

The African Colonial Problem and the Quest for Political Solution: Analysis of Nigeria's Roles at the United Nations

Aderemi Opeyemi Ade-Ibijola
Department of Politics
University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa
Email: [ibjemm \[AT\] yahoo.com](mailto:ibjemm [AT] yahoo.com)

ABSTRACT---- *The paper examines the political roles played by the Nigerian state toward resolving the African colonial problem. It argues that Nigeria participated actively in the quest for political solution to the African colonial problem between the period of its own independence in 1960, and the formal democratic transition in South Africa in 1994. The paper analyses Nigeria's political roles in the anti-colonial discourses in the United Nations and submits that these roles were pivotal in African decolonization struggle.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The anti-colonial policy of the Nigerian state was one of the most consistently pursued policies in the country's international relations history. From the time of its own independence in 1960 to the demise of apartheid and colonialism on the African continent in 1994, Nigerian successive governments (military/civilian) fought the colonial problem with varying degrees of vigour and temperaments although more on the diplomatic and political fronts. Consequently, the task here is to analyse the roles played by Nigeria as a member and subsequently as chair of the United Nations Special Committee against apartheid over two decades. After the attainment of political independence from Britain in October 1960, Nigeria was admitted into the United Nations (UN) as the 99th member state of the world's foremost organization. Upon its admission into the UN, Nigeria quickly committed itself to the decolonization of the African continent when the country joined other independent African countries in search for political independence from the various colonizing powers which were in control of African territories. Although the colonial problem in Africa had been well articulated at the UN, at the Commonwealth of Nations, and other international organizations prior to Nigeria's independence. However, the arrival of the Nigerian state on the global arena added another forceful and prominent voice to the existing anti-colonial sentiments against the colonial regimes in Africa. Nigeria's commitment regarding the decolonization of Africa was cogently captured in the inaugural address of the first Nigerian Prime Minister under the new political dispensation, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa which he delivered to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on 7th October, 1960. He stated amongst other things that: "Nigeria hopes to work with other African states for the progress of Africa and to assist in bringing all African territories to a state of responsible independence."¹ The above declaration underpinned Nigeria's subsequent role in African decolonization issues in the UN. As an African member state, Nigeria vowed to articulate the views of other African countries and their people, especially those still languishing under colonial rule and apartheid. This historical background provides the context within which Nigeria's political activities in the UN should be conceptualized. To drive home the point, this paper analyses Nigeria's roles vis-à-vis the African colonial problem and the quest for political solution. This is followed by concluding remarks.

2. THE AFRICAN COLONIAL PROBLEM AND THE QUEST FOR POLITICAL SOLUTION: ANALYSIS OF NIGERIA'S ROLES

In the desire to liquidate colonialism in Africa political strategies were adopted to bring this about. These strategies came in the form of international campaigns and actions against the white supremacist regimes in the Southern African region, particularly in South Africa which was the bastion of arguably the most extreme colonial policy of the 20th century - apartheid. As part of international efforts to halt this degradation of humanity by humanity, the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid was established following the adoption of UNGA Resolution 1654 (XV1) of November 1961 which approved that a mechanism of this kind be put in place to checkmate the racial policies of the South-African white minority regime. Sequel to this decision, the UNGA under Resolution 1761 (XV11) of November 6, 1962 formerly

¹ See Mr Prime Minister, A Selection of Speeches Made by Sir, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1960-1966, Published by the Nigerian Ministry of Information, Lagos, Nigeria, 1964, p. 54.

established a committee and appointed eleven member states of the organization into the membership of the committee to put this resolution into effect.

