Z.A. Bhutto leadership style: (a) experience; (b) domestic structure; and (c) norms and values of society. Similarly, Von Doepp (2009) identifies leadership as the single most important factor that could lead to development in Africa. He observe that while the personal characteristic of African leaders have profound effect on policy choices, there however exist serious structural constraints on African leaders to make appropriate policy choices. He asserts that the circumstance under which leaders emerge and their official behaviours are all determined by ailing structures in Africa which serve as impediments to constructive foreign policy. He identified two criteria that can be used to assess a leader's official behaviour: (i) the overall character of the leader in relation to governance and development; and (ii) the official behaviour expected of the leader.

Methodology

To make a comparative analysis and fully appreciate the differences and similarities in Obasanjo's foreign policy behavior as military Head of State (1976-1979) and civilian President (1999-2007), it is imperative to adopt a schema developed by Margaret G. Hermann known as "Leadership Traits Analysis (LTA)". This "framework is one of the most widely used methods of assessing leadership characteristics" (Hermann, 2005:178-222). According to Yang (2011:1) the LTA framework translates key theories on cognitive psychology and personality into seven specific personality characteristics. They are: need for power, ethnocentrism, locus of control, conceptual complexity, self-confidence, distrust of others, and task/interpersonal emphasis. "The framework then uses those characteristics to construct detailed personality profiles" (Yang, 2011:1) of top national leaders in relation to the foreign policy styles they pursue. This personality profile was then categorized in to two groups of personality orientations. The first category consist of "leaders with high levels of nationalism, a strong belief in their ability to control events, a strong need for power, low levels of conceptual complexity and high levels of distrust of others" (Mingst, 2008:143). In the same vein, the second category include "leaders with low levels of nationalism, little belief in their ability to control events, high level of conceptual complexity, and low levels of distrust for others" (Mingst, 2008:143). Mingst argues that while the former "tend to developed an independent orientation to foreign affairs", the latter, "tend towards a participatory orientation in foreign affairs".

In this framework Margaret Hermann adopted the methodology of content analysis referred to as 'at-a-distance measurement' by analyzing and scoring "the contents of a leader's verbal material (public speeches, interviews, etc.)" in relations to the identified "personality characteristics and use that score to profile key leadership traits" (Yang, 2011). The reliability and validity of the LTA system has been tested through a series of studies with impressive results. Based on the leadership characteristics contained in the LTA framework, Keller suggests that leaders can be broadly categorized into two groups-those that respect constraints (i.e. constraint respecters) and those that challenge them (i.e. constraint challengers) (Keller, 2005:835-66). In a separate study, Keller examines 39 democratic leaders and 147 foreign policy crises and finds that the leaders classified as constraint challengers were more likely to use violence (and to use more extreme violent responses) than those classified as constraint respecters (Keller, 2005:205-32).

Thus, this paper adopts the LTA framework as well as the methodology of measurement at-a-distance based on content analysis. However, this paper employs parts of the first category of Hermann's personality classification scheme i.e. high levels of nationalism, a strong belief in their ability to control events, a strong need for power and low levels of conceptual complexity for the purpose of comparing foreign policy behaviours of Obasanjo as military Head of State and civilian President. Although, most studies that utilized the LTA compare separate personalities or analyze individual leaders' personality in specific regime, this study compares a single personality in two different regimes.

A Comparative Analysis of Obasanjo's Foreign Policy as Military Head of State (1976-1979) and Civilian President (1999-2007)

High Level of Nationalism

Taking Hermann's schema of personality characteristics of high level of nationalism, General Obasanjo in his rule from 1976-1979, pursued a foreign policy within the general Afro-centric thrust laid out in the immediate post-independence period.

However, what counts for mention is the dynamism, drive, vibrancy with which his foreign policies were prosecuted. As a military Head of State, he displayed a high level of nationalism. This nationalistic tendency can be discern from his uncompromising posture to issues of African liberation struggles from the yoke of colonialism. In 1979, General Obasanjo nationalized two British-owned corporation in Nigeria, the British Petroleum (BP) and the Barclay Bank because of what he perceived to be British continued support for the Apartheid regime in South Africa as well as its support for the puppet regime in Rhodesia. Obasanjo consistently opposed Western imperialism in Africa. At the domestic front, Obasanjo oversaw the creation of a new constitution for Nigeria and handed power to an elected former President Shehu Shagari. In doing so, he became the first military ruler in Nigeria's history to voluntarily step down in favour of a democratically-elected government. Describing the nationalistic posture of General Obasanjo, Aluko (2007:30) opines that "Obasanjo, as military Head of State during 1976-79... championed the freedom from colonialism of many African, particularly of South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia, etc., with money, men and materials. Nigeria became the haven for freedom fighters in Africa.

