

**Nigeria's quest for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council, 1960-2022**

---

**Iyala Okara Godwin**

Department of Political Science  
University of Calabar,  
Calabar, Nigeria.

**Ellah Timothy Ogbang**

Department of History and International Studies  
University of Calabar  
Calabar, Nigeria.

**Abstract**

*This study is an attempt to interrogate Nigeria's quest for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. As at 1st October, 1960, Nigeria got the legal credentials to conduct both her bilateral and multilateral diplomacy with Sovereign States and International Organizations respectively. The attainment of full independence as a Sovereign State then certainly had posed enormous challenges, as well as offered Nigeria the opportunities for the use of foreign policy to advance and protect her interests in political, social, economic and diplomatic fields of endeavours. As a new Sovereign State, it was to also contribute to the Country's image in the International system, thus shaping her values and preferences, and participation with other States in the management of the global order craving for peace, security, human welfare etc. A finding in the course of the study has it that the Security Council, which is a major arm of the UN, has over the years been dominated by five permanent members known as the Big Five. They are Britain, France, United States, Russia and China. Scholars who had over time investigated the contributions of member states towards achievement of the objectives of the organization believe that, Nigeria's contributions toward the growth of the Organization in the areas of peace keeping, peace building, humanitarian intervention etc, should be considered to join the Big Five as Security Council member. The methodology of the study was basically historical, using basically a secondary method of data gathering which include: textbooks, journal articles, newspapers articles and magazines etc.*

**Keywords:** United Nations, Security Council, Nigeria, Permanent Seat, Peace Keeping

**Introduction**

This study is an attempt to underscore Nigeria's quest for a permanent seat in the United Nations in the Security Council. At independence in October 1960, Nigeria got the legal status to conduct both her bilateral foreign relations with similar sovereign states and her multilateral diplomatic relations through international organizations. "The transition to full independence as a sovereign nation certainly posed enormous challenges, as well as offered opportunities for the use of foreign policy to enhance and protect the nation's interest in social, economic and diplomatic fields, contribute to the shaping of the international system in the image of the country's value preference, and participate with



another states in the management of global order crying for peace, security and human welfare”<sup>1</sup>.

Nevertheless, let it be noted that no international organization provides a better and more appropriate theater for multilateral diplomacy for the realization of the above mentioned broad objectives than the United Nations. Not surprisingly, one of the first major foreign policy actions of the former Tafawa Balewa regime in Nigeria was to seek the United Nation membership. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 1960, Nigeria became UN’s 99<sup>th</sup> member state at the 15<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly, and has over the years remained a committed, active and reliable participant in moving of the organization’s activities<sup>2</sup>. And on a rather prophetic words, the Tunisian delegation which, on behalf of the independent African states then, sponsored Nigeria’s admission to the UN, noted that, Nigeria is destined to become, “a catalytic element of liberty for the less favoured African people and a stabilizing factor in Africa”<sup>3</sup>.

Furthermore, in the past fifty years of Nigeria’s membership of the UN, Nigeria has been the arrow head in the fight against the obnoxious apartheid policy in South Africa; she has also played an active role in various UN peacekeeping operations, as well as initiating many regional peace keeping operations to which the UN later gave support. Nigeria has actively supported the call for the reform of the UN system, clearly pointing out the unhelpful contradiction between UN’s call for political stability of the world over through democratization, on one hand and the reluctance of the major powers in the UN to accept the need to democratize the UNSC on the other hand. The Nigeria’s call for the democratization and openness in the decision-making process of the United Nations Security Council in particular is also a call for the application of the principle of “Charity should begin at home”<sup>4</sup>. It is on this note that this study is interrogating the quest for Nigerian permanent membership of the UN Security Council.

Nevertheless, according to an erstwhile Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, “the greatest source of strength enjoyed by the UN stems from its universality of membership and the comprehensive scope of its mandates”<sup>5</sup>. It would be correct to align with the former UN scribe saying that, the UN quite obviously parades the most prominent, glamorous, outwardly transparent and partially democratic diplomacy. This explains why, for different reasons neither the most powerful and influential nor the weakest and least influential sovereign state can care freely and consistently ignore UN arena in the conduct of its foreign policy and management of its external relations. Nevertheless, Nigeria, falling among one of the above mentioned States, has so demonstrated such membership in the last fifty years for it to become a permanent member of the Security Council and that is what is prompting this study.