These countries were: Algeria, Costa Rica, Ghana, Guinea, Haiti, Hungary, Malaya (later known as Malaysia), Nepal, Nigeria, Philippines and Somalia. The Western Powers declined participation in the committee.² The Committee's work began in April 1963 with a mandate to press for effective international sanctions against the apartheid regime of South-Africa. This was followed by series of assistance to the victims of apartheid brutality and to the liberation movements; to ensure constant publicity to the inhumanity of apartheid and the resistance of people in order to get widest possible support for action. The Special Committee was directly responsible to the UNGA and UNSC, the two main organs of the UN to which the Committee's activities were reported.³ For all intents and purposes, the Special Committee was meant to act as apolitical pressure mechanism that would publicize internationally the monstrosity of the apartheid regime and garner support globally to oust it. As part of its political activities to help solve the apartheid crisis in SouthAfrica in particular, the committee held meetings and hearings, international conferences, special sessions and seminars on apartheid and the monitoring of the implementation of resolutions of the UNGA and the UNSC promoting sports, cultural and other boycotts.⁴

By 1962, following the first visit of Nelson Mandela to the country during which he solicited for the support of the ANC and SouthAfrica's black population in the struggle against apartheid, Nigeria had begun to take practical measures which were aimed at ameliorating the socio-political and economic effects of the white minority regimes in Southern-Africa on the non-whites populace of the region, particularly its black components.⁵ Not only that, the country alongside other prominent actors made concerted efforts to push for political change in the region. Its non-hesitant disposition to the implementation of all the U.N resolutions passed against apartheid was second to none in Africa. At the continental level, in May 1963, the independent African states rose from a conference of Heads of States and Government meeting in Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital where they unanimously adopted the constituent charter of a new international organization which became known as the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

The conception and subsequent emergence of this continental organization was a product of ministerial conferences held between 1961-1962. A couple of factors was responsible for the coming into being of the OAU. First was the urgent quest to eliminate colonialism and racism from the African continent and to improve social, political and economic situations in Africa. Second was the popular agitation for the decolonization of Africa in the post-World War II era which gathered momentum in the 1960s thus catapulting Africa into global reckoning, especially in the UN where its presence was vociferously and actively felt in the debates and voting on colonial issues. Third were the less than satisfactory roles of foreign powers in the Congo crisis of 1960; and the burning desire of African political founding fathers to articulate the concerns of the continent to the World under the auspices of a pan-African organization. Fourth, was the need to preserve the ideals of pan-Africanism on the continent, a view which was owed dear by Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah one of the prominent African leaders that facilitated the process for the establishment of the organization (Naldi, 1999).

According to Wayas (1979), the OAU member states coordinated their anti-colonial strategies through the organization and leveraged on this regional platform at the UN to appeal to the international community so that the World body could understand the grave injustices which was dished out to the Black people in the Southern African region. On 7 August 1963 the United Nations Security Council resolution 181 calling for a voluntary arms embargo against SouthAfrica's apartheid government was passed following the consideration of the country's racial policies. That same year, the UNGA called on member states to sever diplomatic ties with the apartheid regime of South-Africa as part of efforts to force the country to abandon its discriminatory racial policies. To this end, states were required to close their ports to South-African flag vessels, boycott all South-African made/originated goods; ban all exports to that country and refuse landing and passage facilities to all aircraft belonging to or registered in the Union of South-Africa.⁶

Nigeria did not just comply with these resolutions seeking to impose sanctions but also called for a mandatory arms and economic sanctions against the unrepentant SouthAfrican regime. Later in 1963, the apartheid regime apparently feeling the heat with the prompt compliance of the Nigerian government and a host of other member states of the UN, especially the African states, accused Nigeria and African states of seeking to expelled the apartheid South Africa and Portugal

² United Nations Special Committee on Apartheid, Available (Online) at: www.un.org.

³ Kalley, J.A. Schoeman, E. & Andor, L.E. (eds) (1999), *Southern Africa Political History: a chronology of key political events from independence to mid-1997*, Westport: Greenwood.

⁴ "Nigeria at the United Nations: A Partnership For Better World," A Ministry of External Affairs, Federal Republic of Nigeria Production, (Third Press Publishers, Lagos, Nigeria 1991).

