

**NIGERIA AND SOUTH AFRICA PRE-APARTHEID
RELATIONS: POLITICAL, CULTURAL, AND
ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS, 1960-1994**

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Abstract

This work interrogates the multidimensional relationship between Nigeria and South Africa during the apartheid era, from Nigeria's independence in October 1960 to the formal collapse of the apartheid regime in January 1994. Although Nigeria did not establish official bilateral or diplomatic ties with apartheid South Africa, it pursued an active and consequential engagement with the African National Congress (ANC) as a vehicle for opposing white minority rule. Through the lens of political diplomacy, cultural solidarity, and economic support, this work examines the nature, motivations, and contradictions of Nigeria's anti-apartheid foreign policy. It traces the evolution of Nigeria's stance from the cautious and inconsistent approach of the Tafawa Balewa administration in the early 1960s, shaped by British influence and inter-regional tensions, to the more assertive and pan-Africanist posture adopted following the military interventions and the oil-boom era of the 1970s. It further highlights how platforms such as FESTAC '77 served as critical spaces for cultural diplomacy and liberation solidarity, and how successive Nigerian administrations both civilian and military invested large amounts of financial, logistical, and moral resources toward dismantling apartheid. Using both primary and secondary sources, and the historical methodology, the

work argues that while Nigeria's anti-apartheid commitment was genuine and historically significant, its execution was characterised by regime-specific inconsistencies and a coherent, institutionalised foreign policy. The findings underscore the centrality of domestic political dynamics, British neo-colonial influence, intra-African rivalries, and pan-Africanist idealism in shaping Nigeria's pre-1994 posture toward South Africa. The work concludes that Nigeria's pre-1994 relationship with South Africa was defined not by formal diplomatic ties but by a sustained, if inconsistent, commitment to the ANC and the broader anti-apartheid cause.

Keywords: *ANC, Apartheid, FESTAC '77, Nigeria-ANC relations, Nigeria, South Africa.*

Introduction

The relationship between Nigeria and South Africa before the dismantling of the apartheid regime in 1994 is one of the most instructive case studies in the history of African diplomacy. Superficially, it was defined by absence: Nigeria maintained no formal bilateral or diplomatic ties with Pretoria throughout the apartheid era; however, underneath that void was a web of political solidarity, cultural engagement, and economic commitment that profoundly shaped the trajectory of South Africa's liberation struggle.¹ To understand this paradox of deep involvement without formal recognition is to appreciate both the ideological ambitions and the structural constraints that characterised Nigeria's foreign policy in the decades following its independence.

From the moment Nigeria gained independence on 1 October 1960, the problem of apartheid South Africa became an inescapable moral and geopolitical issue. Africa's most populous nation which was endowed with significant oil wealth and a growing sense of continental responsibility,

found itself compelled to take a position on the racial injustice that was institutionalised in southern Africa. In its earliest years, Nigeria's anti-apartheid policy was marked by ambiguity and contradiction. The Tafawa Balewa administration, shaped by a conservative pro-Western orientation and constrained by the centrifugal forces of federalism, oscillated between symbolic condemnation of apartheid and quiet accommodation of British interests that were invested in the South African status quo.²

Despite these early inconsistencies, Nigeria's relationship with the ANC took root as early as 1962, when Nelson Mandela, then the ANC's deputy president, made a landmark visit to Lagos seeking solidarity and material support in the anti-apartheid cause.³ That visit marked the beginning of a durable political relationship that would only deepen over the following three decades. As Nigeria passed through successive governments, it became an increasingly assertive champion of ANC interests on the continental and international stage, mounting diplomatic pressure through the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Nations, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the Non-Aligned Movement, and ECOWAS.

The military era, particularly from the mid-1970s onward, marked a decisive shift in Nigeria's anti-apartheid posture. Sustained by oil revenues and a growing sense of hegemonic responsibility on the African continent, Nigeria committed substantial financial, logistical, and political resources to the liberation struggle in southern Africa. Nigeria established the Southern African Relief Fund (SARF), extended direct grants to the ANC and PAC, nationalised British petroleum assets as a sanction against pro-apartheid Western complicity, and dispatched Technical Aid Corps (TAC) personnel to frontline states battered by South Africa's destabilisation campaigns.⁴ These gestures reflected a genuine, although sometimes inconsistent, national commitment to the pan-Africanist

principle that the liberation of one part of the continent was the collective responsibility of all.

