

Inaugural Lecture Series 178

**FOREIGN POLICY COOPERATION IN
DEVELOPING STATES**

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Introduction: On the Third World and International Relations

The question I seek to answer in this lecture is this: in the light of the post-independence experience of African states, do developing states, particularly those with geographical or regional affinities, confronted with similar constraints and pursuing similar objectives, cooperate in foreign policy matters? I consider this a contribution to efforts towards developing a paradigm for understanding the foreign policy behaviour of developing states.

The emergence of the 'Third World' as a distinct group of states participating in the affairs of the international system constitutes one of the significant landmarks of the 20th century. The 'Third World' is the group of states variously described as developing, underdeveloped, less developed, and sometimes, least developed. The definitions of the Third World and the constituent units have changed over the years since its first use.

In contemporary times, there have been two major uses of the term 'Third World'. First, it is an ideological concept employed during the Cold War to describe the group of states that declined to associate with either the Eastern or the Western bloc in the struggle for control of the international political and economic systems. The second use is developmental, with the First World constituting the industrialised capitalist countries of the West, while the Communist bloc states represented the Second World. The developing, underdeveloped and least developed states constitute the 'Third World'.

Over the years, changes in the global society and in the fortunes of individual states have affected the classification of states such that in developmental terms, it has become inappropriate to refer to certain countries as 'Third World'. This is the case with the Asian Tigers. However, for the purpose of my analysis, there were (and are) certain features that identify those states classified as the Third World.

First, geographically, most of the states are found in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, South East Asia, the Caribbean, the Pacific

and Latin America. Secondly, historically, most had been colonised for various periods and their colonial experience has continued to impact upon their abilities to affect the course of events in the international system. Thirdly, most are new sovereign participants in the affairs of the international society, their participation dating only from their attainment of independence. Fourthly, most of the states have no developed traditions of foreign policy conduct, as the development of their foreign policy structures is recent, most of them coming to life in the 1950s and after. Finally, most are beset by systemic constraints that hamper their effective functioning in the international system or the global society of states. Thus, irrespective of the fluidity of definition, there are certain features that distinguish those states known as the 'Third World', the most important being the poverty of their societies and their limited ability to influence the course of events in the global society.

More than any other event, the end of the Cold War has affected the classification of states in the international system. The collapse of communism and of the East bloc brought an effective end of the East-West ideological division, making irrelevant the division into three world groups. However, the end of the East-West division did not imply an end to polarisation in the international system. If anything, the development brought into sharper relief a more fundamental division in the world: the division between the rich and poor states.

Indications that the most important division in the world system is not that of ideology, but of economic status first became manifest during the 1970s when the Third World quest for a restructuring of the international economic order received vocal attention. This quest dominated the international agenda up to the 1980s when the revival of conservatism in world politics, marked by the accession to power of Margaret Thatcher in UK and her ideological soul mate, Ronald Reagan, in the USA, put paid to the Third World advance.

Thus, while the nomenclature may change, there had always existed in the international system a group of disadvantaged states -

disadvantaged both politically and economically, seeking to make an impact on global politics despite their limitations.

In this lecture, the concentration is on sub-Saharan African states. The reason for this is simple: aggregating and analysing the foreign policy of the 54 states of Africa is difficult enough, much less seeking to do this for all developing countries. However, I believe that enough lessons can be drawn from the African experience to make it possible to extrapolate for similarly positioned regions of the world. In this lecture, our subject is foreign policy cooperation in developing countries and our laboratory is sub-Saharan Africa.

Does theory matter?

It is natural to ask why a historian will engage in a conceptualisation exercise given the generally assumed nature of the discipline. Why should we seek to understand the phenomenon of foreign policy cooperation at a conceptual level? Is it not enough to understand what *has* happened and terminate the discourse at that level? Simply, does theory really matter?

The question as to whether or not historians should engage in the study of the past simply for the sake of the past has continued to divide historical scholars for some time. Traditional historians, even of the history of international relations such as J.B. Durozelle, are unanimous that historians should not go beyond the documentation and analysis of events. For J.B. Durozelle, 'History consists only of events', and 'those who think they can go beyond this are usually quite mistaken'.¹ This position fails to acknowledge the fact that knowledge does not lend itself to precise compartmentalisation. Many times scholars construct what a diplomatic historian of note, John Lewis Gaddis, calls "intellectual equivalent of fortified trenches".² If humanities and social sciences scholars are not to sink into mutual incomprehension, then we must engage in more than mere gestures at interdisciplinary cooperation, which is the current routine practice.