⁵ See D. Games (2013), *Nigeria-South Africa Baseline Study, SAFPI Policy Brief No. 44*, Open Society Foundation For South-Africa, South-African Foreign Policy Initiative.

⁶ "Nigeria at the United Nations: A Partnership For Better World," A Ministry of External Affairs, Federal Republic of Nigeria Production, (Third Press Publishers, Lagos, Nigeria 1991).

from the UN. This accusation was denied by the Nigerian government through the country's Foreign Affairs Minister at the time, Jaja Wachukwu who in a statement to the eighteenth session of the UNGA said that his country would rather hold on to diplomatic and political strategies it had adopted in putting pressure on South-Africa to jettison its apartheid policy than support or call for the country's expulsion from the UN. Nigeria believed doing so would be counter-productive. The Nigerian envoy said:

...it has been stated that the African states want to expel South-Africa and Portugal from the United Nations. I think I can say categorically that, as far as I know, the African states are very reasonable states, they have reasonable representatives. Certainly the African states want to apply the strongest possible pressure on those two states to make them reasonable, but I do not know of any positive decision to expel those two members from this Organization. Their expulsion would serve no useful purpose at all. It would be a sheer waste of time. It is better to bring them here and keep on whipping them until they have learned their lesson. To throw them outside and have them in cold would just relieve them of this real burden. If members of an organization do not want to observe the rules of the organization, the only way you can teach them a lesson is to bring them up every time and expose them to a certain amount of humiliation and indignity and one day they will learn some sense. So I want to make it clear that my delegation does not know of any agreed plan to expel either Portugal or South-Africa from this organization, and I do not think my country would even support such a plan.⁷

In 1965, the committee of Trustees for the United Nations Trust Fund for Southern Africa was set-up to provide legal aid and relief to victims of the apartheid system on the basis of voluntary contributions. Nigeria later served on this committee in the Vice-Chairmanship capacity in the early 1990s. The country was also ably represented in a sister committee albeit an advisory one, the United Nations Education and Training Program which provided for Southern African and Namibian students to pursue their study abroad.⁸ As indicated in chapter two, Nigeria was not consistent throughout at least actively in the pursuit of a colonial free Africa due to the prevailing situations on its domestic front. The country's internal political crisis of the mid-60s which culminated into a civil war ensured that it was kept temporarily away from the anti-apartheid and anti-colonial political and diplomatic struggles but right after the civil war in 1970, the Nigerian government resumed activism with the presentation of a new program of action on African decolonization at the UN. This plan of action centred on a time-table for bringing an end to colonialism and racial discrimination in Africa. The plan included a suggestion that a special UN fund should be established to support the liberation movements in Africa as well as other colonial territories world over.

In dealing with the sit-tight colonial regimes in Southern-Africa and in other African enclaves, the program called for the creation of a special African Task Force to support the liberation movements.⁹ To the Nigerian government, violence would be the most effective strategy to unseat the tyrannical colonial regimes on the continent. Despite being laudable, this program of action was repudiated by the colonially subjugated states of Africa like Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde who insisted on waging the anti-colonial insurgency on their own thus making it impossible for the UN to adopt the plan since the concerned states were not favourably disposed to the idea.¹⁰ Regardless of this set-back, Nigeria forged ahead forcefully in the pursuit of the anti-colonial policy. This was clearly demonstrated in the country's chairmanship of the UN anti-apartheid committee for the better part of its existence. From the time of its emergence in 1963 and its scrapping in 1994 following the accomplishment of the task assigned to it, the UN Special Committee was chaired for upward of 20 years by Nigerian diplomats. In 1972, Nigeria took its anti – colonial activism to another level when it led the boycott of the Olympic Games in Munich Germany and the 1976 Olympics in Montreal Canada. The country also boycotted the 1978 Commonwealth Games in Alberta Canada.¹¹ The steps were taken to protest South Africa's participation in those tournaments.

