

# Investigation on International Sanctions and its Consequences on Nigeria's Foreign Policy (1993-1997)

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**Abstract:** *The paper examined international sanctions and its consequences on Nigeria's foreign policy from 1993-1997. It's highlighted on the asymmetrical relationship that existed between Nigeria, United States, United Kingdom, common wealth of Nations for the government unending intention to handover to the democratic rule. The annulment of the June 12, 1993 election frustrated the democratic trend and the execution of the Ken Saro Wiwa and eight Agoni activists were the major factors that stimulated sanctions. The sanctions affected the military, economic and diplomatic respect of Nigeria at the international arena. The paper recommended that relationship between Nigeria, United States, United Kingdom and other Western powers are enormous and should avoid the situations that may invite sanctions in the future.*

## 1. Introduction

The end of the Cold war led to a renewed interest in democracy. Democracy became a positively, forceful, functional and creative wind of change that has been sweeping through the global system and not only creating a new political environment internally for the authoritative allocation of values in the domestic political order and external for the management of international relations, but also emphasizing a new task and challenge for the conduct of foreign policy. The global democratic spaces certainly created a new look and challenge for the conduct of foreign policy for many countries.

The developed and the industrialized powers particularly the group of seven (6-7) countries have evolved more spirited bilateral and multilateral foreign policy that puts high on democratization, respect for human right and fundamental freedom and acceptance of the free market economy doctrine as conceptions which other countries must meet in order to build and sustain structure of good relations globally.

A country can be said to be suffering from sanction when its domestic and foreign policies persistently contradict international norms, conventions and expectations. The sanction would affect military, political, economical and diplomatic respect of that country; whenever nation's domestic policies are exposed to international attention, pressures, criticism, sanctions or isolation, with the subsequent implication that it detriment affects the internal and external socio-political and the economic fabric of a nation and the pursuit of its foreign policy or national interest, "A nation's image is usually inferred from the level of respect and acceptance which a nation uphold; the effective management of her domestic affairs and promotion of her people's interest as well as the conduct of her external relation (Daily Champion, May 12, 1998).

The Nigeria's point of authoritative presided over the processes of authoritative allocation of values for more than 24 years of 38 years of post independence existence, military rule no longer be considered as simply an aberration in the

country. The transition to democratic rule in 1979 under second republic (1979-1983), was short lived as the coup d'état of 31 December, 1983 installed a military regime under major General Muhammad Buhari which was subsequently overthrown by another coup d'état that brought General Ibrahim Babangida to power in August, 1985.

The history of Nigeria since August, 1985 has been largely a history of seemingly endless transition to democratic government. Arguably, a reasonably good transition programme was signed in 1985 by the Babangida Administration in December 1990 local government elections were held for new road to democracy, gubernatorial in 1991, senatorial and house of assembly

## Nigeria and International Sanction

General Ibrahim Babangida 's political programme for transition to democratic governance reached the pinnacle of its very serious credibility crisis over his unexpected presidential election which was not only pronounced free and fair, but also believed to have been clearly won by chief M.K.O Abiola of the social democratic party (SDP). The depending crisis of legitimacy which staved General Ibrahim Babangida's military regime in the face was further exacerbated by the dissolution of the fragile democratic structure. This led to crises of agreement within even the armed forces widely speculated and the pressure from the civil societies such as civil liberties organization (CLO) campaign for democracy (CD) committee for the defuse of human right (CDHR), national Gas workers (NUPENG), Nigeria Labour congress (NLC), academic staff union of universities (ASUU) which ultimately made it impossible for General Ibrahim Babangida to succeed himself prepared the way for the installation of an international government (ING) headed by chief Ernest Shonekan.