Statements such as “the lesson of history is that nobody learns from history” or “history repeats itself” is an admission of the need for history and historians to proceed beyond mere cataloguing or chronicling of events. It is conceptualisation that gives “a context to the activities of practitioners and provides them with an opportunity of learning from the experience of others.” Theory “is an intellectual mapping exercise which tells us where we are now, from where we have come and to where we *might* go”.³ Who says historians do not need theories? Without a minimal conceptual framework the researcher is faced with a confusing mass of facts which he cannot marshal and use.⁴ For the society to learn from history and not to permit history to repeat itself, then historians must learn to embrace conceptual paradigms in the explanations of historical phenomena.

I am not saying that theorising in history is equivalent to theorising in the physical sciences. Certain fields are, in the process of investigating phenomena, able to replicate phenomena. This is not the same for historians who like their disciplinary allies, the political scientists, share a focus on people and therefore depend much on imagination because the phenomena they investigate are non-replicable. However, while exact events are not replicable, sufficient patterns are established such that some *a priori* assumptions can easily be developed.

Replicable sciences assume that knowledge of the past will reveal the future; non-replicable scientists (such as historians) avoid such claims but seek to provide methods for coping with whatever is to come. Thus, while it is difficult to predict where or when exactly the next tsunami will occur, it is helpful to know that coastal lines where tremors had taken place in the past can be vulnerable. Similarly, while one cannot predict which teams will play in the 2006 World Cup final, it is safe to assume that proficiency will determine who will get there. The essence of a historian’s theorising is not to predict the future, but to prepare for it.

We can now return to our primary question and, for ease of reference, I will ask it again: in the light of the African experience, do developing

states confronted with similar constraints and pursuing similar objectives, cooperate in foreign policy matters? International organisations constitute the principal framework through which African states have sought to concert their foreign policy actions over the years. Indeed, international organisations have been the principal instrument for international cooperation in the global system. Any attempt to study African foreign policy cooperation would necessarily seek an understanding of the behaviour of these states in international organisations particularly global and universal organisations such as the United Nations and the Commonwealth of Nations. It will also try to understand the place of sub-regional and regional organisations such as the African Union (the late OAU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the aggregation of foreign policy objectives and plans. While regional and sub-regional organisations play important roles in policy aggregation and coordination – and I have done some work on sub-regional security cooperation in West Africa – my concentration here is on the Commonwealth of Nations, a largely understudied organisation. I seek to do this within the context of the systemic constraints confronting foreign policymaking in these states and the principal objectives of their foreign policy that lend themselves to cooperation.

Constraints on foreign policy making in Africa

On attainment of independence, African states had to participate in the affairs of an international system which they had played little or no part in establishing. For all the newly independent African states, the creation of foreign policy positions to go with their sovereign status meant embarking upon a voyage in rough and uncharted waters. Like other states operating in the international system, African states were faced with certain systemic constraints: military, economic, political, geographical, etc., which affect their exercise of power in the international system.

The exercise of power is crucial in the attempt of any state to make an impact in its relations with other states. Power is a relational concept

and the true test of a state's capacity is reflected on one hand, in its capacity to make others do its bidding and, on the other, to resist pressures from other states. This relational element is reflected in most definitions of power. David A. Baldwin defines power to include "all relationships in which someone [a state] gets someone else [other states] to do something that he or she would not otherwise do."⁵ F.S. Northedge defines power as "the general capacity of a state to make its will felt within the decision-making process of another state,"⁶ while Kal Holsti defines it as "the general capacity of a state to control the behaviour of others."⁷

The capacity of a state to influence events or resist pressure is sometimes compromised by internal and external factors that define the state's operational environment. These include factors of geography, the economy, domestic political structures, the military-strategic situation, historical factors, the policymaking machinery and the nature of the international environment.