---

<sup>1</sup> Akindele, R. A. Nigeria in the United Nations. An Overview in B.A. Akinterinwa (ed) Nigeria and the U.N. Security Council. Ibadan: Vantage Pub. Ibadan, 2005, 11.

<sup>2</sup> Akinterinwa, B.A. Nigeria and the United Nations Security Council. Ibadan: Vantage Pub, 2005, xx iii.

<sup>3</sup> Adebo, S. My Unforgettable Years. Lagos: Macmillan Publishers 1983, 23.

<sup>4</sup> Akinterinwa, B.A. xx iii.

<sup>5</sup> Annan, K. UN Report, 2003, 3.

### Origin of United Nations Organisation

The United Nations is a huge and imposing theatre of conflict of interests, of competition of values and of cooperation in search of solution to common international problems. Given the potentially anarchical nature of the international system in which the organisation operates and the sovereign equality of all the states actors, the UN is arguably the most sophisticated political technology mankind has ever built and developed to maintain International peace and security<sup>6</sup>. The organisation is a body that was set up at the end of the Second World War as a means of preventing further wars. It succeeded a similar organization, the League of Nations, which had been set up after First World War as a result of the ineffectiveness of the League of Nations. Nevertheless, "from discussion that had already taken place between the major powers during the intervening period between the two wars, it became easy for a draft charter to be presented to delegates of the then fifty-one nation states at a United Nations Conference. The then conference took place between 25<sup>th</sup> April and 26<sup>th</sup> of June 1945, at San Francisco in the United States of America. The UNO then formally came into existence on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October 1945.

### Objectives of the United Nations Organisation

According to the charter establishing the United Nations Organization, the objective of the Organisation among others include:

- To maintain international peace and security;
- To develop friendly relations among nations based on the principles of equal right and self-determination of peoples;
- To cooperate in solving international economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems and in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedom;
- To serve as the avenue for cooperation and harmonisation of member states for the realization of these objectives<sup>7</sup>.

Nevertheless, the essential principles that guide the activities of the UN are as follows: -

- The expectations that member states would meet their charter obligation in good faith;
- The expectations that member states would settle international dispute by peaceful means consistent with the maintenance of international peace and security and justice;
- The expectations that members states would abstain from threats or use of force against other state;

---

<sup>6</sup> Akindele, R. A. Nigeria at the United Nations: An Overview in B. A.Akinterinwa Nigeria and the United Nations Security Council. Ibadan: Vantage Publishers 2005, 22.

<sup>7</sup> UN Charter 1995.

- The expectations that members states would support the UN in all its action under the charter and that no member state would support any member state against whom the UN is taking The expectations that the UN would ensure that states that are not members of UN would act preventive or enforcement actions in a manner which is consistent with the principles guaranteeing the maintenance of international peace and security.
- The expectations that the UN should not intervene in matters which are considered to be within the domestic jurisdiction of a member state<sup>8</sup>.

A critical study of the workings of the UN under its charter and obligations, and principles has demonstrated that since the last fifty years, the organisation has drastically not only promoted and pursued international peace and cooperation, but it has evolve the concept of peace keeping and peace building among nations and communities at war with each other. The organization has stood to create an enabling environment for the protection and promotion of human rights in the international system. It has also attempted to create an enabling environment to the alleviation of socioeconomic development in the most disadvantaged states of the world. "Since the end of Cold War, the UN has provided more impetus to the drive by member states to democratize. The UN has succeeded in creating sanctions and punishing for member states whose actions are inconsistent to its charter obligation"<sup>9</sup>.

Oyediran had opined that, the aim and objectives of the UN organisation are clearly stated out in the preamble to the charter of the organisation, and further elaborated upon in the body of the charter itself". They are as follows:

- 
- To save succeeding generations from the scourge of war;
  - To reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and of nations, large and small;
  - To promote social progress and better standards of living;
  - To practice to tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours;
  - To unite the strength of member nations to maintain international peace and security.
  - "To promote the economic and social advancement of people"<sup>10</sup>.

---

<sup>8</sup>Akinbobola, A. International Organization in R. Anifowose & F.C. Enemuoh (ed.) Elements of Politics. Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Pub, Lagos. 1999. 350.

<sup>9</sup>Akinbobola, A. 350.

<sup>10</sup>Oyediran, O. (ed.). The United Nations Organisation. Lagos: Longman Books Ikeja. 1990. 248.

