

Power and Representation at the United Nations: A Critique of Nigeria's Bid for Permanent Seat in the Security Council

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Introduction

The United Nations has been described as a huge and imposing theatre of conflict of interests, of competition of values, and of cooperation in search of solutions to common problems (Akindele, 1999:17). Given the potentially anarchical nature of the international society in which it operates and the sovereign equality of its principal, primary and dominant state actors, the UN is arguably the most sophisticated political technology mankind ever constructed and developed to maintain international peace and security. But member-states of the organisation have various perceptions of it. While a few powerful states which designed it *ab initio* have shown a determination to preserve the *status quo*, which historically has been in their favour, the vast majority of member-states, largely concentrated in the southern hemisphere, poor, underdeveloped and at the periphery of high global politics, would prefer the UN to metamorphose into an instrument of change; an instrument for bridging the economic and technological gap between the rich North and the poor South. As far as the LDCs are concerned, at the centre of this enormous challenge are two crucial tasks: (i) reform of the international economic order, created at the end of World War II, allegedly to protect only the interest of the dominant powers (particularly the developed, industrialised and market-economy countries of the North) at the expense of the other members of the international community; and (ii) introduction and enhancement of the values of justice, fair play and equity in the management of global order.

For Nigeria, the United Nations occupies a central place in the conduct of the country's diplomacy. This is underscored by the fact that the first organisation which independent Nigeria joined was the UN. As far as Nigeria is concerned, the relevance of the UN has never been in doubt. The seemingly high profile of the global body in the conduct of the country's diplomacy is premised on the principle of multilateralism to which the Nigerian state has historically attached great importance. Being a weak state with an underdeveloped economy, Nigerian decision makers held the belief that the best guarantee for the country to protect its independence and sovereignty was to identify with other countries under the platform of multilateral organisation. While excessive idealism and restrained optimism often underscore Nigeria's political behaviour at the UN, there is a firm belief in Nigeria, and indeed all over the world, that if the global organisation is to maintain its continued relevance in the changing international environment, it must reform itself.

To be sure, the reform referred to goes beyond administrative reorganisation and rationalisation,

important as this may be for efficiency and cost effectiveness. It is about fundamental changes involving review and amendment of the institutional law of the organisation. It has been suggested, for example, that it would not be harmful for the UN to reflect and adjust to both the expansion in its membership from 51 sovereign states in 1945 to 191 today (2004). The rationale for this can be located in the need for democratisation of the UN in such a way that an equitable representation and wider participation can take place in the most important organ i.e. the Security Council.

Although discussion about the UN reform has been going on for sometime, it was not until more recently that the question moved to the top of the UN agenda. 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 rationalisation, merging and integration of related institutional structures, creation of the post of Deputy Secretary-General, reduction of the UN work force by 1000, establishment of a Revolving Credit Fund with an initial capital of US \$1 billion and the creation of a cabinet style Senior Management Group (Annan, 1997, Gambari, 1992, Mcdermott, 1997 PP.172-174).

While the Nigerian government welcomed these reforms, it is obvious that it is the second track of reforms which concerns the restructuring of the Security Council that is more critical and of greater relevance to Nigeria. Like many other UN member-states, Nigeria draws attention to the fact that expansion of membership as well as a more equitable and regionally-balanced representation in the Council is bound to improve the democratic profile and legitimacy standing of the Council which has primary responsibility

for the maintenance of peace and security (Akindele and Akinterinwa, 1998).

Against the background of the foregoing, this paper sets for itself the task of assessing Nigeria's bid for a permanent seat at the Security Council. Among other things, the paper examines Nigeria's credentials for the position and also the challenge to Nigeria's aspiration by other interested African nations. Finally, an attempt will be made to see whether the performance of the current leadership has or can in anyway promote Nigeria's aspiration. But first what credentials does the nation possess? Put differently, what are the antecedents of the nation at the UN to inform its ambition for a permanent Council seat?

Nigeria's Credentials: A Scrutiny

Throughout its entire post-independence history, Nigeria's diplomatic behaviour, particularly in the United Nations, has been inspired by an acute consciousness of the injuries which slave trade and colonialism had inflicted on the collective pride and dignity of the black race, and by an awareness of the special responsibility which destiny is believed to have imposed on Nigeria, as the largest concentration of black men and women on earth, for the restoration of that human dignity and collective black pride. As General Babangida once put it:

The defence of the humanity and freedom of the black man is an issue dear to us all. This is natural, in view of the role which providence has cast for Nigeria in Africa. It has been a cardinal factor in our foreign relations to provide the

African continent focus and leadership in the struggle against colonialism, exploitation and racial oppression (Babangida, 1991: 307).