Beyond the political and economic dimensions, Nigeria's engagement with South Africa during the apartheid era had a rich cultural dimension that is often underappreciated in the scholarly literature. The hosting of the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC '77) in Lagos stands as the most vivid expression of this cultural diplomacy. By bringing together over 17,000 participants from 56 countries, FESTAC provided a critical platform for the consolidation of pan-Africanist solidarity and for the internationalisation of the ANC's liberation narrative. It was at FESTAC that Thabo Mbeki, which later became South Africa's second democratically elected president, first honed the ANC's cultural strategy for building international solidarity against apartheid.⁵ Nigerian musicians, including Fela Anikulapo-Kuti and Sonny Okosun, further amplified this cultural front by embedding anti-apartheid consciousness into popular music that resonated far beyond Nigeria's borders.

This work is structured to examine these dimensions in turn. It begins with an analysis of Nigeria's political and diplomatic relations vis-à-vis the apartheid regime and the ANC, tracing the evolution of policy from the cautious Balewa years to the more assertive stances of the military era. It then turns to the cultural sphere, examining the role of FESTAC '77 and artistic activism in Nigeria's anti-apartheid engagement. Finally, it examines Nigeria's economic relations. Together, these three dimensions reveal a foreign policy that, for all its inconsistencies, was animated by a coherent pan-Africanist vision and left a lasting imprint on the course of South Africa's liberation.

The central argument of this work is that Nigeria's pre-1994 engagement with South Africa, though never formalised at the

state-to-state level, constituted a substantive and historically significant foreign policy enterprise driven by pan-Africanist ideology, domestic political imperatives, and the personal dispositions of successive Nigerian leaders.

Nigerian Political and Diplomatic Relations with South Africa

Nigeria did not establish any formal bilateral or diplomatic relations with South Africa between October 1960 and January 1994. South Africa was only an object of Nigerian foreign policy that was executed through various international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), Commonwealth of Nations, Organization of African Unity, Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) and ECOWAS. Domestic policies were designed to encourage the same thing. However, Nigeria established relations with the African National Congress (ANC) and its leadership. Nigeria-ANC relations date back to 1962 when Dr. Nelson Mandela who was the African National Congress's (ANC) deputy president sneaked out of apartheid South Africa to seek support from fellow African nations through Nigeria during the anti-racial struggle.⁶ It was during this famous visit that relation was established between both nations under the leadership of Nigeria's first Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa during Nigeria's first republic. Since this historic visit, Nigeria supported the ANC in her anti-apartheid struggles and eventually with South Africa at the wake of defeat of the apartheid regime⁷. The visit did not just mark the links between both parties; it as well established the leadership role which Nigeria was to assume in African nationalism and politics. It could be said and rightly that no diplomatic relations were established between Nigeria and South Africa; rather political relations were established with the ANC and this relation was targeted at crushing the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Claude Philips noted that Nigeria's policy towards apartheid before 1975 was encompassed with lack of consistencies⁸. At the wake of independence, for instance, the NPC and the NCNC coalition parliamentary system of government led by Alhaji Tafawa Balewa and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe had divergent political opinions towards South Africa. While Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe of the NCNC, favoured diplomatic relations with South Africa during his election campaign in 1959⁹, Alhaji Tafawa Balewa of the NPC did not consider the apartheid issue to be his party's area of concern. Unsurprisingly, this was reflected in Jaja Wachuku's (an NCNC member) speech to the UNO in 1963, when he denied a plot by Nigeria to expel South Africa from the UNO. Balewa and his political party did not initially have a foreign policy regarding South Africa. Ostensibly, the foregoing explains the reason behind Balewa's employing of an expatriate secretary, Mr. Peter Stallard (a Briton who was pro-apartheid), who dominated Nigeria's foreign policy formulation and implementation until 1961¹⁰. Balewa handled the apartheid issue in his policy with utmost care and diplomacy. In his inaugural foreign policy position statement on 20 August 1960, he announced that his government considered the issue of South African politics to be a volatile one, and that he did not want to embarrass his colleagues in the Commonwealth. Consequently, the Acting foreign policy spokesman, Anthony Enahoro, indicted him of hitting the apartheid system with kid gloves¹¹. On another occasion, in January 1960, Tafawa Balewa renounced the use of a boycott to force a change in South Africa, as he argued that a boycott might make South Africa unduly bitter and there would be no end to the trouble which might then arise¹². Balewa's stance may have been as a result of fear of economic sanctions or withdrawal of economic aids from Britain.