### Structure of the UN

On the establishment of the United Nations Organization, it was from the offset structured into six divisions namely:-

- The security council;
- The general assembly;
- The economic and social council;
- The trusteeship council;
- The international court of justice;
- The secretariat<sup>11</sup>.

In addition, a number of inter-governmental agencies are related to the UN. Amongst these are the following: -

- The International Labour Organisation;
- Food and Agricultural Organisation of the UN;
- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation;
- World Health Organisation (WHO)<sup>12</sup>.

This section will further attempt to briefly define the six basic organs of the United Nations Organisation.

### The Security Council

The Security Council is the most important organ of the UN. It is made up of fifteen members with five permanent members to include USA, Russia, Britain, France and China. While the remaining ten seats on the council are allocated to the continents, two of the seats are allocated to Western Europe, two to Asia, two to Africa, two to the Americas and one to the Arab World<sup>13</sup>. For a Security Council decision to be made, none of the five permanent members of the council must be opposed to it. They must either support the proposal or abstain from voting. A "no" vote by any of the permanent member means that the function or proposal has failed and no decision can be taken on it by the council. This is what is usually referred as the "veto power". To this end, questions have continued to be raised on whether such power is appropriate for an organisation that claims to recognize the equality and sovereignty of nations, large and small. The Security Council considers and takes action on any matter that might impinge on global peace and security. The council appoints the secretary General and recommends such to the General Assembly. It elects Justices of the International Court of Justice, in conjunction with the General

---

<sup>11</sup>UN Charter 1995.

<sup>12</sup>UN Charter 1995.

<sup>13</sup>Anifowose, R. The United Nations as a tool for conflict prevention. Lagos: University of Lagos Seminar Paper, 1998.

assembly, and recommends a new Nation to the General Assembly before such Nation can be granted membership of the United Nations.

### **The General Assembly**

The UN general assembly is largely a “talk shop” like most scholars may refer to it. It is the principal organ of the UN and is divided into seven committees. The general assembly meets once in a year for about three months, a meeting which tends to run from the third week of September to the last week of December yearly. Nevertheless, emergency sessions can be held. The General Assembly deliberates on all issues that affect humanity, except for peace and security which are the preserve of the Security Council. The General Assembly has the power of the purse, because it is the body that approves the budget of the organization. The General Assembly, in conjunction with the Security Council, serves as an elective body for Organs and position in the UN systems<sup>14</sup>.

### **The Economic and Social Council**

The Economic and Social Council is made up of 54 members of the General Assembly. The Organ coordinates the activities of the various Commissions and Agencies like the Economic Commission for Africa, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Health Organization (WHO),<sup>15</sup> etc.

### **The Trusteeship**

This Organ was initially set up to oversee the administration of the mandated territories. These territories were taken from Germany and Italy at the end of World War I and attached to other countries under the supervision of the League of Nations. These territories were passed on to the UN as trust territories. The Trusteeship Council is made up of permanent members of the Security Council who are at the time not administering any Trust territories, as well as other members elected for three year term by the general assembly. The Trusteeship Council works toward the social, economic, and political development of the territories until the attainment of independence. The council later served as a forum for decolonization process and is today irrelevant<sup>16</sup>.

### **The International Court of Justice**

The International Court of Justice is made up of fifteen distinguished Jurists, representing various legal systems of the world. They are elected by both the Security Council and the General Assembly. Their appointment is for nine years. The ICJ is the organ of the UNO; it provides legal advice to the other Organs and Agencies of the Organisation. Its member States of the UN agrees to bring their conflict before the International Court; the Court acts as a Judicial Court for such

---

<sup>14</sup> UN Charter 1995.

<sup>15</sup> UN Charter 1995.

<sup>16</sup> UN Charter 1995.

conflicts. Nevertheless, the decisions of the Court in this respect are however, not binding on the parties to the conflict. This is because there is no UN force to implement such judgment and the Security Council is, until recently, never in agreement to the extent of deciding to enforce decisions of the International Court<sup>17</sup>.