Thus, successive regimes in Nigeria since independence had formally declared Africa as the centrepiece of the country's foreign policy; and indeed, the 1979 Constitution had formalised this by providing that Africa should occupy a position of primacy in Nigeria's foreign policy.

The country's diplomatic behaviour has also been grounded in the firm belief that the search for world peace which peripheralises the issues of justice and trivialises the imperative for 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.

As earlier mentioned, commitment to the eradication of colonialism from the face of the earth, particularly from the continent of Africa, ran through Nigeria's foreign policy agenda and dominated its foreign policy behaviour in the UN from 1960 to the 1980 (Tukur, not dated, Adebo, 1988:48). Although the UN was only one avenue for the anti-colonial campaign, it was clearly the most strategic diplomatic forum, which Nigeria, aligned with others, adroitly utilised for the purpose of expediting the movement towards self-determination and political independence in all colonial territories. The inspiration for anti-colonial commitment stemmed as much from Nigeria's own century of humiliating colonial experience, the celebrated 1960 UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples, and the anticolonial obligations assumed under the 1963 Addis Ababa Charter of the Organisation of African Unity, as well as from the belief that the principle of self-determination has become *just cogens* (Akindele and Oyebo, 1978:96).

Regarding the Resolution 1514 (XV), Simeon Adebo, Nigeria's distinguished permanent representative to the UN (1962-1967) had this to say: "From 1961 onwards, any new African diplomat in New York must as quickly as possible make himself familiar with the contents" (Adebo, 1988:80). The collective global legitimisation which the United Nations provided for decolonisation was exploited to elevate the anticolonial campaign to the status of an international *duty* for all UN member-states. In the UN, Nigeria projected the view that self-determination was not just a political right but indeed has become a *legal* right for all colonised peoples. Colonialism was therefore designated as a form of *permanent aggression* committed by European powers in the North against the colonised peoples of the South. Therefore, the use of all measures, including force, to rid a colonial territory of foreign domination was legitimate (Akindele, 1972:PP.3058). Nigeria's endorsement of and total support for armed confrontation by the liberation movements against colonial regimes in Africa and elsewhere on the globe was an integral part of its strategy of mobilising international support against the continued existence of colonial rule, particularly in Africa which was the centre piece of Nigeria's foreign policy.

That classical colonialism has virtually become a dead issue on the UN agenda no doubt represents a triumph of the anti-colonial campaign spearheaded by Nigeria and many other states, using the machinery of the political support of the UN. Its slow pace notwithstanding, the

UN provided for Nigeria a valuable forum for the achievement of the much desired irreversible march to the liquidation of colonialism in Africa.

As with external domination, (colonial rule), white minority rule was another issue on which Nigeria invested considerable resources and energy. The battles for desalinisation and the campaign against *apartheid* and white minority rule in Southern Africa were fought simultaneously by direct action and through the instrumentality of the UN; as the Charter commits members-states to respecting the principle of "equal rights and self-determination of peoples" . In the UN, Nigeria put the liquidation of white minority rule in both Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and South Africa very high on its foreign policy agenda, and mobilised international support to expedite and achieve black majority rule and democratic dispensation in both countries.

Undoubtedly, the financial and material support from Nigeria and the defunct GAU; Nigeria's nationalisation of the British Petroleum in 1979; Nigeria's sustained mobilisation of international support in and outside the UN, coupled with the effectiveness of armed confrontation by the liberation movements in Southern Rhodesia, all combined to bring about political changes which firstly brought black majority rule in Zimbabwe (Parsonms, 1988:PP.353-361). In the same vein, under pressure from the armed national liberation movements, the Western powers and the UN-based international community, the white minority National Party government in Pretoria unbanned the African National Congress, released Nelson Mandela from jail in February 1990 and began the process of transition to democratic rule, - a transition that ultimately resulted in the election of a national unity government under the presidency of Nelson Mandela in April 1994 (Hamil and Spemce, 1994:PP 28-132).