Another instance of the inconsistencies of the foreign policy of Nigeria towards South Africa was regions taking a different stance from the central government. This was when the governments of Eastern and Western Nigeria recognized Israel and South Africa, whereas the northern region failed to do so. Again, while the Tafawa Balewa federal government as have been stated did not want to openly support the ANC, the delegates of the ANC soliciting money for Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), which was the military arm of the ANC, got 10,000 British pounds sterling from Ahmadu Bello, the premier of the Northern region, in 1962¹³.

Nigeria was among the frontline states that condemned the racial killings of unarmed Africans in Sharpeville riots in the 1960s. There was generally an international condemnation of apartheid after the Sharpeville Massacre of 21 March 1960, which caused Nigeria's parliament to condemn Pretoria's political system. This led to the Private Member's Bill, which proscribed importation of goods from South Africa, on 5 April 1960. The Sharpeville massacre resulted in a call for South Africa's expulsion from the Commonwealth by the Premier of western Nigeria who was also the leader of the opposition in the parliament, Chief Obafemi Awolowo. Awolowo was of the opinion that there could be no family ties with whites of South Africa who have shown a sadism and barbarism which are rare in the annals of man¹⁴. The inconsistency of Tafawa Balewa's foreign policy towards South Africa was made very evident when in 1962 he requested to be invited to South Africa and suggested the possibility of economic and political relations, after his condemnation of South Africa at the March 1961 Commonwealth Summit in London. Prime Minister H. F. Verwoerd rejected this request. Domestically, Balewa's request for an invitation to visit South Africa was criticized by some members of the Nigerian parliament. Dr. Kalu Ezera (NCNC MP), for example challenged Balewa about his

proposed visit to South Africa, as being a contradiction of his government's anti-apartheid policy. Balewa's move might have resulted from the British pressure on Nigeria to take the lead in recognizing South Africa. Balewa's inconsistent policy and position on sanctions against apartheid in South Africa notwithstanding, his party, the NPC, imposed an embargo on the employment of white South Africans in the Northern region of Nigeria¹⁵. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe in an address to Parliament said regarding South Africa that Nigeria would regard any racial discrimination as a mark of disrespect and an unfriendly act. Like have been stated, this again is an instance of the regional government having a different foreign policy stance from the central government. At the federal level, the Nigeria's then minister of commerce, Alhaji Zanna Bukar Dipcharina, in the House of Representatives, undertook to stop engaging white South Africans in the civil service¹⁶.

Balewa's foreign policy towards South Africa apartheid can be seen in terms of the rivalry between himself and Dr. Kwame Nkrumah for hegemonic leadership in Africa. Balewa rejected Nkrumah's call for an African High Command to deal with colonialism and apartheid policies. Ideological incompatibility and hegemonic competition between Nigeria and Ghana caused Balewa to reject Nkrumah's position, irrespective of its logic in terms of the anti-apartheid struggle. This ideological differences and incompatibility of foreign policy with Kwameh Nkrumah in Ghana, the need to satisfy the West especially with Britain, and the cautious diplomacy of the federal government, had an effect on government attitudes on the apartheid policy and its hegemonic leadership intentions in Africa¹⁷. It becomes very necessary for one to begin to ask, "Why was Nigeria's foreign policy stance towards South Africa during this period inconsistent?"