In varying degrees, the capacity of African states to determine the course of events in the international environment is affected by these limiting factors. The combination of geographical, economic, military-strategic and other limitations seriously affected the capacity of the immediate post-independence governments in Africa to dictate the pattern of events in the global society. To these should be added the constraints imposed by the colonial legacy, the nature of domestic politics and the capacity of the diplomatic machinery inherited at independence. Thus, it was difficult for most of them to build any sustained pattern or tradition of foreign policymaking. Slim national budgets made difficult the setting up of elaborate foreign policy machinery equipped with the necessary support facilities including quality intelligence and other information gathering services. As such, basic political and economic information about foreign policy operation areas is lacking and technical intelligence is handicapped.

Our argument is this: the various constraints constitute limitations on the manoeuvrability of African states in international society.

Nevertheless, sovereignty and membership of the international society impose certain obligations on states, one of which is participation in international relations. In fulfilling this obligation, each state has its goals, the objectives it intends to pursue. In the case of African states, many of the goals of their foreign policy are similar, a fact that *should* encourage them to concert their actions in achieving them.

One goal of the foreign policies of African states in the immediate post-independence era was anti-colonialism, "the most obvious, consistent, and all-embracing common denominator of African foreign policies".⁸ Even as the first set of African states emerged into independence during the late 1950s and early 1960s, colonialism and white supremacist regimes were prominent features of the African political landscape. Thus, an anti-colonial posture was a natural response of these states in defining their foreign policy goals. Concomitant with the commitment to the full decolonisation of Africa was the pursuit of the eradication of all forms of racism in Africa, the worst expression of which was apartheid in South Africa.

At the inception of the OAU in 1963, there were still many colonial territories and it was only natural that a principal objective of the organisation was the eradication of all forms of colonialism from the continent. To facilitate the realisation of this objective, a Liberation Committee was set up with headquarters in Dar es Salaam, charged with the harmonisation of all the assistance provided by African states to the liberation movements. It also managed a special fund set up for the purpose. In the following years, collective African commitment to decolonisation found expression in such documents as the 1969 Lusaka Manifesto, the 1974 Dar Declaration, and the 1974 Lusaka Agreement.

Another common political objective of the foreign policy of African states was the pursuit of non-alignment in their relations with the power blocs in the international system. At independence, African states were confronted with a world cleft into antagonistic power blocs. For these states, their immediate colonial history had ensured that all the important commercial, cultural, military and professional

links were with the West particularly Western Europe. The need not to be caught in the power struggle between East and West was clear enough to them – as to the new states in other parts of the world, which led to the formation of the Non-aligned Movement. By the mid-1960s, non-alignment had become a norm among most developing countries and a cardinal principle in the foreign policy declarations of the new states of Africa despite the different interpretations of what constitutes non-alignment.

Another common political objective, again variously interpreted, was the search for African unity. A few states were committed to 'instant' unity and the creation of a "continental government of Africa now", while others opted for a gradual approach. Nyerere argued for sub-regional integration, a mid-point to continental unity, a proposition that Nkrumah considered an obstacle to ultimate unity. For Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the idea of an African government was a pipedream. When the OAU was established, it was clearly stated that its purpose was to defend, not to abolish member states. But in varying forms, all states professed a search for unity of the states of the continent.

The fulfilment of economic expectations was a major task of the post-independence governments. Popular expectations of the material benefits of independence, created in no small measure by the nationalist leaders themselves in the years of the anti-colonial struggle, and the utterances of political leaders in the period after, demand at least partial fulfilment. The future political security of leaders was gradually tied to their economic performance and concrete evidence of accomplishment. It was only natural to deploy every tool available, foreign policy inclusive, to attain the objective. Foreign policy became a tool for pursuing domestic economic goals. In seeking to overcome the problems of underdevelopment, states seek to protect, augment and diversify their economic and foreign trade patterns.

Against the background of the constraints within which they were operating, these states had grand objectives which required the input of others for their attainment. For instance, the complete decolonisation

of Africa and end to apartheid in South Africa were dependent on factors some of which were beyond their direct control. In their economic aspirations, the states were handicapped financially and technically and lacked the necessary manpower. Thus, it was apparent that African states needed to relate with states outside their region in order to facilitate the attainment of their objectives.

Even before African countries began to attain their independence, the question of a common foreign policy had been explored and debated mainly at the various Pan-African conferences that brought together African nationalists in the continent and the diaspora. However, in the post-independence period, cooperation efforts found expression in African participation in international organisations.