It is instructive to note that for more than 20 years, the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid was chaired by successive permanent representatives of Nigeria at the UN (Gambari, 1997:8). It needs to be added that although Nigeria

is not geographically a frontline state located in Southern Africa, it nevertheless was for many years regarded as a frontline state. This no doubt illustrates the crucial role Nigeria played as a member of the UN in the political battle to bring about the end of apartheid and white minority rule in Southern Africa.

In trying to evaluate Nigeria's role in the UN and its contribution to the implementation of the objectives of the world organisation, the country's contribution to UN peacekeeping also deserves a closer examination. Nigeria's peacekeeping record clearly portrays it as a reliable and dependable UN member, prepared to shoulder the burden of responsibility for the realisation of the foremost objective of the United Nations. The first international peace-keeping operation in which Nigeria participated was in the Congo (UNYC), undertaken very shortly after Nigeria became a sovereign and independent state. As at 1997, Nigeria had been involved in fourteen peace-keeping and peace- observer missions (Garba, 1997). As Ibrahim Gambari hastened to remind us, "over 200,000 Nigerians have served in one (UN) peace-keeping operation or another (Gambari, 1992, Endnote 37 P.9). Participating in all these UN peace-keeping operations and peace-observer missions clearly shows Nigeria's contribution to bolstering and strengthening the UN's capacity for preventive diplomacy and post-conflict peace-building, as well as its

credentials as a strong supporter of UN efforts at bringing about and sustaining a peaceful world order. In addition, it highlights the burden of responsibility, the country has always been prepared to shoulder as a credible member of the world body.

It may also be added that in line with the great importance which Nigeria has always attached to preparation for and preoccupation with the task and challenge of peace and security maintenance, the country in 1998 signed with the UN a memorandum of understanding on Nigeria's troop contribution to newly created UN stand-by peace-keeping force. It was reported that Nigeria had agreed to contribute a motorised battalion and a sizeable number of civilian policemen to the stand-by force (*This Day*, February 16, 1998:5). It is perhaps deserving of mention here that in this era of indebtedness, Nigeria is neither indebted to the UN regular budget, nor the peace-keeping account.

Contemporary Internal Realities and Nigeria's Ambition

The pattern of growth and development of the Nigerian economy between independence (1960) and 1970 conformed with the general pattern of growth in developing countries. When the process of development started, agriculture played a dominant role as the engine of growth. As a leading sector of the economy, it provided employment for about 70 per cent of the population and accounted for about 80 per cent of the government revenue (Falae, 1992:219). In terms of exports, Nigeria was a major producer of agricultural commodities such as cocoa, cotton, groundnut, timber, rubber, hides and skin etc. The emergence of the oil sector in the early seventies as a major revenue earner for the country drastically altered the face of the Nigerian economy. The contribution of the oil sector to total exports rose from 57.6 per cent in 1970 to 97.2 per cent in 1986. Thus, Nigeria's legendary continental pre-eminence in the 1970s was not unconnected with the existence of a buoyant economy fed by an unexpected oil boom. Not only was the country not indebted, at least, up till the first jumbo loan of 1978 (*Africa* No.79, March 1978:101), it also possessed the requisite economic leverage to bank-roll an activist foreign policy. This was clearly manifested in the leading roles that it played in the struggle to secure independence for Angola, Guinea Bissau, Zimbabwe and Namibia, not to mention the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa.

Prior to May 1999 when Olusegun Obasanjo was sworn in as new civilian president, the Nigerian armed forces had ruled the nation continuously for fifteen years. In this same era, Nigeria which was previously celebrated as the foremost Africa nation in the world fell into the pit of infamy, especially between 1993 and 1998. Under the first of these military regimes, led by General Muhamadu Buhari, relations with member-states of the sub-regional body, ECOW AS reached an all time low. Not only were the nation's borders permanently closed against its neighbours, thus badly hurting their economies, the regime did not heed all appeals for them to be re-opened (Akinrinade, 1992). As if this border closure had not done enough damage to the neighbours, the regime suddenly changed the face of the *Naira* the national currency. The border closure made it impossible for the millions of *Naira* that was circulating in West Africa to be repatriated home to be exchanged for new notes, thus ruining the businesses of other ECOW AS citizens, as well as Nigerians involved in money-laundering and speculation. Before the effects of this policy wore off, the regime expelled millions of ECOW AS nationals from Nigeria in 1985. This mass expulsion provoked resentment and hostility towards Nigeria within the sub-

region and severely eroded its claim to leadership (Fawole, 2000:21).