As a civilian President, Obasanjo continued to champion the course of Third World nations particularly Africa. He consistently and untiringly canvassed for the reversal of the abysmal socio-economic conditions in the Third World especially Africa, a role which no doubt rubbed off his personality as an important international statesman. His international campaign for debt cancellation and forgiveness for Third World countries is a case in point. As a result, "in 2005, creditors wrote off 60% (\$18 billion) of Nigeria's estimated \$30 billion in external debt to the Paris Club and other creditor nations" (Aluko 2007:28). Furthermore, Nigerian foreign reserve rose from \$2 billion in 1999 to \$43 billion on leaving office in 2007 (Ajetunmobi et al, 2011:313). In spite of president Obasanjo's avowed advocacy for African and by extension Third World development, it is worthy of note that his level of nationalism became diluted as a civilian president compared to his military era. Aluko (2007:31) corroborates this view when he asserts that:

Since the second coming of Obasanjo and the [People's Democratic Party] PDP regime in 1999, reverse nationalistic stance has become the order of the day. Rather than pursue nationalistic economic and political policies to the benefit of Nigerians, the regime has completely sold out to the Western imperialistic nations, to the extent that Nigeria, today, is less independent, economically and politically, than it was in 1960 or in 1979.

This, for many observers is not unconnected with corruption and Obasanjo's increased penchant for power that became increasingly manifest under his democratic rule. At the domestic level, corruption became the order of the day and continued unabated as his government fight against corruption became highly politicized. His government was highly criticized for abuse of power, flagrant disregard for due process and the rule of law. Obasanjo conducted foreign policy as a personal affair with brazen disregard for other foreign policy making institutions, like National Assembly, Ministry of foreign Affairs etc.

Belief in One's Ability to Control Event and Self-Confidence

General Obasanjo as a military Head of State displayed tremendous belief in his own ability to control events. Leaders who believe that they can influence what happens in the world are generally more active in the policy making process. Leaders high in this belief are less likely to delegate authority (Hermann, 2002:14). He displayed this personality characteristic even more visibly when he courageously took tough stands and steps against Anglo-American interests in Africa in reaction to their imperialistic policies in Africa which culminated in the eventual nationalization of two British-owned corporations in Nigeria. Similarly, Jubrin (2004:40) observe that "General Obasanjo's total commitment to the liberation of Africa and the eradication of apartheid led to his bold and timely decision to nationalize the British Petroleum (BP) in Nigeria in August 1979".

General Obasanjo's self-confidence and belief in his ability to control events is evident in his address at the 1978 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit in Khartoum as he told the Soviet Union that "having been invited to assist in the liberation struggle and the consolidation of independence, they should not overstay their welcome". Such brave and courageous foreign policy choices not only propelled Nigeria to the forefront of anti-colonial and anti-Apartheid struggle in Africa, but also revealed Obasanjo as a tough personality to be reckoned with. Throughout his rule as a military Head of State, he never hesitates to take strong position at international forum especially when the interest of Africa is at stake. Foreign policy under General Obasanjo was swift and never time wasting as Fafowora notes "the regime was generally impatient with bureaucratic procedure and often acted with dispatch" (Akinboye, 1999:375).

He displayed incredible level of confidence and pursued a dynamic foreign policy that can be described as independent. Jubrin (2004:41) affirmed that under the Obasanjo's military administration, "there was a more concerted move towards greater independence in foreign policy making than the previous regime". He related freely, confidently and courted the friendship of great world leaders. It will be recalled that it was during his reign as military Head of State that a serving President of the United States (Jimmy Carter) visited Nigeria for the first time.