Participation in international organisations generally can be useful for developing states. International organisations are recognised as capable of performing three basic roles: they function as instruments for advancing the particular ends and interest of their members; they serve as arenas of forums within which actions take place; and they function as independent actors in the international system.⁹ The most usual image of international organisations is that of the policy instrument of states, instruments used to further particular ends, a "means for the diplomacy of a number of disparate and sovereign national states."¹⁰ Our case study of the use of international organisations by African states for the realisation of foreign policy goals is the Commonwealth of Nations.

Africa and the Commonwealth: Reflections in the search for a theory

African issues took prominent stage in Commonwealth deliberations from the time of their accession to the organisation. Indeed, Rhodesia and apartheid in South Africa ensured a pronounced African dimension in the Commonwealth.

The aspirations of African states in their quest for membership of the Commonwealth were essentially in two categories, political and

economic, and derived mostly from the general foreign policy goals identified earlier. The political ones include attempts to use the organisation as a forum for the continuation of the struggle for the total liberation of Africa, the independence of colonial territories and eradication of apartheid in South Africa. The economic aspirations include search for better terms of trade and for aid and other technical assistance in their development efforts.

The pursuit of the liberation struggle produced mixed results particularly up till 1990. They were able to secure the withdrawal of South Africa from the organisation but could not prevent certain powerful members from continuing diplomatic, economic, cultural, sporting and other contacts with South Africa. However, the issue was kept in the forefront of Commonwealth discussions until the transition of that country to democratic rule in 1994. On Rhodesia, the Commonwealth managed to hold the line between 1966 and 1972, but the internationalisation of the struggle for the liberation of Zimbabwe from 1973 led to an apparent marginalisation of the Commonwealth. The ultimate resolution of the crisis was the outcome of decisions reached at the 1979 Lusaka Commonwealth summit and the subsequent Lancaster House Conference at which the Commonwealth, through its Secretariat, played a leading mediatory role.

In the economic sphere, the ability of African countries to affect the behaviour of their British counterparts using the forum of the Commonwealth was nil. Against the wishes of its Commonwealth partners, the British government successfully negotiated its entry into the European Community, while Commonwealth African states were compelled to join forces with similarly positioned developing countries in Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific regions to form the ACP¹¹ Group that subsequently negotiated the various Lome Agreements with the European Community (now European Union). The Commonwealth, again through its Secretariat, sought to play a crucial role in bringing

the various developing countries together to negotiate with the EEC, but its efforts proved abortive.¹²

The area of development assistance produced the least friction in Africa's relations with the Commonwealth. The initiation of the Special Commonwealth African Assistance Plan (SCAAP) was recognition of the special claim of its African members to development assistance. The setting up of the Secretariat and the multilateralisation of Commonwealth assistance activities through the setting up of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation meant the addressing of African needs within a broader framework. Even then, Africa continued to attract pride of place in Commonwealth assistance programmes.

Elsewhere, I have explored the issue of the appropriateness of the Commonwealth as a forum for the attainment of the African foreign policy goals as well as the objective value of the African achievements *vis-à-vis* their aspirations. Here, my concern is with the general conclusions that can be drawn with respect to the phenomenon of foreign policy cooperation and the place of international organisations in the foreign policy calculations of developing countries. So, we can now return to our primary question: do states with similar constraints, pursuing similar objectives, necessarily cooperate in the pursuit of these objectives?

The experience of African states in the Commonwealth is instructive. At different times, there was evidence of attempts to concert the African position on the issues at stake within the forum of the organisation. The first attempt at 'caucusing' was at the September 1966 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting, described by the then British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, as the 'nightmare conference'¹³. The principal issue at the Meeting was how to deal with the Ian Smith-led rebellion in Rhodesia. The African members reached out to the Asian and Caribbean states to evolve a common approach to the debate on Rhodesia. The caucusing approach involved holding a number of

meetings before the plenary sessions and invariably meant holding up the formal sessions. These side meetings irritated the other Prime Ministers and Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada did not hesitate to express annoyance at the strategy. The approach, it was conceded, had facilitated the reconciliation of views and the emergence of a consensus, but then, the group consultations were considered unusual and were not accepted as precedent.¹⁴