The constitution and politics of Nigeria at independence may have made Balewa to remain inconsistent on foreign policy

matters, as the 1960 constitution institutionalised federalism. The three regions created at independence were empowered with powers regarding industrial and economic development. This gap was used by the regions to send representatives (consular officers) to certain developed states. Parallel foreign policies therefore ensued, which caused confusion to the government at the centre. The Eastern region was not completely against the apartheid system. Nnamdi Azikwe and Jaja Wachuku, the Governor General and Foreign Affairs Minister respectively, were members of the NCNC and favored constructive engagement with South Africa s against a radical engagement. A conflict of interest between Wachuku (NCNC), Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Bamali (NPC), Minister for states on Foreign Affairs, could have caused Balewa to adopt two parallel policies on apartheid.

Again, the obvious influence of Britain on Nigeria at independence robbed Nigeria of the liberty of an uncensored foreign policy. Of course the interest of the British government was to support white South Africans¹⁸. Among the reason that could be responsible are; First; the need to maintain economic and demographic balance in Britain was responsible for the British support of South African white supremacists and Nigeria's dilly-dallying foreign policy towards South African apartheid¹⁹. For instance, Campbell noted that close to 20 percent of white South Africans were British passport holders. This implied that attempts to introduce majority rule in favour of the blacks might jeopardise whites' employment opportunities and cause subsequent emigration to Britain, with resulting economic pressure on London.

Again, British interest in South Africa could be perceived as being strategic owing to military and economic considerations. The need to control the Cape route and the mineral resources together with gold, platinum and coal ranked high in the policies of London. Therefore, presumably,

pressure from Britain in the form of economic rewards, could have influenced Balewa and his secretary, Stallard, in their according implied recognition to South Africa²⁰.

As have been established elsewhere in this work, Ghana's emerging role and the perceived threat of almost hijacking Nigeria's manifest destiny in Africa as the regional giant may have influenced Balewa's conservative foreign policy stance towards South Africa's apartheid or the policy of constructive engagement as against Ghana's radical actions against South Africa.

After Nigeria's second military coup in the 1970s, Nigeria's foreign policy stance against apartheid in South Africa became firmer and stricter in support of the South African blacks. Nigeria was a major voice in the condemnation of the racist violent responses to the Soweto crisis in June 1976. Nigeria also strongly condemned the murder by Pretoria's agents in 1982 of Mary First, a member of the ANC in Maputo and Mrs. Dulcie September in February, 1988 in Paris. When the ANC's offices in Lusaka and Harare were raided by Pretoria's commando units and when also the captured operatives of ANC were hanged and murdered without trial, the ANC enjoyed Nigeria's unalloyed support. In both national and international forums like the United Nations, Commonwealth of Nations, Non-Aligned Movements, among others, different Nigerian administrations called for sanctions to be imposed on Pretoria. It is clear that both Nigeria and ANC share common stand on the African nationalist struggles and in the movement for the eradication of apartheid. Nigeria was a signatory of the Harare document which called for the unconditional release of all political prisoners, lift ban on political organisation, move troops out the towns, end state of emergency, repeal legislations like the internal security act meant to circumscribe the activities of political bodies and end all forms of political executions. It was as a result of

Nigeria-ANC relations that led to the nationalist outfit of the movement to establish a mission in Lagos, Nigeria²¹.

The Nigerian Civil War affected Gowon's political attitudes towards liberation movements in Africa. He established direct contact with the ANC, PAC, and certain other liberation movements in Southern Africa such as the MPLA, FNLA, FRELIMO and ZANU. The South African Defence Force's (SADF's) continuous attacks on Mozambique appeared to have influenced Gowon, in 1973, to give out 1.3 million pounds to FRELIMO, in order to dislodge South Africa from Mozambique. He went ahead to deny South African journalists visas to Nigeria to attend an International Press Conference scheduled for May 1975 in Lagos. In line with his usual quiet diplomacy and attempts to not directly offend Britain and America, Gowon empowered the Federal Investigation and Intelligence Bureau (FIIB) under Alhaji Mohammed Dikko Yusuf to understudy and provide political and military support to various liberation movements in South Africa. He sent Yusuf and Ukpabi Assika on a secret mission to Agostinho Neto (the MPLA leader) to consider the possibility of recognising the MPLA as the sole representative of Angola. The mission was as well authorized to assess the extent of damage caused on Luanda by South Africa through the UNITA rebels. Nigeria's financial power its hegemonic ambitions, and the Civil War experience, influenced Nigeria to embark on an outward-looking policy beyond the West African sub-region. Several missions were sent to Southern Africa to determine how Nigeria could get fully involved in reducing the effects of apartheid in the region, and in relegating South Africa to a pariah status. Although Gowon called for an imposition of trade and diplomatic boycotts on South Africa and recognized liberation movements, as was stated earlier, he however, did not allow the ANC and PAC to open offices in Nigeria²².