From 1976 to 1994, Nigeria assumed the permanent chairmanship of the UN Special Committee against apartheid. Prior to that time, Nigeria had served as chair of the committee from 1972 – 1975. During these periods, Nigeria used the platform of the committee to intensify the campaign against colonialism and racism in the entire Southern African region. The most innovative demonstration of the Nigerian government's active commitment in the struggle against colonialism was the setting up of the Southern African Relief Fund (SARF) in 1976.

⁷ Ibid, pg. 65-66

⁸ Ibid

⁹ See H. A. Asobie, 2010. *Nigeria's Foreign Policy, 1960-2010: An Overview in 50 Years Of Nigeria's Foreign Policy, Issues, Challenges and Prospects*, C. E. Osita (ed) NIIA, Lagos, Nigeria.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ See D. Games (2013), *Nigeria-South Africa Baseline Study*, SAFPI Policy Brief No. 44, Open Society Foundation For South-Africa, South-African Foreign Policy Initiative.

According to Garba (1987) this initiative brought in the Nigerian domestic populace in the fight against colonialism as citizens were asked to make financial contributions toward the project. The proceeds which accrued into the coffers of (SARF) were used to provide scholarships and other assistance to students of Southern Africa and the apartheid refugees.¹² Nigeria pursued this pivotal foreign policy objective with all its weight behind it to the extent that it is not only the foreign policy instruments that were available to Nigeria at the time but also domestically in its total fight against apartheid the population of Nigeria was involved. Nigerian civil servants were obliged at the time to donate a portion of their salaries to the fight against apartheid South-Africa. Even primary and secondary school students were asked to give a small percentage of their pocket money to the fight against apartheid South-Africa.

All these donations were deducted from various sources and channelled directly into the (SARF) account.¹³ By 1978, the (SARF) fund had \$28million in its coffers.¹⁴ Early in 1977, Leslie Harriman, Nigeria's ambassador and permanent representative at the United Nations, and also the serving chairman of the United Nations Committee against Apartheid informed the country's external affairs commissioner Joseph Garba about the UNGA resolution 31/6 paragraph 4, which proposed the holding of a World Conference for Action against Apartheid. The UN plan was to hold the Conference at its headquarters either in New York or "in a country that was irrevocably committed to the eradication of this heinous crime against humanity" (Garba, 1987:104). According to Garba, the UN subsequently asked Nigeria to host the conference because of its commitment in the struggle. The Conference was designed to publicize the danger of apartheid regime's increasing militarization as a danger to global peace and security; to focus attention on the regime with a view to promoting firm African unity in support of the freedom fighters against the apartheid leadership; to document and condemn the collaboration with the apartheid regime, of all governments with vested interests in South-Africa; and finally to use the occasion as a pledging conference for national support to the liberation Movement(Garba,1987).

The first anti-apartheid conference was held in Lagos, Nigeria in 1977. At the conference, the Nigerian Head of State General Olusegun Obasanjo expressed his administration's commitment toward ensuring that colonialism became history in Africa. In attaining this goal, Obasanjo highlighted the bottlenecks which had hitherto prevented the victory of the anti-apartheid forces. He particularly singled out the western companies that were having business transactions with the apartheid regime for criticism and threatened to move against their economic interests in Nigeria if they failed to toll the path of honour by dissociating themselves from the repressive apartheid. The Lagos Conference of August 1977 succeeded in anticipating the ways to bring international pressure on the Pretoria regime especially coming after the Soweto massacres of school children in June 1976.