### **The Secretariat**

This is an Organ of the UN that coordinates the day to day activities of the Organisation. It is made up of a number of appointed International Civil Servants under an elected Official referred to as the Secretary General. The Secretariat undertakes all the paper works required for the administration of the UN, it provides everything about the Organisation. The Secretary General, in his capacity as the Head of the Secretariat, presents an annual report on the state of the world to the General Assembly. The Secretary General may also bring to the notice of the UN any issue that may threaten world peace. The Secretary General can also insert any item on the agenda of the General Assembly meetings and may embark on good office mission to tense areas of the world with the aim of bringing peace to such region<sup>18</sup>.

### **Nigeria's Membership of the United Nations**

On October 1<sup>st</sup> 1960, Nigeria got the legal credentials to conduct both her bilateral and multilateral diplomacy with Sovereign States and International Organizations respectively. The transition to full independence as a Sovereign State then certainly had posed enormous challenges, as well as offered the Country opportunities for the use of foreign policy to advance and protect her interests in social, economic and diplomatic fields, contribute to the shaping of the international system in the image of the country's value preference, and participation with other States in the management of the global order crying for peace, security and human welfare. According to Akindele ".... no international organisation provides a better and more appropriate theatre for multilateral diplomacy for the realization of these objectives than the United Nations"<sup>19</sup>.

Nevertheless one major foreign policy action of the former Prime Minister of Nigeria, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's government was to seek the membership of the United Nations. This could be recalled when Adebo recalled that, "there was no question of a challenge to Nigeria's qualification for admission<sup>20</sup>. On the contrary, the practically unanimous opinion in all circles in the Organisation was that if ever there was a most welcome application this was it. Thus, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 1960, Nigeria was admitted to become the United Nations 99<sup>th</sup> Member State during the 15<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly, and has over the years remained a committed, active and reliable participant in many of the Organisation's activities<sup>21</sup>.

---

<sup>17</sup>UN Charter 1995

<sup>18</sup> UN Charter, 1995.

<sup>19</sup> Akindele, R. A., 10.

<sup>20</sup> Akindele, R. A., 10.

<sup>21</sup> Akindele, R. A., 10.

Notwithstanding, like every UN member State, Nigeria has, as expected, established a permanent mission to the UN in New York to enhance the operation and coordination for her diplomatic activities in the world. Nigeria's successive Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives to the UN have usually been experienced and well informed Professionals with sterling credentials that command respect. Nigeria's first Permanent Representative to the UN was Mohammed Ngileruma who served from mid-December 1960 to May 1961. He was later succeeded by Simeon Adebo (1962-1967). Others that came later to head Nigeria's permanent mission in the UN were Edwin Ogbu (1975-1979), Akporode B. Clark (June 1979-August 1981), Yusuf Maitama Sule (1981-1983), Ishaya S. Audu (1983-1984), Joe N. Garba (1984-1989), Ibrahim Gambari (1990-1999), Arthur Mbanefo (1999-2003), Alhaji Aminu Wali (2004), Ibrahim Gambari, Prof. Joy Ogwu, and Mr. Abiodun Richard Adejola. It should at this point be noted that, "both in Abuja and New York, the machinery for the organization, administration and conduct of Nigeria's multilateral diplomacy has over the years been strengthened and streamlined to provide efficient services to all multilateral diplomatic posts, particularly in Geneva, New York and Vienna where UN activities are largely concentrated.

As a member of the UN, Nigeria's diplomatic behaviour has been grounded in the firm belief that the search for world peace which trivializes the issue of justice peripheralizes the imperative of development inevitably lacks a solid foundation, and is consequently bound to collapse. Perhaps, most importantly, it has been built upon respect for and commitment to the rules of international law. Quite understandably, in jungle arena of international politics where the age old notion that 'might is power', lingers on and dies hardly, one expects greater instinctive commitment to the rules of international law from small and comparatively weak States like Nigeria and other underdeveloped Countries than from the more powerful States in their foreign policy behaviours.

### **Nigeria and the Reforming of the United Nations Organisation**

Since the inception of the UN in 1945, only once has there been a formal Constitutional amendment, which is not only to expand the membership of the Security Council from 11 to 15, and the Economic and Social Council from 18-27, and then to 54 but also to increase from 7 to 9 the number of affirmative votes required for valid Security Council decision to include the concurring votes of the permanent members. These constitutional amendments which were supported by Nigeria came into effect in 1965. Nevertheless, the discussion on the UN reforms has been ongoing for some time now; it was not until more recently that the question moved up to the top of UN agenda at beginning of the new millennium (2000). According to Akindele, "the first track of reforms, drawn up by the Secretary General, deals with reforms in the management structure of the UN Secretariat, such as administrative rationalization, merging and integration of related institutional structures, creation of the post of Deputy Secretary General, reduction of the UN work force by about 1000, establishment of a Revolving Credit Fund with an initial capital of US\$1billion and the creation of a cabinet-style Senior Management Group"<sup>22</sup>. Nevertheless, the above mentioned administrative reforms do not need