With group consultations or caucusing 'outlawed' at Commonwealth summits, there were no serious attempts at coordinating the African position on issues *during* subsequent summits. But there were several instances of informal consultations *before* the formal convening of official summits. For example, at the instance of Nigeria, most African delegates to the Singapore Meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government, met to discuss a strategy for making more effective their opposition to Britain's intention to resume the sale of arms to apartheid South Africa. Before then and not long after the new British Government of Prime Minister Edward Heath made a pronouncement on the issue, there was an attempt by the East, Central and Southern African Commonwealth leaders to formulate a common position on the issue. This involved meetings of their Presidents and later of their Foreign Ministers. However, not much was achieved by these meetings given especially the developments at the Singapore summit and in the months after which showed an apparent disdain for the African position by the British Government. The only other attempt to collate an African strategy before formal sessions of Heads of Government Meetings was in 1979, when a special meeting of the Frontline States attended by the two leaders of Zimbabwe's Patriotic Front, Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe, was held with the purpose of formulating an effective strategy on the Rhodesian question at the Lusaka summit.

On the other hand, it is easier to discern evidence of lack of cooperation or coordination of policy and approach. Although all Commonwealth African countries were rhetorically committed to similar objectives, they chose to pursue these objectives in different directions and many

times acted at cross-purposes. A few examples will suffice. The first was in the aftermath of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence by the Ian Smith-led white minority regime in Rhodesia in November 1965, which had pitched Ghana and Tanzania against the rest of Commonwealth Africa. While the other members had shied away from implementing the OAU resolution calling for break in diplomatic relations with Britain, the two countries not only implemented it, but refused to attend the Lagos Prime Ministers' Meeting of January 1966 called largely to save the face of those who had backed out of the OAU commitment. Following a change of government in Ghana a few weeks later, that country restored relations with Britain but Tanzania continued to boycott subsequent Commonwealth summits until it restored relations with Britain in 1968.

A lack of common approach was similarly manifested in November 1977, this time by the Frontline States. From the time the group was set up in 1974, the members had consistently favoured the holding of elections before independence in Rhodesia. However, at a time when Ian Smith was launching an offensive against the Anglo-American proposals which both the Frontline States and the Commonwealth had accepted as a possible solution to the crisis, Zambia decided to break ranks with the rest. President Kaunda whose private views were that holding elections before independence in Zimbabwe was a recipe for violence finally clashed openly with Julius Nyerere in November 1977 at a meeting of the group in Mbala, Zambia. These internal differences among the Frontline States affected the Rhodesian struggle as they came into the open at a time Ian Smith developed his alternative strategy for resolving the question of Rhodesian independence, the so-called 'Internal Settlement'.

There are several instances of Commonwealth African leaders operating at cross-purposes, thus injuring their own causes. The late 1960s had witnessed a split on the African front with regard to approach to the South African question. The fundamental difference of approach finally burst into the open in 1971 when that year's OAU

summit witnessed a division between those in support of dialogue with the Pretoria regime such as Ghana, Malawi and Lesotho, and those against including Botswana, Gambia, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Zambia. While the former group of states held that the only way to bring South Africa to reason was to dialogue with the apartheid regime, the opponents were firmly of the view that it was "self-deceiving and a waste of time to advocate dialogue with those who were not ready to listen."¹⁵

Another example of lack of consensus was over the Edmonton Commonwealth Games in 1978. Unlike in 1970 when virtually all African states were ready to pull out of the Commonwealth Games to protest the proposed South African rugby tour of England, Africa's protest at New Zealand's continued sporting links with South Africa did not meet with equal resolve in 1977-78. Their boycott of the 1976 Montreal Olympics had turned out an unpleasant experience and they were not ready to miss the 1978 Commonwealth Games. This time, only Nigeria felt sufficiently strong about the breach of the Commonwealth code to announce a withdrawal from the Commonwealth Games.

With regard to policy, it was probably the maverick nature of the policies of Malawi under the late President Hastings Kamuzu Banda, which provided the most glaring contradiction in African approach to issues particularly on the liberation of southern Africa. Over the years, President Banda openly adopted attitudes opposed to the mainstream of African opinion. At the Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers in Lagos in January 1966 and at subsequent summits where the Rhodesian issue was tackled, Banda spoke more as an apologist of the British Government, decried the use of force and justified the British Government's claim to incapacity to use force to restore order and legitimacy in Rhodesia. Later, he declared the armed struggle in Rhodesia and other parts of southern Africa a futile exercise. His positions occasionally embarrassed even the British Government.