On December 16, 1977, Nigeria and other progressive states of the UN voted 113 to zero, with ten abstentions, to impose an oil embargo on South Africa at the thirty - second UNGA meeting. The United States and its allies especially the member states of NATO were among those that abstained from the exercise (Irogbe, 1997). The United States' action in this regard called to question the much trumpeted sympathies of the Carter administration for the oppressed black majority in South Africa and Southern Africa as a whole. In the same vein, the Security Council of the UN also adopted a mandatory arms embargo resolution against South Africa on November 4, 1977 of which the U.S Carter Administration was initially hesitant to vote in favour of but later did having come under pressure domestically and internationally.

Earlier at the 1977 UNGA meeting, Nigeria reiterated its commitment to African decolonization. In his address to the Assembly, Obasanjo deployed the feckless economic sanctions against the apartheid regime which he believed was responsible for the racist regime guts to defy all appeals to it by the sympathizing states and organizations to end apartheid. He summed up his country's concern thus, "all our appeals have been met with half- hearted measures inventing superficial economic sanctions that are full of loopholes. Today therefore, the racist regime in rebellion could still boast of a more viable economy and high standard of living for the white minority".¹⁵ He went on to express Nigeria's desire of ensuring that justice was done with regard to the colonial problem, "...it is necessary to emphasize once again that the Nigeria government and people are totally committed to the cause of freedom and justice in that part of our continent. This we consider as a duty that must be performed and we are determined to restore the honour and dignity that belong to that continent and all its inhabitants at whatever cost".¹⁶

Nigeria also played a significant role at the UN in wresting the administration of Namibia from the grip of apartheid South Africa, and entrusting it to the UN Council for Namibia. Also in 1978, during Nigeria's membership of the UN

¹²Ibid.

¹³ Interview with Professor OgabaOche, Director of Research and Studies, Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Lagos, Nigeria (15/01/2014).

¹⁴ See D. Games (2013), Nigeria-South Africa Baseline Study, SAFPI Policy Brief No. 44, Open Society Foundation For South-Africa, South-African Foreign Policy Initiative.

¹⁵ See "A March Of Progress," Collected Speeches Of His Excellency General Olusegun Obasanjo, Nigeria's Head Of State, 1976-1979, Federal Ministry Of Information, Federal Military Government, Lagos, Nigeria (1979), p. 219.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 220.

Security Council, its political and diplomatic acumen contributed immensely toward the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 435, which formed the basis on which Namibia's independence was attained in 1990. In monetary terms, Nigeria matched its actions with spending as it contributed \$400, 000 to the OAU assessed contributions to help South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) to finance its 1989 campaign at the UN the Nigerian government also paid a staggering \$162, 174 in assessed contributions to Namibia's UN Transition Assistance Group (UNITAG). This was followed by military assistance to Namibia which it gave by providing a 182 – man police contingent – the single largest to the U.N mission at the time (Uhomobhi, 2008).

In 1979, Nigeria - Britain relations came under threat over the Rhodesian (now Zimbabwe) colonial situation. Nigeria's decision to nationalize Shell-British petroleum (BP) assets played a major role in Britain's Margaret Thatcher's policy U-turn on the Rhodesian crisis by convening the Lancaster House Conference which culminated into the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980 (Uhomobhi, 2008). Prior to taking this decision, Nigeria was involved in the "crucial political drama in Lusaka at the Commonwealth summit" in July that same year, which finally bent Thatcher on the issue (Whiteman 2008:264). The Nigerian government provided explanatory notes as to why it took that decision. General Obasanjo was explicit in his defence of the rattling decision to nationalize the BP:

The British press was referring to Nigeria as a toothless bulldog. We had to show them that we had teeth and we could bark and bite as hard as we barked and we did... We felt incensed, insulted and terribly disenchanted at the level of reactionary policies pursued by the British government, especially over the South-African situation. And we were prepared to reduce drastically the level of our importation and undertake other measures that will {sic} shake and force the British government to review and take a more enlightened and civilized posture in her position over the South African question. As a first step and a seizer, we took the decision to nationalize British Petroleum.¹⁷