As a civilian President, it was never in doubt that he (Obasanjo) was fully in-charge as he established a monopoly over foreign policy affairs; Obasanjo overshadowed his foreign ministers often leaving little or no role for them. Admittedly, he surrounded himself with a number of advisers, including the Presidential Advisory Committee on Foreign Relations and gave the impression that he consulted. But it was quite clear that he believed himself to be an institutional centre of excellence in foreign policy (Akindele, 2006:196). Describing President Obasanjo's resentful belief in his ability to control events in the public domain, Nwosu quoted in Akindele (2006:196) bluntly depicted his attitude as "a know-all stance" which has earned him a lot of criticism of possessing a "messianic complex". It must be appreciated that throughout Obasanjo's civil rule (1999-2007), he exhibited a domineering attitude in both domestic and foreign policies. Institutional constraints that are typical in democratic regime couldn't check Obasanjo's personal dispositions on policy matters.

For instance, following the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling in 2002 on the disputed Bakassi Peninsula, that awarded the territory to the Republic of Cameroon, President Obasanjo went ahead to cede the disputed territory to the Republic Cameroon on August 14, 2006, without prior approval of the National Assembly. Two weeks later, the Nigerian Senate approved a motion declaring the transfer illegal because it had not been ratified by the National Assembly (Ploch, 2008:20). Similarly, Akinola (2003) assert that despite the aversion by Nigerians about the grant of asylum to Charles Taylor, former President of Liberia, President Obasanjo went ahead to grant the asylum in disregard to dissenting public opinions and without recourse to the National Assembly. The influence of President Obasanjo's personality on foreign policy during his democratic rule surpasses even those witnessed under successive military regimes in Nigeria including his brief interregnum from 1976-1979. To buttress this point, a This Day editorial observes that:

There is no doubt that role aggrandizement on the part of the executive arm of government has been a characteristic feature of Nigeria's diplomatic practice and tradition. But, under this Fourth Republic, Obasanjo seem to have personalized Nigeria's diplomacy in a way that no previously-elected Head of State ever did (Akindele, 2006:196).

In a similar vein, President Obasanjo's characteristic strong belief in his ability to control events has in many respects contributed to his contempt for constituted authority and due processes. His eight years civil democratic rule was replete of countless cases of disregard for the rule of law and constitutionalism with impunity in both foreign and domestic issues. At the domestic front, his regime witness high incidence of disregard for court injunctions and rulings with impunity. As Tinubu (2009:5) observes "his style was gruff and dismissive. He barely disguised his contempt for democratic finesse. He openly and unrepentantly subverts due process... With his gruff and sour temper, he was best suited to manage a 'democratic' dispensation run on military temper". Obasanjo's little regard for constitutionalism and the rule of law may not be unconnected with his background as an Army General and former Head of State who is used to giving orders and causing subordinates to obey without obeying any himself. President Obasanjo found it extremely difficult adjusting to the prying and probing democratic environment as a head of a democratic government, a situation that have always pitched him in conflict with the National Assembly.

Need for Power and Influence

Need for power and influence indicates a concern for establishing, maintaining, or restoring one's power or in other words, the desire to control, influence, or have an impact on other groups (2002:15). General Obasanjo as a military Head of State displayed strong need or quest for power. He took Nigeria to a position of reckoning in Africa and world affairs and positioned himself as one of the powerful, if not the most powerful personality in African politics at that time. Although, General Obasanjo was respected for being the first military Head State to willingly cede power to a democratically elected government in Nigeria, he courted the friendship of strong and powerful nations of the world such as the United States of America, United Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR), Italy to mention a few in order to extend his political influence.

Table 1: Benchmarking Obasanjo's personality Traits against Democratic Expectations

Responsiveness to Constraints	Openness to Information	Obasanjo's personality Trait	Democracy Behavioural Expectation
Challenges Constraints	Closed to information	Expansionistic (Focus is on expanding one's power and influence)	Evangelistic (Focus is on persuading others to accept one's message and join one's cause)
Challenges Constraints	Openness to Information	Incremental (Focus is on maintaining one's maneuverability and flexibility while avoiding the obstacles that continually try to limit both)	Charismatic (Focus is on achieving one's agenda by engaging others in the process and persuading them to act)

Source: Adapted with modification from Hermann (2002)

He pursued an internationalist agenda that connected him so well with world leaders and international organizations where he played notable roles. It was during his reign as a military Head of State that Jimmy Carter, then American President visited Nigeria, the first serving American President ever to visit Nigeria. He played the power game at the slightest opportunity; he took sharp and tough stand against Western imperial interests in Africa as well as the eventual nationalization of British-owned companies in Nigeria.