The mounting pressure for democratic government based upon the decisive mandate which the 14 Million Nigerians who voted on June 12, 1993, gave to chief Abiola was remarkably boosted and further strengthened, when a Lagos High court, in a historic judgment by justice Dalapo Akin Sany avoided decree 6, of 1993 and declared Chief

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Shonekan's government illegal. The heightened crises which resulted prepared the way for the re-entry of military into the political scene in full force under General Sani Abacha on November 17, 1993. In a statement of fact, with the suspension of the transitions, the abolition of democratic institutions, structure and perhaps move importantly the absence of any programme of democratic transition. In the hand of the new military regime, seemingly determined not to de-annual the June 12 presidential election,

Against the background of the on going phenomenal expansion of the democratic space with its veneration for democratic governance, human right and fundamental freedom in Nigeria and the rest of the world. The reaction of international community to the seemingly endless transition from military rule to democratic governance in Nigeria, focusing on the western powers, United Kingdom, the common wealth and international agencies like the world bank the international Bank for reconstruction and development (IBRD). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) were critical and influential institution actors in international economic diplomacy cannot be ignored, particularly by a dependent and underdeveloped third world country with virtually a mono-culture economy.

### **The Annulment of the June 12 Election**

The planned death and burial of funeral general Babangida' managed transition to democratic governance can not but put Nigeria on a collision course with the major power of the world. The united state government made it clear that in the new world order, the support for democratization is their most cherished value and important pre-occupation, its international agenda is bound to be disappointed in Nigeria because the ruling elites in Nigeria, the most populous country on the continent of black Africa who ought to show democratic leadership and example for other to follow continue to and frustrate the democratization trend. Thus the June 1993 president election, in Abuja high court restrained the country's national election commission from going ahead with the presidential election, the America government through the director of united state information service in Lagos, publically warned that any postponement of the election would cause great concern to the us government.

### **The United States Reaction**

In its reaction to the crisis in Nigeria political transition to democratic governance which came to a great depression with arbitrary annulment by General Ibrahim Babangida the June 12 presidential election on 23 June 1993 in election generally believed to have been won by MKO Abiola, the US department of state issued the following policy statement.

*"The united state deplores the outrageous decision of the June 12 election. According to independent Nigeria monitoring groups and outside observers, the elections was free and fair from any serious irregularities. The Nigeria press, public and leading civilians view the election as most successful in Nigeria's history and have called upon the military to release and respect the result. We remain concerned about the continuing repression of the press and democratic forces. The United States government has strongly and consistently supported the restoration of*

*civilian rule in Nigeria and called upon the military regime to hand over power to the duly elected civilian leadership on August 27, 1993 in keeping with its previously announced transition plan. The failure on the part of the military regime to respect the will of the Nigeria people and transition to democracy will have serious implication for US-Nigeria relations. We are in the process of reassessing our relation with Nigeria. There are various options available for responding. We are closely examining each one to see whether employing it might help the Nigerian people successfully express their political will. All aspects of bilateral relations including our \$22.8 million in literal assistance are currently under review" (USIS) News June 24, 1993.*

General Ibrahim Babangida refusal to release the of the June 12 presidential election his suspension of transition to democracy, his repeal of the decree establishing August 27 as the end of military rule and yet preparation for another election impelled the us government on July 22 to take the following steps aimed at specifically Nigerian military;

- Reviewing with the presumption denial application for the commercial expert of articles bound for Nigeria
- Restricting the remaining Nigeria military attached access to the us government and
- Asked five Nigeria military officers studying in the US under the auspices of the International Military Education and Training Programme (IMETP) to depart the US.

The taking over of government on, November 17, 1993 which swept away Shonekan Interim National Government (ING) brought General Sani Abacha to power and addresses the nation and his government was child of necessity complete abortion of the 1993 democratization process in Nigeria, but provided a new fillip for the intensification of hostility towards Nigeria. Thus on December 10, 1993, US President Bill Clinton issued a Proclamation that bans the beneficiaries of the coup from entering the US. As explained by the then us Ambassador Walter C. Carrington.