The above implicitly showed that it was more convenient for the British government to pay lip service to the colonial problem other than take appropriate practical steps that would help solve the situation. The nationalization of BP served the purpose which Nigeria wanted. As Obasanjo himself put it, the decision "seemed to have such a biting effect on the British economy that it led to rapid change in official British position on the independence of Zimbabwe".¹⁸ Addressing the UNGA in October 1979, Obasanjo declared that his country would not be a party to any deceitful solution to the Zimbabwean question. He told the Assembly: "I consider it imperative to sound a note of warning that Nigeria will never be party to any solution in Zimbabwe that could be remotely interpreted as a "sell - out" of the six million people of that land. Our objective is the unequivocal surrender of power by the minority of the population".¹⁹

This consistent policy assertiveness on the platform of the most powerful diplomatic machinery in the world – the UN proved beyond the realm of doubt that Nigeria was indeed desirous of freedom for fellow African states. In the 1980s, Nigeria utilized its tenure as chairman of the anti – apartheid committee of the UN to seek the political support of the new French government, under the leadership of President Francois Mitterrand in resolving the apartheid problem. The Committee's decision in this regard stemmed from the conviction that the country had a vital role to play in the international effort for the elimination of apartheid in South Africa.²⁰

The leadership of the Special Committee was pleased with the progressive measures that was taken by France on the colonial problem. The committee noted with great satisfaction that France voted in the Security Council on 31 August 1981, for a resolution condemning South Africa's aggression against Angola and that it enabled the African National Congress of South Africa and the South West Africa People's Organization to open offices in Paris. The committee led by its Nigerian chairman Maitama – Sule appealed to the French government to double its efforts in the struggle against apartheid and white rule in Africa. The French government applauded the committee for its visit and promised to implement the UN arms embargo against South Africa.²¹

¹⁷ Quoted in K. Whiteman (2008) "The Switchback and the Fallback, Nigeria – Britain relations," in *Gulliver Troubles, Nigeria's Foreign Policy after the Cold War*, A. Adebajo and A. R. Mustapha (eds) University of KwaZulu Natal Press, Scottsville, South Africa, p. 264.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 264.

¹⁹ Cited by M. I. Uhomobhi (2008) "A Triple Web Of Interdependence, The UN, the Commonwealth and the EU," in *Gulliver Troubles, Nigeria's Foreign Policy after the Cold War*, A. Adebajo and A. R. Mustapha (eds) University of KwaZulu Natal Press, Scottsville, South Africa, p. 229.

²⁰ See "The New France in the Campaign Against Apartheid, Report By His Excellency, Maitama – Sule (Nigeria), Chairman Of the Special Committee Against Apartheid, On the Mission to France (1-3 March 1982), Published by the U.N Centre Against Apartheid, p. 1.

²¹ Ibid.

The apartheid system came under fire again in 1984 following the introduction of a “new constitution” which deprived the indigenous population of their rights to citizenship by the South African regime.²² Both the UN Security Council and General Assembly declared the “new constitution” null and void. The UN Special Committee against Apartheid under the Chairmanship of Nigeria’s Joseph Garba organized the International Seminar on the Legal Status of the Apartheid Regime held in Lagos, from 13-16 August 1984. The Seminar brought together jurists and social scientist from Africa, Europe, North America and Asia which represented the principal legal systems of the world. The Seminar appraised the situation in Southern Africa and called on the international community to understand the urgent necessity for prompt action through the invocation of international law to a situation which constituted one of the most serious threats to international peace and security.²³ The Committee also expressed dismay at the magnitude of violence unleashed on the sovereign states of the region such as Angola and Mozambique by South African troops and police.