As a civilian President, Obasanjo, just like in his days as military Head of State played a dominant role in African politics and world affairs. Obasanjo's quest for power is easily revealed by his overshadowing influence on domestic and foreign policies as well as his domineering personality. It was his forward personality on international affairs particularly as it affects Africa and the Third World that earned him the recognition of an international statesman. He maintained and indeed extensively exhibited internationalist posture. This personality trait, helped tremendously in quickening the reversal of Nigeria's pariah status that was acquired during General Sani Abacha's authoritarian military rule (1993-1998). He undertook frequent and numerous foreign trips to many parts of the world with the conviction that such would attract foreign direct investments for the purpose of catalyzing national development. Critics of President Obasanjo contended that the latter's foreign trips for this purposes had been too excessive (Akindele, 2006:193). Records from official sources as presented by Akindele (2006:193) shows that as at mid-August 2002, just barely three years and three months into his rule, "the President travelled out of the country for one hundred and thirteen times..., and that, as at 10 June 2002, he had been out of Nigeria altogether for a period of 340 days-almost a year.

President Obasanjo's irrepressibly aptitude for 'shuttle diplomacy' as his government calls' it, is not unconnected with his desires to be well connected internationally and locally so as to enable him exert and command political influence globally. Nonetheless, his numerous foreign shuttles did not only contribute to the reversal of Nigeria's image crisis but also propelled the country to a position of reckoning in international policy circle. It will be recalled that it was during his reign that serving United States Presidents Bill Clinton and Bush Junior all visited Nigeria. Indeed, Obasanjo's internationalist posture rubbed off his personality as not just a famous and important African leader but also a powerful international personality just the same way his domineering personality rubbed off on every single domestic issue. President Obasanjo's quest for political power and influence manifested even more frantically towards the end of his second term in office, when he and some of his advisers made desperate but failed attempt to amend the Nigerian constitution to enable him contest for a third term in office.

Low Complexity

Obasanjo as a military Head of State pursued a very dynamic and active foreign policy, but such foreign policies demonstrated low conceptual complexity. Scholars have linked conceptual complexity to a leader's attention and sensitivity to information from his or her surrounding policy environment. Leaders who are low in conceptual complexity trust their intuition and often are willing to go with that option which presents itself first. Action is preferable to thinking, planning, or searching for more information (Herman, 2002:23). According to Yang (2011:424):

During policy deliberations, high-complexity leaders demand more information and are likely to engage in a relatively broad and inclusive information search. They generally welcome and might proactively seek alternative viewpoints, In contrast, low-complexity leaders demand less information, are less sensitive to environmental contexts, and do not welcome input from outside actors. Low-complexity leaders operate according to a previously established and strongly held set of beliefs. They accept and process information that fits their existing mental framework and are generally unresponsive to alternative viewpoints and discrepant information.

Cottam and Preston argue that Low-complexity leaders usually surround themselves with like-minded advisors and tend to equate bad news or disagreement with disloyalty. In this environment, policy advisors are often hesitant to deliver bad news or offer dissenting opinions. Such reticence can lead to 'group think' and other group decision problems (Yang, 2011). Obasanjo's low conceptual complexity score suggests that he is not attuned to contextual information and his regime's foreign policies in most cases do not appear to be well thought-out in many respects. He surrounded himself with advisers who are mostly appointed on the basis of a client-patron relationship and cannot advise him objectively especially when such advice is opposed to his beliefs and convictions because such may be considered as disloyalty. Although, his government's foreign policies with respect to the liberation of the remaining African countries from colonial rule and the Apartheid regime in South Africa were dynamic and aggressive they fall short of laying down a coherent principle in terms of defining the ideological basis to guide Nigeria in the prosecution of her foreign policy.

This lack of clear focus in General Obasanjo's foreign policy was to be found in Nigeria's entanglement in superpower ideological rivalry on the side of the USSR by declaring support for the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), "accusatory and obstructive actions against the United States' stance vis-à-vis that of the Soviet Union" (Chukwu, 1998:17), even as he avowedly professed a non-aligned foreign policy. Similarly, despite the exacerbation of Anti-American posture in Nigerian foreign policy after the assassination of General Murtala because of Nigeria's suspicion of alleged U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) complicity in the incident as well as the "bellicose posture in Anglo-Nigerian relations" (Chukwu, 1998:17). Chukwu (1998:17) identified some fundamentally contradictory steps in Obasanjo's foreign policy behaviours as follows:

- (a) the award of a staggering contract for the modernization of the Nigerian telephone system to the Nigerian subsidiary of the American ITT;
- (b) endorsement in February 1976 of the pro-American Ricks Institute in Liberia;
- (c) the refusal of Nigeria to identify with the progressive and avowedly anti-imperialist states of Africa; and
- (d) Nigerian support for the Anglo-American proposals on Zimbabwe.