In 1970-71, Banda declared support for the sale of arms to apartheid South Africa by the British Government and claimed that his African colleagues were merely spreading wicked and malicious lies against the Republic of South Africa. Malawi maintained full diplomatic and economic relations with apartheid South Africa and received financial assistance from the apartheid government for the building of a new capital in Lilongwe, and it remained a leading advocate of dialogue with the apartheid regime. One should not dismiss Malawi's position on issues of common interest to African states with a wave of the hand because it had a negative impact on the cause of liberation of states in the southern African region. It is true that its landlocked position could have influenced its approach to South Africa; yet, in this situation, Malawi was not more handicapped than Zambia or the BLS¹⁶ states. One may attribute this attitude to the whims of a maverick leader but it does not in any way lessen the negative impact on the African cause.

The lack of a discernible common African position negatively affected the pursuit of their objectives in the international arena and provides some answer to the question as to whether participation in international organisations can further the cause of foreign policy cooperation among African and other developing states.

In the light of the above, the obvious conclusion to draw is that, the fact that states have common objectives, are faced with common problems, and pursuing these objectives on a common platform, does not mean that they would necessarily cooperate in pursuing these objectives. If anything, the common platform may only serve as a forum for highlighting their differences. Individual countries are likely to continue to pursue their own interests while expressing rhetorical commitment to cooperation in pursuit of similar objectives. Many factors are responsible for the apparent conflict of approach in addressing what seemed logical enough ordinarily. These include the peculiar needs of states which may force on a state a foreign policy posture conditioned by its circumstance: the personal attributes and

disposition of the leaders, and the stage of development of a country's foreign policy machinery. In various ways, all these affect the foreign policy postures of a state particularly for developing countries.

The future of foreign policy cooperation in Africa

I now step into the realm that traditional historians consider forbidden territory, one which they shy away from "like vampires confronted with crosses".¹⁷ The status of African states in the post-Cold War international system has exposed more than ever the need for these states to come together in the pursuit of common objectives. Probably more than at any other time in their post-independence era, sub-Saharan Africa today presents probably the greatest development challenge to the international community. Africa fares badly under most development indices and fares even worse when its performance is compared with those of other regions of the world. Despite having 12.5% of the world's population, Africa produces only 3.7% of global gross domestic product and accounts for only 1.5% of the global trade in goods and services. More than 50% of its people live on less than US \$1 a day, with 59% of the rural and 43% of the urban population living below the poverty line. A meaningful pursuit of Africa's development agenda would require concerted efforts on the part of these states.

In the area of regional security, peace and stability, African states have also had to assume responsibility for addressing the problems of their continent. Without doubt, African states are the leading orphans of the Cold War. Even before the end of the Cold War, the great powers had become increasingly reluctant to assume responsibility for restoring or imposing order in the crisis-ridden regions of the developing world except in special circumstances. The experiences of Somalia, Rwanda, Liberia and other crisis areas in Africa confirm the postulation that the great powers are weary of involvement in conflict situations in Africa. This makes it necessary for African and other developing states to assume primary responsibility for the

management and resolution of conflicts in their regions in the face of an increasingly indifferent world.

In particular, I believe the Nigerian government would benefit from cooperating with other African states in the pursuit of certain elements of its foreign policy agenda, including debt forgiveness and pursuit of a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. Too often, various Nigerian governments had acted as if other African states need us more than we need them. Probably the only exception was the development of the Concert of Medium Powers during the tenure of Bolaji Akinyemi as Foreign Minister. Even then, not many African countries were included in the list. In the pursuit of these two objectives, Nigeria would benefit from concerting its action with those of other African states. Recently, the government set up a high-level national awareness committee on United Nations Reform. A glaring omission in the committee is the absence of an academic. While the Information Minister disclosed that the government was not yet dealing with the issue of representation by Nigeria at the reformed UN, it was clear that the unspoken agendum of the committee is to prepare the ground for Nigeria's pursuit of a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Nigeria needs other African countries if this agendum were to be successfully pursued. South Africa and Egypt, among others, can lay claims to being equally if not better qualified to represent the continent on the UN body. The pursuit of three different claims by African countries could only injure the goal of African states to have a permanent seat in the expanded UN Security Council.