Nigeria and South Africa Cultural Relations

Culturally, Nigeria related with the ANC through the FESTAC '77 which was a platform to further the advocacy for pan-Africanism and African liberation in the areas of decolonisation and the anti-apartheid movement. On 15 January 1977 inside the National Stadium in Lagos, Nigeria, the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture was inaugurated. Black and African artists, musicians, dancers, performers, writers and intellectuals from all over the world gathered in Nigeria for a month-long celebration of music, art, literature, drama, dance and religion²³. Under the auspices of FESTAC 1977 (Festival of Arts and Culture) which was hosted by Nigeria in Lagos, Nigeria united African peoples from all over the continent who participated in the cultural festival against the apartheid regime²⁴.

There were about 17,000 participants from about 56 countries and an estimation of 500,000 spectators; it was easily one of the biggest cultural events on the African soil during the twentieth century²⁵. The magnificent cultural event celebrated Black and African culture through performances and exhibitions and involved important intellectual deliberations in which about 700 intellectuals participated²⁶. On the basis of culture and heritage, the festival sought to forge links between the continent and diaspora and redefine the role and place of Africa in the world. As such, the festival, also known as FESTAC '77, performed an 'African Renaissance' and gave tangible expression to Pan-Africanist ideals that had been popular in the era of decolonization²⁷. These postcolonial festivals helped to shape as well as highlight the highly positive immediate post independent years, celebrating Black and African cultures and their contributions to world civilization. Partially coinciding with the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, self-apprehension and self-appreciation laid at the heart of the festivals, marked by Pan-Africanist ideas

of historical retrieval and cultural revival as well as a profound utopianism²⁸.

The festival also served as a place for the leaders of African countries to converge and discuss continental issues. Both leaders of independent countries and prominent members of various liberation movements used the events at FESTAC to hold face-to-face meetings and coordinate political issues. One of the most pressing themes of the moment was independence in Southern Africa. For example, for both Kenneth Kaunda and Thabo Mbeki, FESTAC would serve as an important moment in the struggle against colonialism and Apartheid in Southern Africa. Nigeria not only facilitated these concrete encounters at FESTAC but also played a decisive role as an intermediary and power broker as it leveraged its powerful position on the continent in dealings with the West. Nigeria's foreign policy was characterized by its conservative stance on continental issues prior to 1966. The civil war and oil-boom radically changed Nigeria's position within the OAU as Nigeria adopted a strong stance against colonialism and Apartheid and supported various liberation movements²⁹.

Internationally, Nigeria's new-found power was recognized and FESTAC serves as a 'veritable off-stage' to discuss African affairs. For both the leaders of independent African countries and the various attending liberation movements, the festival offered many venues to contemplate the state of the continent and new aspirations for the future. Many felt that FESTAC ushered in a new period of continental unity and "might well be remembered as a turning point in modern African politics³⁰. The situation of white-dominated South Africa and Rhodesia was a pressing topic and served as a unifying force amongst the African countries at FESTAC. Nigeria taking on the role as leader of the Black world looked to continue its leading role in the movement against colonialism and Apartheid in Southern Africa. Since its independence Nigeria had

supported the anti-apartheid cause championing economic sanctions and cultural boycotts at the Commonwealth, and, from 1976 onwards, it participated in the meetings of the Frontline States of Southern Africa at the OAU³¹.