*"All request for visas by high government officials have to go to state department for review" (USIS news July 23, 1993) it was arguable that the derailment of the democratic transition which imposes severe strain on US. Nigeria relations helped to influence the final decision of the American President to sanction Nigeria for its falling grade in the world narcotic control record.*

According to West Africa magazine July, 1993 *"it come of as a surprise; therefore that Nigeria did not get certified by President Clinton to decision that 25 in some respect political. For example 26 major drug producing and transit countries were identified by president Clinton of the 26, only Burma, Iran, Nigeria and Syria went derived certification" (USIS News July 23 1993.*

In addition to the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election, the execution of Ken Saro Wiwa and eight other leaders of the movement for the survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) amidst international outcry over the nature of the Murderer charges, the member of their trial, conviction and subsequent sentence to death by hanging of the victims. During the common wealth of state meeting

galvanized international community into imposing further sanction on Nigeria.

### Reaction of the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom most penetrating relation with Nigeria to demonstrate its unhappiness with Nigeria's unending transition to democracy and presumably determined to be seen to be reinforcing its commitment to democratic change in Nigeria announced selective sanction against Nigeria specifically aimed at the military. The United Kingdom stopped all military aid to Nigeria, withdrew the British military Adviser to the Nigerian War College and barred government officials especially members of the Armed forces, Police and their families from entering Britain. Robin Cook, the British foreign secretary banned all Nigerian registered aircraft from its air space ostensibly on safety grounds.

### The commonwealth Sanctions

The November 10, 1995 execution of Ken Saro Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists caused a huge outcry from the international community. Sanction put in place since the annulment of 1993 election and the military coup which followed was strengthened in the weeks after the execution. British Prime Minister John Major said he thought the trial that proceeded the execution was *"fraudulent and the verdict bad"*. He said *"I cannot see how Nigeria can stay in the commonwealth until they return to democratic government; many more voices joined the sanctions campaign as the commonwealth leaders entered into a special session to deliberate on a response to Nigeria"*.

In response to development in Nigeria which constituted a serious violation of the principles set out in the Harare commonwealth declaration, commonwealth heads of government... Agreed to suspend Nigeria from membership of the commonwealth pending the return to compliance with the principles of the Harare commonwealth declarations. (West Africa 18-24 April Pg. 69)

### Nigeria's Reaction to Sanctions

With the imposition of sanction and Nigeria's suspension from the commonwealth, Tom Ikimi, the Juntas Minister for foreign affairs, stated that: *"All commonwealth countries had their political and human right problems (Africa today, September /October 1997 pg. 13)"*. While the regime's defense spokesperson, Brigadier General Chijuka said that: *"Nigeria could very well do without European assistance and that if South Africa could live with sanction for years. Nigeria was in a better position than when Apartheid South Africa was sanctioned"* (Tell December 4, 1995).

Nigerian military devised strategies to train its personnel locally. In the words of Nigerian chief of Air Staff: *"Sanctions came many years late. If we didn't have some Nigerians well trained as instructors, if we had been relying on foreign instructors, we would have effect. But we have trained our people with high standards, some instructors, engineering instructors... we have our own people here"* (Tell December 11, 199 Pg10). Nigeria found new friends with notable pariah states such as North Korea, Iran, and China, (Guardian Sunday Lagos) 22, November, 1997 Pg17 & 19).

## 2. Conclusion

The imposition of sanction did lead to a review of our relationship with most of our traditional friends and also led to the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission. Most of Nigeria's new friends were in no position to replace the kind of trusted allies that Nigeria relies on. Despite the threat made by the European Union and the United States, the sanctions imposed on Nigeria *"were long on words and short in action"* the items on which sanctions were imposed were not the crucial things to effect a total change of policy. Sanction, therefore, can provide a satisfying theoretical display, yet avoid the high cost of war. This is not to say that sanctions are cost free but in most times as the one imposed to see that something is done.

## 3. Recommendations

- 1) A smoother relationship with the Western powers is necessary for Nigeria since such countries have enormous capacity to do a lot of harm to a country's national interest.
- 2) Nigeria should try to avoid the occurrence of all the reverses of diplomatic front she went through since that had been a serious blow on her foreign policy.
- 3) There is a need to minimize whatever that can lead to sanctions since that can cause harm to citizenry. Such could be done through dialogue, patience, understanding and all known friendly understanding and all known friendly linkages that explain her action and achieve desired result for the nation.

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