A second current agendum on the foreign policy of African states is the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). NEPAD should be understood in the context of the current dismal economic status of sub-Saharan African states. NEPAD is supposed to be the basis of a new partnership between Africa and the international community in the search for a way forward for the continent. From the inception of the initiative, African leaders were conscious of the need to carry along the various partners at the national, regional and

global levels. Indeed, the NEPAD leadership was aggressive in courting the support of the international community. However, African states have not been as aggressive in courting themselves. A major area of need is that of bringing the civil society in their various countries on board.

In lieu of a conclusion: are Nigerian historians in search of relevance?

In recent years, a new fad has emerged in the circle of History Departments in Nigerian universities: the addition of new names to the nomenclature of the 'Department of History'. Hence, we now have departments of 'History and International Studies', 'History and Diplomatic Studies', 'History and Strategic Studies', etc. For me, this raises crucial questions on the development of History as a discipline in this country. Any new student of international relations is aware of the pedigree of her discipline, specifically, its origins in History. It is true that one of the errors of the 6-3-3-4 system is the phasing out of History as a subject at the primary and junior secondary levels. By the time a student reaches senior secondary level, she would not have had the necessary exposure to the history and culture of her country or even the simplest introduction to the discipline. The consequence is the dwindling number of applications to the departments of History. The challenges of a collapsed economy have also made young people to query the relevance of a History degree in today's market-driven society. In their efforts to recruit new students, many Nigerian universities chose to self-immolate by giving themselves new names that would appeal to prospective students. I consider this absurd. Not only do these universities lack the capacity to teach required courses, the change in nomenclature has not been accompanied by any serious review of their curriculum. A principal challenge that historians must confront is that of curriculum review to reflect changing values and the country's development needs.

The London School of Economics has separate Departments of International Relations, International History, and Economic History,

as well as an autonomous Business History Unit. All of these are functioning normally with their academic staff engaged in constant productive scholarship. There is no suggestion of a merger much less the Department of International History seeking relevance by attaching itself to International Relations.

In Ife, we have recognised the challenge posed by these developments. Our response to dwindling enrolment is the introduction of new programmes and review of our curricula to meet contemporary challenges in the nation's political economy. Our History & International Relations combined Honours programme, operated in collaboration with the Department of International Relations is now into its fifteenth year. What we discovered more than 15 years ago in Ife is just being discovered in other Nigerian universities. We lead others follow. We were the first to introduce a combined honours programme in History and Economics and we are probably still the only Department of History running the programme. We can proudly beat our chests as leaders in the field.

A nation that ignores its history and which is not concerned with how much of its history and culture is passed on to its youth and future generations, is in grave danger. Here in Ife, the statute setting up the University states specifically that one of the tasks of the University would be to give its students training in African History and Culture. The course that was designed to prosecute this was effectively wiped out with the development of the Special Electives system. This is a major disservice. I believe this University should begin the task of setting this nation on the right path by reintroducing the compulsory teaching and learning of African History and Culture because a nation or a people that do not know where they are coming from are unlikely to have a clear idea of their destination.

Vice-Chancellor, distinguished members of the audience, I thank you for your attention.

Notes

- ¹ J.B. Durozelle, "La nature des relations internationales", *Politique étrangère* No. 5; cited in Mercel Merle, *The Sociology of International Relations*, trans. by Dorothy Parkin (Lemington Spa, Hamburg & New York: Berg, 1987), p.98.
- ² John Lewis Gaddis, "History, Theory and Common Ground", *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 1, Summer 1997, p.75.
- ³ A.J.R. Groom, 'The Setting in World Society', in A.J.R. Groom and P. Taylor (eds.), *Frameworks for International Cooperation* (London: Pinter, 1990), p.3.
- ⁴ Merle, *The Sociology of International Relations*, p.98.
- ⁵ David A. Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), p.20.
- ⁶ F.S. Northedge, *The International Political System*, London: Faber and Faber, 1976, p.20.
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- ⁸ Vernon McKay, "International Conflict Patterns", in Vernon McKay (ed.), *African Diplomacy: Studies in the Determinants of Foreign Policy* (London & New York: Pall Mall Press for SAIS, The John Hopkins University, 1966), p.20.
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¹⁵ *West Africa*, 18 June 1971, p.683, and 9 July 1971, p.773.

¹⁶ Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland.

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