<sup>22</sup> Akindele, R. A. Nigeria at the United Nations, 22.



constitutional amendments, but Nigeria welcomed them and further warned that the UN will not be strengthened if reforms only concentrate on cost effectiveness, efficiency and better coordination and that in shedding manpower load, consideration should be given to concerns of regions, particularly Africa, which are grossly underrepresented in the top ranking post in the Secretariat.

In Nigeria's observation, the second track of reforms on the restructuring of Nigeria and the Organization should be as follows:-

Firstly, the clear recognition to reform the UNSC membership, including its permanent membership, having in mind the expansion in the membership of the Organization since 1945 and more importantly, the last time the UNSC membership was increased for about forty years back.

Secondly, like most UN member States, Nigeria draws attention to the fact that expansion of membership as well as a more equitable and Regional-balanced representation on the Council is bound to improve the democratic profile, legitimacy-standing of the council which has the primary responsibility of the maintenance of peace and security. Ironically, as Nigeria's *Daily Times* Edition would have this to say:-

"The membership of the Security Council indeed posed the biggest paradox of the time, namely that those who are weeping louder than the bereaved, calling for democracy in other Countries, cannot see the need to democratize the UN to ensure that all the free nations of the world conduct their affairs in an atmosphere devoid of bullying and condescending inequality"<sup>23</sup>.

The above query is to major powers that have dominated the Security Council opposing an extension of the veto power to prospective permanent members of an enlarged Security Council.

Thirdly, Nigeria's call for a readjustment of power and responsibility between the General Assembly and the Security Council in order to strengthen the capacity of the former, the parliament of the world- in the management of the world order.

Fourthly, Nigeria may have been advocating the retention of the veto power, it nevertheless seek to limit the scope of its use strictly to matters partaking to the maintenance of peace and security. Here, Nigeria considers it appropriate that two permanent seats on the enlarged Security Council should be reserved for Africa, which has 54 of UN's 191 member states.

On the above note, Nigeria, through different fora, has sent out signals indicating interest to occupy one of the will-be seats to be allocated to the African Continent. Among Nigeria's credentials for a permanent seat in the Security Council are: -

---

<sup>23</sup> Daily Times. Lagos, 10<sup>th</sup> September, 1994.

It is a fact that she has served in different occasions: 1966-67, 1978-79 and 1994-95 as a non-permanent member of the enlarged UN Security Council and has consequently acquired considerable experiences through her participation in the management of the world order at highest political level within the UN. The incontrovertible evidence that she has over the years emerged as a Regional heavy weight on the Continent of Africa; there is no doubt that a permanent seat for Nigeria in an enlarged Security Council is no doubt certain.

### **Nigeria's Eligibility for the UNSC Permanent Seat**

In the views of Akinterinwa, "Nigeria's bid for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council is legitimate, it is the most credible and that can be truly representative of African and Black interests in the world. The African and world environmental conditioning are favourable to Nigeria's permanent membership of the UNSC"<sup>24</sup>. Nevertheless, more importantly, Nigeria's decision to be a permanent member of UNSC is deliberate and has taken into account all the challenges especially military, human resources, and financial wise. In the event of an expanded UNSC, Nigeria is currently the most eligible African candidate for a UNSC permanent seat for many reasons. Among these is Nigeria's foreign policy which is predicated on the right of Black People in the world and the promotion of African cooperation and Unity and also the promotion of world peace and peaceful resolution of crisis and conflicts. The former Prime Minister of Nigeria, Late Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, made these principles very clear in his address to the National Parliament on the 20<sup>th</sup> August, 1960 and to the United Nations General Assembly on the accession of Nigeria's admission as the 99<sup>th</sup> member of the UN on 7<sup>th</sup> October, 1960. "It is on the basis of this altruistic and enlightened self-interest that Nigeria would accept to participate in the UN peace keeping operations both in Africa and in the larger world"<sup>25</sup>.