In this context, FESTAC figured as a key moment to demonstrate Nigeria's effort to become the leader of the Black world and its dedication to end white supremacy on the continent. As Antonio de Figueiredo, who was reporting FESTAC for *The Guardian*, noted that "President Kaunda's increasingly militant stand against Rhodesia and South Africa prior to this week's crucial OAU meeting in Lusaka was preceded by personal talks with both the Nigerian and the Ghanaian government at FESTAC's inaugural ceremonies³². It was at the same OAU meeting coinciding with the festival, that Nigeria's proposal to form a 'Pan-African military high command' to confront the minority regimes was accepted. Even President Nyerere of Tanzania and President Kaunda of Zambia, who had previously opposed the idea, now, supported it. Despite unanimous support from the OAU, the creation of the military command was eventually put off to allow the United States to mediate in the Rhodesian situation³³.

For Thabo Mbeki, the later President of South Africa, FESTAC also served as "a key moment in the branding of the South-African liberation movement."¹⁸⁸ Mbeki led the South-African delegation at FESTAC. The delegation comprised a wide variety of artists from all over the world. Many artists were in exile and, moreover, not every participant subscribed to the ideas of the African National Congress (ANC) as the Black Consciousness movement was also popular among the younger members. In need of direction, Mbeki managed to create a cohesive cohort, accommodating the culturally-oriented Black Consciousness supporters into the sphere of influence of the ANC. More importantly, at FESTAC, Mbeki understood the value of "culture as a vehicle for the

mobilization of international solidarity³⁴. Culture could be used politically to reassert Africa on the world stage and showcase the capabilities of Africans if not held down by racist ideologies. Eventually, arising from the experiences at FESTAC, the Amandla Cultural Ensemble was created, which would play an important role in the international charm offensive to end Apartheid in the 1980s³⁵. Externally, the Nigeria's Ministry of Information and Culture got hugely involved in the struggle against anti-apartheid. It supported musical shows and concerts by black South African artists in the 1970s, both before and after the FESTAC '77. For instance, Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masekela, Yvonne Chaka Chaka and the Ipitombi Group added great impetus to the awareness of Nigeria's struggle against apartheid. To show her gratitude to Nigeria's anti-apartheid fight, Miriam Makeba, in 1978, waxed a record in which she praised Nigeria's Murtala Mohammed as an anti-apartheid hero.

Again, Nigerian musicians were employed to play active roles. They were encouraged to disseminate misinformation on the disadvantages of apartheid and political developments in South Africa. Musicians such as Sonny Okosun and Fela Anikulapo Kuti were said to have played major roles in the liberation of South Africa. They in their songs portrayed several of the nationalists and anti-apartheid figures among the blacks, such as Winnie Mandela, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo and the "Soweto Kids", as immortal. Awareness of such leaders, even among uninformed people, grew like wildfire. Fela Kuti in his song, 'Beast of no Nation' (1989) was a powerful anti-apartheid voice culturally in Nigeria against South Africa. The music did not just form a protest, but was a form of awareness on the dehumanizing nature of apartheid in South Africa³⁶.

Nigeria increased its efforts to eradicate colonialism and apartheid in Southern Africa, particularly within the OAU.

Through different initiatives and organizations, most notably the New International Economic Order, Nigeria pushed for a fairer and just world order. Thus, when the festival is placed in the context of Nigeria's foreign policy after the civil war, it becomes clear that for more than half a decade, Nigeria was deeply committed to the development African continent and, more generally, formerly colonized countries outside the continent.