They condemned the killing and maiming of hapless citizens of these countries which also included Namibia. The displacement of persons and disappearance of persons after arrests was condemned by the attendees.²⁴ The UN Special Committee against Apartheid kept its political activities going from all through the mid 1980 as Nigeria continued to use its chairmanship of the committee to garner international support in the struggle to eliminate apartheid and colonialism in Africa.²⁵ Nigeria advanced in its political activities on colonialism at the UN when in 1986, in a statement to forty – one session of the UNGA, the Nigerian External Affairs Minister, Bolaji Akinyemi requested, to universal applause, that the President of the General Assembly sends an appeal to the President of the United States to endorse the action taken by the Congress to impose sanctions on South Africa. He said:

Apartheid is not an internal affair of South Africa, but a universal affair. Witness the amount of time, energy and resources the international community devotes to it. Legitimately, therefore, this assembly can and should miss no opportunity to advance the universal effort to achieve the peaceful dismantling of apartheid. In that context, I propose that you, Mr President, address on our behalf an urgent appeal today, to the President of the United States to endorse the congressional action on sanction against South Africa.²⁶

The President of the General Assembly acceded to this request by stating:

We have just heard an appeal to the President of the General Assembly by the Foreign Minister of Nigeria. The acclamation from members of the Assembly indicates widespread support from the floor. I take note of that appeal and shall find a suitable means to convey that sentiments to the appropriate quarters.²⁷

This request was Nigeria’s response to the American erroneous perception of the colonial problem in Africa. For instance, Former U.S President Reagan claimed that “The African problem is a Russian weapon aimed at the U.S The Soviet Union underlies all the unrest that is going on. If they weren’t engaged in this game of dominoes there wouldn’t be any hotspots in the world.”²⁸ Reagan’s charge proved further that African decolonization was a political tool used by both the Soviet Union and the United States within the period colonialism lasted to advance their Cold War agenda. In 1989, Nigeria’s voice was again heard clearly at the UNGA’s 44th session when the country expressed the positions of Liberation Movements in South Africa. The country’s External Affairs Minister, Major-General Ike Nwachukwu in an address to the session expressed a sentiment which was to be echoed by the anti-apartheid forces in the months which followed.²⁹ He declared:

Action is what is required. Action to immediately release Nelson Mandela and other political detainees; action to lift the state of emergency and legitimize all anti-apartheid groups; and action to commence dialogue and negotiation with the authentic leaders of non-white majority, with a view to working out arrangements for a non-racial democracy. The South Africa regime must first seek acceptability at home among all South Africans

²² See “Declaration Of the Seminar On the Legal Status Of Apartheid Regime and Other Legal Aspects Of the Struggle Against Apartheid,” Held in Lagos, Nigeria, From 13-16 August 1984, Published by the U.N Centre Against Apartheid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ See Special Meeting Of the Special Committee Against Apartheid For Consultations With the Ministers Of External Relations Of France, U.N Headquarters, 9 October 1984.

²⁶ “Nigeria at the United Nations: A Partnership For Better World,” A Ministry of External Affairs, Federal Republic Of Nigeria Production, (Third Press Publishers, Lagos, Nigeria 1991), p. 67.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Quoted in K. Irogbe (1997) “The Roots Of United States Foreign Policy Toward Apartheid South Africa, 1969-1985” The Edwin Mellen Press Ltd, Lampeter, Ceredigion, United Kingdom, p. 91.

²⁹ “Nigeria at the United Nations: A Partnership For Better World,” A Ministry of External Affairs, Federal Republic Of Nigeria Production, (Third Press Publishers, Lagos, Nigeria 1991), p. 68.

before seeking respectability abroad. These are the basic requirements for taking seriously, any talk of changes in South Africa.³⁰

Within the space of one year some of these demands had been met. Nelson Mandela was released unconditionally after spending close to three decades in prison. Nigeria however continued to caution against the premature lifting of sanctions until the pillars of apartheid had been uprooted.³¹ The release of Mandela ushered in a series of reforms by the regime of the last apartheid leader F W De Klerk (1989-1994) who superintended the eventual transfer of power from the white minority to the indigenous black majority population. While these reforms were being carried out, Nigeria was on the side-lines watching to see if the entire process would produce the desired outcome. Fortunately it did as Nelson Mandela made history by becoming the first democratically elected black President of Post-apartheid South Africa in 1994. Interestingly, Nigeria, which had played a relentless role in the struggle against apartheid politically, economically and diplomatically for more than three decades, was the country which sponsored the UN Security Council resolution in 1994 which freed South Africa from sanctions and reintegrated the country into the international circuit (Uhomobhi, 2008).