Also, Nigeria's role in securing peace in the African Continent through the dismantlement of apartheid is second to none in Africa. Even though excerpts on Nigeria's anti-apartheid policy is rich and has underscored assistance to the various liberation movements, she was the Chairman of the UN Committee Against Apartheid, and also as a front line State, she enhanced the nationalization of the British Petroleum and Barclays Bank etc, little or nothing is known about the fact that, Nigeria, under Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo, then as Head of State, directed all Nigeria's Diplomatic Missions abroad not to issue visa to any holder of a passport in which there was a South African visa. "In Nigeria's calculation then, any visitor or traveler to South Africa could not but have interests that were likely to be inimical to those of Nigeria in South Africa"<sup>26</sup>. Also then, the hand writing above could tell that the friends of apartheid South Africa then were not wanted in Nigeria.

In another development, in this same anti-apartheid spirit in South Africa, Nigeria ensured the expulsion of South Africa from the Board of the

<sup>24</sup> Akinterinwa, B. A. Nigeria and Permanent Membership of the United Nations Security Council: Dynamics and Definition. Lagos: NIIA Seminar Paper, 2005. 68.

<sup>25</sup> Akinterinwa, B. A., 31

<sup>26</sup> Akinterinwa, B. A., 31.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 1977. By that time, South Africa, by virtue of her possession of the most advanced nuclear programme in Africa, was occupying the seat reserved for Africa. Egypt replaced South Africa which then had a modest nuclear programme<sup>27</sup>. Nigeria's nationalization of British Petroleum and the manner it handled the decolonization of Rhodesia therefore made a lot of sense to give the mandate to Nigeria to continue to provide leadership in the defence of Africa.

Furthermore, the French atomic weapon test in the Sahara Desert in February and April 1960 was highly condemned by the then Nigerian Government. Not only that, but Nigeria was made to believe that African Countries, not necessarily Nigeria, were likely to be adversely affected by the radiation emission of the atomic bombs moving southward. Nigeria protested through the United Kingdom, the then colonial master against the test. Nigeria had warned France not to carry out such test in Africa again, but on December 1960, France engaged on a similar test and Nigeria had to strain her diplomatic relations with France. Ghana then condemned such test but never went ahead to sever her ties with France. Other African countries appeared to prefer to keep their silence over the issue. "As a result, France did whatever was possible to frustrate Nigeria's interest at the level of the then European Economic Community"<sup>28</sup>.

Nevertheless, Nigeria's policy position on the Angolan conflict was a blow to the apartheid- supported UNITA led Jonas Savimbi. It is useful to recall that Nigeria initially supported UNITA against MPLA and FNLA. She was in other words ideologically on the side of the western countries and capitalism. It was at the peak of the Cold War that Nigeria discovered that UNITA was principally being sustained by South Africa, and Nigeria had to promptly make a u-turn. Nigeria did not only shift her support for the UNITA to the Soviet-Cuban-backed MPLA, but also led other Africans in seeking international support for the MPLA. "The then change in position says much about Nigeria's principled stand to the defence of African interest; not the stooge of any country; objectivity of purpose in foreign policy decisions, leadership by example etc.

Finally, Nigeria's capital Abuja is also the capital of the continent of Africa. Most of the names of the streets in Abuja are named after Africa leaders and all African states capital. This gesture not only relives African History but also draws the attention of future generalizations to African history. It is a reflection of the extent of Africanness in the way of life of Nigerians and in the making of policy in Nigeria.

### **Challenges Facing Nigeria's Quest for UNSC Seat**

There are major challenges that could hinder Nigeria's ambition as a member of the UNSC from Africa. Some of these challenges are herewith discussed in this section.

---

<sup>27</sup> Akinterinwa, B. A., 31.

<sup>28</sup> Akinterinwa, B. A. Nigeria and France, 1960-1995: The Dilemma of Thirty Five years of Relationship. Ibadan: Vantage Publishers, 1999. 55.

One major challenge of Nigeria is how to convince the current permanent members of the UNSC to support the reforms as proposed by Mr. Kofi Annan, the former Secretary General of the UN. They need to see reasons why the proposal for the reforms, including its expansion and associated procedures should be taken seriously, which means that, the need for the amendment of the UN Charter is in accordance with article 108 is necessary.