Nigeria's Economic Relations with South Africa before 1994

Just like Nigeria did not establish official diplomatic relations with South Africa; rather with the ANC, Nigeria did also not establish nay economic relations with South Africa. In 1962, the delegates of the ANC solicited funds for Umkhonto we Sizwe (a Zulu phrase that means spear of the nation) which was the armed wing of the ANC and got 10,000 British pounds from Ahmadu Bello, the premier of the Northern region, in 1962³⁷. In the 1970s, Nigeria took a giant leap in the anti-apartheid struggle alongside other movements against apartheid and established the Southern African Relief Fund (SARF) during the Obasanjo's military regime. Nigeria-ANC had flourishing relation during this regime because of the important roles it played in Angola and Zimbabwe. In an attempt to further the liberation struggle in Southern Africa, Obasanjo's opinion was that there was a need to support the economy of frontline states as well as boost the supplies of material to various liberation movements. To this effect, there was a need to put in place a relief fund, probably to take over the Ghanaian position concerning liberation support, which had been left unattended since Nkrumah was overthrown in a *coup d'état* in 1966. The Obasanjo's led government promulgated Decree No. 22 of 1979 to this effect, in order to highlight the aims of the fund as being³⁸;

1. To raise funds by means of appeals, public companies, exhibitions and other activities.
2. To increase such funds through judicious investments, and to administer relief assistance to citizens of Southern Africa via scholarships, emergency materials, social assistance and the amelioration of the condition of the civilian population and the wounded.
3. That assistance from the Fund was to be used to buy buses, generators, clothing, food, pharmaceuticals and camp tents, etc. for refugee camps, liberation movements and frontline states devastated by the racist regimes.
4. To sponsor medical doctors from Nigeria to cushion the medical destabilization effects on the region.

A board of trustees was established and Alhaji Adamu Ciroma, the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria was appointed as the head. All civil servants in Nigeria were asked to compulsorily contribute 10 percent of their April 1977 salary to the Fund. Obasanjo personally donated \$3,000 and his cabinet members each contributed \$1,500³⁹. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in conjunction with Swaziland, Lesotho, Botswana and the CIA under the Carter administration in the US offered sanctuary to as many of the "Soweto Kids" as could make their way to Nigeria⁴⁰.

Mr. Oliver Thambo, ANC's president in 1989 visited Nigeria for assistance when the ANC was faced with inadequate resources to prosecute the anti-apartheid struggles. This was done because of Nigeria's track record of rendering both financial and political assistance to the ANC. The ANC was granted an office in Lagos as well as a form of support that it enjoyed from Nigeria.

Nigeria had a dogged support for the anti-apartheid struggle. In many ways, Nigeria's government compelled the

deduction of the monies to support South Africa from the salaries of Nigerian civil and public servants. It was the enormous financial commitment of Nigeria that enabled Nigeria's admission and selection as one of the Frontline States, even though territorially both states were very much apart. This is also argued as the reason why Nigeria was made chair of the United Nations Committee against Apartheid until the end of the racist segregationist regime in the state⁴¹.

Obasanjo stated that⁴²,

Our conviction was that the independence of our brothers ought to and must be the collective responsibility of all free Africans. We were willing as a people and as a government to commit whatever resources were deemed necessary. Our administration viewed with great concern the apartheid policy of the South African government. It was a concern that was pursued with the same religious fervour as the question of decolonisation.

He added that,

We shall not consider any sacrifice too great nor any weapons too mean to hasten the end of all oppression and injustice in Southern Africa and to ensure total liquidation of apartheid, foreign domination and economic exploitation.

To achieve the above objective, he stated that;

We shall not consider any sacrifice too great nor any weapons too mean to hasten the end of all oppression and injustice in Southern Africa and to ensure total liquidation of apartheid, foreign domination and economic exploitation

To demonstrate Nigeria's economic independence and prove its anti-apartheid stance, Obasanjo announced the nationalisation of BP's 20 percent share in the BP-Shell operating company and 40 percent equity in the marketing company on 31 July 1979 with effective and prompt compensation⁴³. He went ahead to ban all vessels that had any form of connection to South Africa, Namibia, Israel and Southern Rhodesia, from Nigeria's territorial waters. This ban involved all ships that were owned by, hired, or run by, citizens of, or people or companies based in, those states. It also affected any ships carrying any of their citizens or residents, whether as crew or passengers. He also imposed a ban on British businessmen tendering for any contracts in Nigeria. Britain as a result lost about 250 million pounds during the period of the ban⁴⁴.