The regime also offended the sensibilities of its traditional friends in the West when it engaged in counter-trade, exchanging crude oil as payment for imports. This arrangement, concluded with a few countries such as Brazil and Austria, angered the United Kingdom because of its negative effects on the price of the UK's North Sea Brent, the equivalent of Nigeria's low-sulphur Bonny Light. The ensuing shaky Anglo-Nigerian relations later experienced a jolt when the Nigerian government was implicated in the attempted kidnap of Alhaji Umaru Dikko from London for shipment to Nigeria in a crate with diplomatic markings (Akinsanya, 1981-1983; Soyinka, 1994).

The succeeding regime of General Ibrahim Babangida sought to clean up the mess created by its predecessor. It normalised relations with Nigeria's neighbours by re-opening the closed borders, provided economic assistance (Adeniji, 2004), and generally regained their trust and confidence so much that Babangida was voted ECOW AS chairman three times. He succeeded in getting the sub-regional grouping to approve his proposal for the establishment of a standing mediating committee, and later the deployment of ECOMOG troops into Liberia (Fawole, 2000:22).

At the African and global levels, General Babangida became the chairman of the (defunct) Organisation of African Unity (OAU), hosted the summit of the OAU in 1991 and got the heads of state to sign the treaty establishing the African Economic Community (AEC); got the United States of America to forgive Nigeria some of its bilateral debts and obtained financial and technical assistance to establish the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA). It also restored Anglo-Nigerian relations to a cordial level. It was also at this time that Nigeria's permanent representative at the United Nations, Major General Joe Garba became the president of the 44th UN General Assembly, while Chief Emeka Anyaoku was elected the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth.

Unfortunately, the advances Nigeria recorded in its external relations were eclipsed by the insincerity of the Babangida regime in its transition programme. General Babangida had not only postponed the terminal date for the transition to civil rule three times, but had also repeatedly banned and unbanned many politicians with every round of postponement of the terminal date until the criteria for participation and non-participation in the electoral process became completely blurred (Olukoshi and Agbu, 1995). This deliberate subversion of its own transition programme by the government became evident when the 12 June 1993 presidential election was annulled. The political imbroglio occasioned by this act forced the government to leave office hurriedly in August 1993; but, more importantly, it diminished considerably Nigeria's credibility in the international arena. In the words of a respected Nigerian politician, Alhaji Adamu Ciroma:

General Babangida generated distrust for himself and his successor military regime in the circles of the western government because of the way he mishandled the transition process, especially the annulment of the June 12 elections (Ciroma, 1995:54).

If the last days of General Babangida attracted global opprobrium to the Nigerian nation, the next five years under General Sani Abacha witnessed an almost complete isolation of the country from the international community. In the five years that he reigned, General Abacha presided

over the most combative and defensive foreign policy in Nigeria's history (Fawole, 1999). Nigeria conducted an abrasive diplomacy, thus creating more enemies for the country. On account of its oppressive domestic policies, indicated by the severe abuse of the fundamental human rights, coupled with the execution of the "Ogoni Nine" in 1995 in spite of passionate international plea for clemency, Nigeria got suspended from the Commonwealth, was derided by the United Nations and ostracised by its traditional allies. While diplomatic relations with the United States were severely strained, Canada actually went a step ahead by severing diplomatic relations with Nigeria. Reeling from the pinch of severe isolation, the regime made overtures to join the French community and sought the friendship of countries, like Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Libya and Sudan.

Nigeria's status as an international outcast during this period reached an appalling level when it had to suffer the humiliation of hosting a UN Fact Finding Mission to scrutinise its human rights records. Of note is the fact that the Mission was led by a man from the Republic of Togo, a tiny West African nation that is a minor player in the international system. Following the execution of Ken SaroWiwa and eight of his followers in November 1995, Nigeria was summarily suspended from the Commonwealth, an organisation inside which it had been a prominent African voice. It was only within the defunct OAU and the ECOW AS that it still managed to retain some semblance of international relevance. The foregoing picture however abated somewhat with the return to democracy and civil rule in May 1999.