3. CONCLUSION

The paper has examined the political roles played by Nigeria in the anti-colonial struggle on the platform of the UN and the consistencies of the country's articulations of the colonial situation in Africa. It argued that Nigeria's roles was instrumental to African decolonization victory as its assertiveness, boldness, unintimidating presence helped in putting pressure on the colonial regimes across Africa who eventually relinquished power to the indigenous peoples.

4. NOTES AND REFERENCES

A March Of Progress, Collected Speeches Of His Excellency General Olusegun Obasanjo, Nigeria's Head Of State, 1976-1979, Federal Ministry Of Information, Federal Military Government, Lagos, Nigeria

Asobie, H.A. 2010. Nigeria's Foreign Policy, 1960-2010: An Overview in 50 Years Of Nigeria's Foreign Policy, Issues, Challenges and Prospects, C. E. Osita (ed) NIIA, Lagos, Nigeria.

Declaration Of the Seminar On the Legal Status Of Apartheid Regime and Other Legal Aspects Of the Struggle Against Apartheid, Held in Lagos, Nigeria, From 13-16 August 1984, Published by the U.N Centre Against Apartheid.

Games, D. (2013), *Nigeria-South Africa Baseline Study*, SAFPI Policy Brief No. 44, Open Society Foundation For South-Africa, South-African Foreign Policy Initiative.

Interview with Professor OgabaOche, Director of Research and Studies, Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Lagos, Nigeria (15/01/2014).

Iroge K. (1997) *The Roots Of United States Foreign Policy Toward Apartheid South Africa, 1969-1985*, the Edwin Mellen Press Ltd, Lampeter, Ceredigion, United Kingdom, p. 91.

Kalley, J.A. Schoeman, E. & Andor, L.E. (eds) (1999), *Southern Africa Political History: A chronology of key political events from independence to mid-1997*, Westport: Greenwood.

Mr Prime Minister, A Selection of Speeches Made by Sir, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1960-1966, Published by the Nigerian Ministry of Information, Lagos, Nigeria, 1964, p. 54.

Nigeria at the United Nations: A Partnership For Better World, A Ministry of External Affairs, Federal Republic of Nigeria Production, (Third Press Publishers, Lagos, Nigeria 1991).

Special Meeting Of the Special Committee Against Apartheid For Consultations With the Ministers Of External Relations Of France, U.N Headquarters, 9 October 1984.

The New France in the Campaign Against Apartheid, Report By His Excellency, Maitama – Sule (Nigeria), Chairman Of the Special Committee Against Apartheid, On the Mission to France (1-3 March 1982), Published by the U.N Centre Against Apartheid, p. 1.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

Uhomoibhi, M.I. (2008) *A Triple Web Of Interdependence, The UN, the Commonwealth and the EU,*” in *Gulliver Troubles, Nigeria’s Foreign Policy after the Cold War*, A. Adebajo and A. R. Mustapha (eds) University of KwaZulu Natal Press, Scottsville, South Africa, p. 229.

United Nations Special Committee on Apartheid, Available (Online) at: www.un.org.

Whiteman, K. (2008) *The Switchback and the Fallback, Nigeria – Britain relations*, in *Gulliver Troubles, Nigeria’s Foreign Policy after the Cold War*, A. Adebajo and A. R. Mustapha (eds) University of KwaZulu Natal Press, Scottsville, South Africa, p. 264