In preparation for the World Conference against South Africa's Apartheid Policy, Joe Garba⁴⁵ established a committee to study what Nigerian's position on South Africa should be. The committee made recommendations which became the cornerstone of Nigeria's foreign policy towards South Africa, although the recommendations, as approved by the government, were not actualised to the letter. Parts of the recommendations of the committee were as follows;

1. All firms, companies, banking or financial institutions, including the insurance industry, that have interests in South Africa, should be nationalised.
2. Remittances and dividends of such firms or companies may be frozen until such interests are dissolved in South Africa.
3. All multinationals with interests in Nigeria and South Africa should declare such links and related affiliations in South Africa before a certain deadline.
4. At the end of six months, they (the multinationals concerned) stand to suffer penalties as spelt out in (a) and (b).

5. Foreign contractors with links or connections to South Africa should be barred from taking part in any tender of any kind, either for sale, auction or purchase of goods or any construction in Nigeria, with the proviso that this ruling will not affect existing contracts.

President Shehu Shagari gave \$1 million each to the ANC and PAC. In the same year, Swaziland and Botswana received financial and technical aid to cushion the effects of the total national strategy inflicted on them by P. W. Botha's government. Shagari also hosted the meeting of Heads of frontline states in 1981. In a diplomatic move to prevent South Africa's economic blockade against Mugabe's government, Shagari sent a fact-finding team to report on the implications of the independence of Zimbabwe for Southern Africa. The team recommended technical, educational, financial and agricultural assistance to Harare⁴⁶. Shagari as a result donated \$10 million to the ZANU-PF government. South Africa, perhaps as a result of this, executed an unfriendly act against Mugabe: the withdrawal of its High Commissioner, probably because of the perceived pro-Nigerian stance of Zimbabwe. Shagari on realising the necessity of information in the newly independent state, made \$5 million in aid available to Zimbabwe to buy out the shares held by the South African government in *The Herald* newspaper, which had been the major mouthpiece of the Ian Smith government. Obasanjo did a similar thing before 1979 when *West Africa Magazine* was about to be bought by the South African interest to be used against Nigerian interest⁴⁷.

In order to support this stand that he was not ready to negotiate with any racist government, General Ibrahim Babangida gave \$1 million and \$600,000 to the ANC and PAC respectively. In order to reduce the economic dislocation in Southern Africa, Technical Aid Corps Scheme (TACS) officials

were sent to the subregion as doctors, teachers and technicians from various fields, to offset the impact of apartheid on nearby states.

Economic hardships in Nigeria and the Technical Aid Corps Scheme (TACS) made some Nigerians to penetrate the South African economy during the apartheid era. As from 1985, Nigerian professionals entered the homelands of Transkei, Ciskei, Bophuthatswana, and Lebowa, through Botswana, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, and Lesotho. Probably because of the perceived relaxation in Babangida's antiapartheid posture, some Nigerian businessmen, in 1986, exported cocoa beans, palm produce and petroleum products to South Africa⁴⁸.

The above showed that while Africa continued to be professed as the centre-piece of Nigeria's foreign policy, the way and manner that it was discharged remained inconsistent. Generally, this shows the foreign policy instability stance of Nigeria as they were all regimic and not institutional. That is, each Nigerian government had its own foreign policy thrust and how it was pursued as against having a well instituted and structural foreign policy. This process continued until in 1994, the apartheid system was officially crushed after which Nigeria established official diplomatic relations with the post-apartheid South Africa with Nelson Mandela as its first president.

Conclusion

Nigeria's pre-1994 relationship with South Africa was defined not by formal diplomatic ties but by a sustained, if inconsistent, commitment to the ANC and the broader anti-apartheid cause. Across successive administrations, Nigeria deployed political pressure, cultural diplomacy, and considerable financial resources in pursuit of a pan-Africanist vision that regarded the liberation of South Africa as a collective African responsibility. The contradictions that marked this

engagement; rooted in federalism, British influence, and the personal dispositions of individual leaders, do not diminish its historical significance. On the contrary, it was precisely this decades-long investment of solidarity that laid the relational foundations upon which the post-apartheid Nigeria-South Africa partnership would be constructed, and whose legacy continues to shape the bilateral relationship to this day.

Endnotes

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