Regional Challenge to Nigeria's Ambition

There appears to have been something of a consensus that in the impending reorganisation of the UN, at least one permanent seat will be reserved for Africa in the expanded Security Council. Again, very consistently Egypt and South Africa have been touted as countries that may challenge Nigeria for the seat. To be sure, whether in terms of geopolitics, regional international politics and issues of stability and conflict, or size of population and culture, Egypt remains an important Arab and African state. It also shares with Iran, Israel and Turkey for many of the same reasons, the characterisation of being one of the four most important countries in the entire Middle East including North Africa. Egypt until 1991 was the key hegemonic state in the international relations of the Middle East. It is the selfidentified chief peace-maker, and on occasions, chief warmaker in the region. It was Egypt, for example, which crafted the unprecedented Arab alliance against Iraq in 1991. It is also militarily powerful in terms of size (300,000) and quality of armed forces as well as the size of its population, which at about 60 million contains practically one-half of all Arabs (Cantori, 2002:229). It should also be mentioned that Egypt had a strong voice in the GAU (AU). It was Egypt, for example, that influenced the diplomatic isolation of Israel in Africa, following the 1973 Arab-Israel war.

South Africa's credentials are also quite impressive. First, it is undoubtedly the regional hegemonic power in the Southern African sub-region; and secondly, it has had an incredible economic performance relative to other African nations. But perhaps, its greatest strength can be located in the charismatic personality of its erstwhile leader, Nelson Mandela. It is well-recognised that it will be difficult for any country to resist a lobby anchored by the legendary 'Madeeva'.

In spite of the undoubtedly impressive records of these two countries, supporters of the Nigerian bid have gone ahead to submit that Nigeria's bid is unassailable. First, of the three nations under consideration, Nigeria is the most representative of the black race. With an unadulterated black population of over 120 million people, it qualifies to be treated as the real black man's country because for every four black persons anywhere in the world, one of them is mathematically a Nigerian. This statistic, they contend, is very important if the black race is being considered for representation in the multi-racial global body (Ikhariale, 2002:35). Although Egypt is on the African continent, it is more ideologically identified with the Arab World than with Africa they aver. As for South Africa, It is contended that the country is not racially a pure African society since it is composed of blacks, white and Indians - the so-called rainbow nation.

Secondly, Nigeria is deemed to be ahead of the other contending nations because it has been fully tested in the responsibility and effective discharge of international obligations in the key areas of peace-keeping and peace-enforcement - two critical areas in which the Security Council had been very active. On this score, even the UN records confirm that Nigeria has acquitted itself very well (Gambari,1997:9).

Lastly, Nigeria is considered the ideal African candidate for a permanent seat at the Security Council because, in addition to the points already highlighted, the country is strategically located almost at the middle of Africa; Egypt is too northerly to be effective in responding to a truly African situation, while South Africa, developed as it may be, is too southerly to effectively respond to many possible core African crises. From this abundantly strategic perspective therefore, none of these other countries is considered to enjoy the near equidistance to the " four corners" of the African continent which Nigeria does (Ikhariale,2002:36).

The Post-Military Democratic Government and Nigeria's UN Aspirations

Following General Abacha's sudden death in June 1998, General Abdulsalaam Abubakar, his successor, put in motion a transition programme that resulted in the coming to power of President Olusegun Obasanjo. The apparent sincerity of General Abubakar's transition programme generated tremendous goodwill for the country. This is partially indicated by the fact that the inauguration ceremony attracted about forty heads of state and government. At no time in Nigeria's history, has any national event attracted such an impressive array of world leaders.

Unlike previous Nigerian leaders, President Obasanjo came into the job with impressive credentials. Having once been a head of state under military rule from 1976 to 1979, he was endowed with a good knowledge of the intricacies of power, politicking and diplomacy. Even after vacating power, he had served impressively and creditably in several international bodies and assignments, attended countless conferences, delivered papers on a vast array of issues bordering on leadership and development and had written and edited a number of books and scholarly publications (Fawole, 2002:26). He had interacted with great leaders and other men and women of international repute, and had in the process built an image as a world statesman.