The above highlights a great deal of inconsistency in the foreign policy orientation of the Obasanjo's military government which throws up a lot of questions about the sincerity of the regime's Non-aligned posture as well as its anti-colonial and anti-imperialist commitments.

As civilian President, much did not change with respect to the articulation and coherence of Nigerian foreign policy. Just like his military era, his foreign policy was based on pursuing an internationalist agenda based on the firm but elusive belief that the answer to Nigeria's developmental problems lies in the attraction of foreign investment to Nigeria. President Obasanjo's thus spent a significant part of his tenure traveling all over the world canvassing for foreign investment at the expense of fixing domestic infrastructural deficits and other problems such as poor and disarticulated transport system, epileptic electricity supply, insecurity and micro-economic instability that are critical incentives for attracting foreign investment. Obasanjo's lack of analytical depth in foreign policy is heightened by his zero dispositions to advise even though he had many advisers'.

For Tinubu (2009:5) Obasanjo has “an anti-democratic temper, with penchant for viewing dissenting views as enemies to be crushed”. For example, It will be recalled in 2002, when disagreement brewed between President Obasanjo and Chief Audu Ogbah (then PDP National Chairman) over what should be the best solution for the Anambra State crisis (following alleged abduction of Governor Chris Ngige by his godfather Andy Uba both of PDP) led to the insistence by President Obasanjo that Chief Ogbah must vacate his office as the National Chairman of the ruling party.

President Obasanjo’s disinclination for alternative views and his know-it-all attitude contributed significantly to the low level of conceptual complexity in the articulation of foreign policy by his regime and perhaps even more importantly account for the abysmal performance in terms of engineering development and attracting the needed foreign investment that his government so desperately pursued. In fact, for the eight years of President Obasanjo’s rule, the two most outstanding achievements in foreign policy was the partial debt cancellation granted Nigeria by her external debtors and the reintegration of Nigeria into the committee of Nations following the end of military rule. The lack of analytical and conceptual depth in Obasanjo’s foreign policies both as a military Head of State and civilian President stem partly and largely too from the fact that foreign policy decision making was a one man show strictly determined by Obasanjo’s perception and judgment of event about domestic and external realities.

Conclusion

This paper attempted a comparative analysis of the effect of Obasanjo’s personality on Nigeria’s foreign policies during his two different rule as military Head of State (1976-1979) and civilian President (1999-2007) using the LTA framework. The study found that under both regimes, Obasanjo’s personality had an overbearing influence on foreign policy decision making. Although, military rule is naturally more amenable to personal rule, this study found that Obasanjo’s personality had more influence on Nigerian foreign policy as a civilian President than as military Head of State. This is partly explained by the grief circumstance surrounding his emergence as Head of State and the precarious situation of frequent military coups in Africa at that time compared to his long and relatively secured reign as a civilian President (in a neo-patrimonial democratic system) allowing many of his personality traits to manifest in full.

In spite of the existence of democratic structures and institutions which ideally should serve as constraints, his personality had overbearing and domineering influence on both domestic and foreign policies. Obasanjo exhibited incredible level of self-confidence and belief on his ability to control of events; great penchant and quest for power and intolerant of criticism thus monopolizing the foreign policy domain as his personal estate at the expense of all other institutions and the Nigerian public. The personalization of foreign policy affairs by Obasanjo both as military and civilian ruler prevented the articulation of a viable and coherent foreign policy and limited socio-economic gains considering the time, men and material committed as well as opportunities that existed during his two different regimes.

Thus, Nigeria’s foreign policy during Obasanjo’s two different eras can best be described as a one man show, largely driven by his worldview of domestic and foreign politics. Therefore, for Nigeria to operate an objective foreign policy, concerted effort should be made by stakeholders in ensuring the institutionalization of the process through the review of relevant laws, improving and strengthening legislative oversights, good governance and the adoption of best practices.

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