Also, another challenge is how to convince other African countries to support Nigeria's candidature being the fact that there is competition rather than consensus among African countries interested in the UNSC seat. Besides, many African countries are suspicious of Nigeria. They believe that Nigeria is flaunting her weight capability i.e. resources and population of the three contestants - Nigeria has the highest population, followed by Egypt and South Africa in that order. However, in contributions to the UN budget, Nigeria needs to do more.

In the views of Saliu, "the negative image Nigeria parades in the international system have not come about by accident"<sup>29</sup>. Before now, the world, especially the West, was not impressed with the confined military role in the country owing to the fact that has continued to affect Nigeria's nascent democratic footing. The West has not forgotten the coercive manner in which past military regimes dealt with political prisoners and the trampling on people's rights and freedom. Consequently, even with the present democratic experiment, the refusal of former President Babangida and Gen. Abacha's regimes to release Nigeria for democracy is still fresh in the minds of the West. The need at present for good governance in the form of democracy in Nigeria is still at the lowest ebb even with the last twenty years of the experimentation of democracy.

Also, there is a near consensus among Western Nations and Nigerians that if there is any legacy left behind by the military and politicians presently is the legacy of corruption and mismanagement by the military turned politicians and even the civilian counterparts of the nation's resources. Concepts such as settlements, misapplication of funds and ten percent etc which are nothing more than dressing up corruption in new garbs are being popularized. Over time, money has been recklessly spent by politicians in order to enforce their will on the people. It is sad to note that while money was being withdrawn without any recourse to established financial regulations, Nigeria is conveniently moving progressively along the ladder of corruption in the world. Saliu, further believe that, "the ranking of the country as one of the most corrupt in the world by the Transparency International has indeed, drawn global attention to the country in a negative way"<sup>30</sup> over the years.

Nevertheless, the resultant effect of the opportunistic management of the economy of Nigeria through the channeling of scarce resources to mostly non-productive sectors of the nation has projected Nigeria's image in bad light, unfortunately the corrupt system has not allowed the Nigerian economy to

---

<sup>29</sup> Saliu, H. A. Nigeria's External Image under Obasanjo and Membership of the UN Security Council. Lagos: NIIA Seminar paper, 2000. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Saliu, H. A., 5.

grow in a manner that it could absorb Nigerians in need of gainful employment. While a few have succeeded in migrating to other countries to seek for a good living, most of other migrants have offered themselves for employment in a less dignifying sectors of the economy. The decision of most of them to accept to do menial jobs has not helped that cause of a positive image for the country. On the other part, those who remained in Nigeria, criminality is gradually being accepted as a norm and this is in various forms. Nevertheless, the beneficiary of loots in various government offices in Nigeria right from 1960 to date have locked up their loots in major Capitals in the West without any linkage with the economy and then the country keeps looking for loans and grants in the midst of plenty. Since the disclosure by Margaret Thatcher in the late 1980s that a few Nigerians have enough money abroad to liquidate the country's external debt, more and more actors in the international system have been exhibiting noticeable reluctance in identifying with Nigeria's call for debt relief and their quest for membership of the UNSC.

It has been noticed over the years that Nigeria does not have good human right records even in her twenty years of experimenting democracy. Before now, there have been high profile assassinations either by the State or by powerful individuals. Some of such killings are those of Late KudiratAbiola, Ken SaroWiwa, Chief Bola Ige and Funso Williams etc. All the above mentioned killings demonstrated that Nigeria has no respect for her individuals and also the acts perpetrated by the killing of the above mentioned individuals is a violation of 1991 Harare Declaration of the Commonwealth on Human Rights and Democracy. For Nigeria to get one of the two seats allocated to Africa in the UNSC, there is need for a positive image by the country not only at home but to be showcased to the outside world.

### **Summary/Conclusion**

This study on Nigeria's quest for a permanent seat in the UNSC has demonstrated that multilateral institution building and multilateral diplomatic process characterized the second half of the twentieth century into which the independent and sovereign Nigeria was born. The organization and conduct of the country's foreign policy have therefore, had no choice but to respond to and face the challenges of the imperatives of multilateralism. Nigeria's response has taken the form of membership and active participation in many International/Regional Organization especially the United Nations, which is the most prestigious and important instrument for the promotion and maintenance of peace and security, and management of global order.