There is no doubting the fact that the warm embrace with which Nigeria was welcomed back into the international community in 1999 is both a function of the new democratic dispensation as well as the international community's perception of the personality and moral stature of President

Olusegun Obasanjo. Since assuming power as a democratically elected leader, Obasanjo has traversed the globe in what appears to be a public relations drive aimed at restoring Nigeria to its place of pride in the international community. Included in this agenda is the desire to secure external support for the Nigerian economy in the form of increased foreign investment, debt forgiveness and the return of Nigeria's "stolen billions". He was elected the chairman of the G-77; became the foremost spokesman for African integration (a ministry has been created to handle this issue); become a respected regional peace-maker; and was involved in the crafting of both the African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). In addition, President Obasanjo has played host to several foreign leaders and dignitaries in Abuja. President Bill Clinton's visit to Nigeria in August 2000 represents an unmistakable indication of Nigeria's full rehabilitation and return to global reckoning (Fawole, 2000:25). One can add to this the fact that President Obasanjo is the current chairman of the Commonwealth.

That the Obasanjo administration attaches great importance to Nigeria's bid for a permanent UN seat is borne out by the fact that in October 2000, the government set up a high-power committee to lobby the UN member states. It is worth noting that at about this same period, China, France, Libya and South Korea have openly declared their support for Nigeria. The prevailing realities in the Nigeria nation nevertheless remain a limiting factor to its ambition. There is the depressed economy with a large external debt of about US\$32 billion. The ugly consequences of a depressed economy are visible enough for all to perceive: collapsed infrastructure and social services, mass poverty with a significant percentage of the population living below the poverty line, rampant corruption, insecurity of life and property and a desperate need for reorientation and reconstruction. A prostrate economy and a debt overhang have combined to circumscribe the country's latitude for the kind of robust foreign policy that Nigeria was known for in the 1970s.

If the Africa Group at the UN fails to present a common candidate, how is Nigeria likely to fare in the ensuing contest for a permanent seat? In Africa, it is speculated that Egypt can only count on the support of the Maghreb states in North Africa (Libya of course has publicly declared its support for Nigeria).

Outside Africa, Egypt will be able to count on the support of almost all the entire Arab and Muslim world including perhaps Iran and Turkey. As an acknowledged stabilising force in the Middle East, with very close relations with United States, Egypt may also secure the support of the other permanent members of the Security Council. However, Egypt, for historical reasons may not secure the support of the majority of African States.

If South Africa decides to run for the seat, then Nigeria may have a serious competition on its hands. South Africa will be able to count on the support of virtually all the Southern, Eastern and Central states of Africa, including such, countries as Gabon and the two Congos, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. That leaves West Africa,; but even here, Nigeria cannot take the support of its neighbours for granted. After all, only as recently as 1995, Nigeria, in spite of her huge financial contributions to the organisation, lost the bid for the chairmanship of the African Development Bank in an election that took place on Nigerian soil (Saliu, 1999:45). While one can ascribe the foregoing humiliation to the 'pariah' status of Nigeria in the period mentioned, can it be assumed that such countries as Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal and even Sierra Leone and Liberia will support Nigeria's bid, if the elections were to take place today? Ambassador Oladapo Fafowora

(1997:35) has submitted that even in normal circumstances, Nigeria has garnered more African support outside the West African sub-region than from within. So, what is the way out?

Concluding Remarks

That Nigeria's bid for a permanent seat at the Security Council is largely legitimate and quite in order is not in doubt. That Nigeria has been there for Africa from Angola to Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) through Sierra Leone to Liberia is not contestable. On countless occasions, she has matched its words with deeds. Indeed as Mike Ikhariale put it:

The Permanent Council seat that is meant for Africa whenever it comes, ought to be given to Nigeria. The only reason why it may not be so is if Nigeria herself rejects it or continues to undermine her undeniable geopolitical standing before the world. (Ikhariale, 2002:36)

While not denying Nigeria's strong claim to this exalted position, one should add that in order to solidify Nigeria's chances, the government needs to pay attention to the "domestic condition". It was this "condition", as ambassador Glu Sanu recalls, that had stood in the way of Chief Simeon Adebo being elected UN secretary general, in succession to U. Thant, even when it was clear that he was the best candidate (Fafowora, 1997:35).

The task left out for Nigeria is quite simple. The challenge before the Nigerian government and people in their quest for a permanent UN Security Council seat is to make

the domestic condition amenable by reviving the economy and ensuring the sustainability of the present democratic experiment. The international community cannot be expected to reward a country with veto power, where strife is endemic, security of citizens in peril, and democracy faces threats of authoritarianism.

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