Nevertheless, this study has attempted to review Nigeria's roles and dealings in the UN since her independence, situations which have demonstrated that Nigeria has been in the vanguard of peace operations and decolonization since it joined the Organization. The study has attempted to review the UN since inception, its structures, Organs and objectives, the roles of Nigeria in peace keeping and conflict prevention in Africa and the world. Also included is the role of Nigeria in the reforms of the UN, her eligibility, the chances of Egypt and South Africa who are Nigeria's contenders and finally the challenges to Nigeria's ambition. In all, it was discovered that in terms of commitment and support to

the global Organization, Nigeria is ranking ahead of all other contenders even with some internal challenges to contend with.

This study is concluding that Nigeria's international relations over the years especially in the UN have revealed the Country's passionate concern for the development, security and stability of Africa and the world. In pursuit of such lofty dreams and objectives, it joined the UN to ensure the desirable political and economic conditions in Africa and the world. Nigeria has had to expand her valuable resources – human and material in the belief that her resources are useless, if they cannot be deployed in the service of Africa and the world's interest. Today, Nigeria is craving to represent Africa in the Security Council after all her contributions to the Organization. This is an ambition all African States, coupled with her vision to keep rendering better services to the continent and the world, should support. It is believed that on the strength of Nigeria's contributions to the cause of Africa's development and promotion of peace, security and stability in the continent, and the world at large, she would clinch one of Africa's permanent seats in the Security Council. Nevertheless, Nigeria will have to do a lot to strengthen her anti corruption Agencies, her image in the international scene, the security situation at home, especially as it concerns present security and political situation in the Northern part of the country. When the above is fixed, her United Nations Security Council seat will be swiftly achieved.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Akindele, R. A. Nigeria in the United Nations. An Overview in B.A. Akinterinwa (ed) Nigeria and the U.N. Security Council. Ibadan: Vantage Pub. Ibadan, 2005, 11.
- <sup>2</sup> Akinterinwa, B.A. Nigeria and the United Nations Security Council. Ibadan: Vantage Pub, 2005, xx iii.
- <sup>3</sup> Adebo, S. My Unforgettable Years. Lagos: Macmillan Publishers 1983, 23.
- <sup>4</sup> Akinterinwa, B.A. xx iii.
- <sup>5</sup> Annan, K. UN Report, 2003, 3.
- <sup>6</sup> Akindele, R. A. Nigeria at the United Nations: An Overview in B. A. Akinterinwa Nigeria and the United Nations Security Council. Ibadan: Vantage Publishers 2005, 22.
- <sup>7</sup> UN Charter 1995.
- <sup>8</sup> Akinbobola, A. International Organization in R. Anifowose & F.C. Enemu (ed.) Elements of Politics. Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Pub, Lagos. 1999. 350.
- <sup>9</sup> Akinbobola, A. 350.
- <sup>10</sup> Oyediran, O. (ed.). The United Nations Organisation. Lagos: Longman Books Ikeja. 1990. 248.
- <sup>11</sup> UN Charter 1995.
- <sup>12</sup> UN Charter 1995.

<sup>13</sup>Anifowose, R. The United Nations as a tool for conflict prevention. Lagos: University of Lagos Seminar Paper, 1998.

<sup>14</sup>UN Charter 1995.

<sup>15</sup>UN Charter 1995.

<sup>16</sup> UN Charter 1995.

<sup>17</sup>UN Charter 1995

<sup>18</sup>UN Charter, 1995.

<sup>19</sup>Akindele, R. A., 10.

<sup>20</sup>Akindele, R. A., 10.

<sup>21</sup>Akindele, R. A., 10.

<sup>22</sup> Akindele, R. A. Nigeria at the United Nations, 22.

<sup>23</sup> Daily Times. Lagos, 10<sup>th</sup> September, 1994.

<sup>24</sup>Akinterinwa, B. A. Nigeria and Permanent Membership of the United Nations Security Council: Dynamics and Definition. Lagos: NIIA Seminar Paper, 2005. 68.

<sup>25</sup>Akinterinwa, B. A., 31

<sup>26</sup>Akinterinwa, B. A., 31.

<sup>27</sup> Akinterinwa, B. A., 31.

<sup>38</sup>Akinterinwa, B. A. Nigeria and France, 1960-1995: The Dilemma of Thirty Five years of Relationship. Ibadan: Vantage Publishers, 1999. 55.

<sup>29</sup>Saliu, H. A. Nigeria's External Image under Obasanjo and Membership of the UN Security Council. Lagos: NIIA Seminar paper, 2000. 3.

<sup>30</sup>Saliu, H. A., 5