



■
The Economic and
Financial Crimes
Commission of Nigeria:
A Political Science
Analysis
Adebayo Tajudeen Salami 107

■
Olusegun Obasanjo's
Policy Scoresheet:
Challenge of Leadership
and Continuity
Sheriff Folarin 124

■
The African Union
and The Peace
Progress in Darfur
Saka Lugman 141

■
Hamas' Electoral Victory
and its Implications for
the Israeli-Palestinian
Conflict
Samuel Obadiah 150

NIGERIAN FORUM

A JOURNAL OF OPINION ON WORLD AFFAIRS

■
The Economic and
Financial Crimes
Commission of Nigeria:
A Political Science
Analysis
Adebayo Tajudeen Salami 107

■
Olusegun Obasanjo's
Policy Scoresheet:
Challenge of Leadership
and Continuity
Sheriff Folarin 124

■
The African Union
and The Peace
Process in Darfur
Saka Lugman 141

■
Hamas' Electoral Victory
and its Implications for
the Israeli-Palestinian
Conflict
Samuel Obadiah 150



Olusegun Obasanjo's Policy Scoresheet: Challenge of Leadership and Continuity

By
*Sheriff Folarin**

Introduction

One pertinent dilemma central to Africa and Nigeria's slow development or lack of it, has been the challenge of continuity of leadership. An African political science scholar once described this phenomenal setback to development as the "*ab initio*" syndrome, namely a situation in which one rulership after another, seeing no reason why he should continue from where the predecessor stopped, dismantles everything and starts all over again, leaving no stone unturned. The policies are overhauled for no reason, with each rulership committing huge fortunes to restart a social engineering process that was hitherto on good course. Such wastage, more evident during the era of soldiers in government, cannot be quantified in naira and kobo. This is why Nigeria and Africa are so backward.

The civilians are no less affected by this syndrome. A close observation of current electioneering campaigns, shows an

* Sheriff Folarin is with the Department of Policy and Strategic Studies/ International Relations, Covenant University, Canaanland, Ota, Nigeria

avalanche of "promises" of undoing what the ruling party has done, without pointing out the basis for that or mentioning any asking whether it is an overhauling that is needed or improving on current efforts. That is how it starts. Forty-seven years and we are yet to take off because of discontinuity in leadership programmes, policies and projects. Looking back at W.W. Rostow's theoretical construction of the five essential stages of national economic development, Nigeria has refused to go beyond the take-off age, and lack of continuity in leadership is largely responsible.

Another problem is political will and courage to continue. Some rulers, no matter their belief in, and commitment to, policy regimes of their predecessors, may not be endowed with much political will and lack the courage to continue the legacies.

At this juncture, it is pertinent to reflect on Obasanjo's policies, particularly his reforms and ask ourselves if the shoes he will be removing in May will not be oversized for whoever succeeds him. Can anyone, even if he belongs to the ruling party, be able to dare a complex and volatile Nigerian society and carry on OBJ's aggressively reformist policies? Will the opposition, if it happens to have succeeded him, for political reasons, not brush aside all he has done so as to consign Obasanjo and his legacies to the waste-bin of the past? Will those that have moral and financial question marks against their names in the EFCC and ICPC records want any continuity? These are salient matters that may pose a challenge to a post-Obasanjo administration.

The Philosophy Behind Obasanjo's Reforms

For all of us, today is a day to celebrate the fact that Nigeria has not only remained intact, but also that the nation is getting stronger, with institutions that are firming up, and a society that is no longer

in despair because in many respects the future is looking much brighter.

-President Olusegun Obasanjo

The above statement represents a fundamental premise that informed Obasanjo's reforms. He also said:

I intend to use my mandate to provide quality leadership for all of Nigeria and for all Nigerians regardless of their political persuasions. Anything less would be unconstitutional, morally inadequate, and contrary to the will of God whose wishes are my commands. Above all, in adherence to my leadership vision of a greater Nigeria, the only way to advance this country that belongs to all of us, is through solidarity and hard work.

Obasanjo has never shied away from the fact that cohesion is fundamental if any multinational state as Nigeria could pull down the vestiges of past mal-administration and join the league of developed countries. Poised to challenge the status quo that he met, Obasanjo affirmed:

We were fully conscious of the high expectations by which the rot would immediately be put to an end, our infrastructure would resurrect from its ruins and our comatose public service would function again.

From the foregoing, we could establish that the present administration met enormous challenges that desired change and rose up to confront the challenges. As Obasanjo achieved the objects of reforms, he also engendered certain landmarks in Nigeria's political history. It is to the eternal credit of his administration that Nigeria got debt pardon from its creditor-

nations and international financial institutions. Added to this is the huge foreign reserve Nigeria was able to make despite the copious depletion and indebtedness by previous military administrations. Lots of stolen funds were recovered, part of which was put in the country's external reserves.

The greater part of these lofty achievements was a culmination of his reforms. Let us examine these changes one after the other by appraising Obasanjo's policy regime from 1999 to date. We will look at the initiatives, the implementation, success and loopholes in each of these reformist policies.

Military Reforms

The first institution that experienced reforms is the military. Since returning to power as civilian President in 1999, Obasanjo overhauled the military, disengaging any officer who had held political postings in the military regimes led by Generals Sani Abacha, Ibrahim Babangida, Muhammadu Buhari and Abdulsalami Abubakar. The administration considered this central to the rehabilitation of a nation that had been turned upside down by decades of military pillage, plunder and oppression; and for a country which had become the theatre for military adventurism and coups. Moreover, the reorganization was to restore professionalism and sanity in the over politicized institution. He also installed a new cadre of military intelligence officers drawn primarily from the younger generation who had remained committed to professional tasks while the military politicians lasted in power.

However, some people considered the recent 300% increase in officers' salaries as outlandish and patronizing of the military, which may erode commitment and rather develop, in military circles, an unusual appetite for money and material rewards.

Executive Reforms

President Obasanjo has made regular changes of his executive, particularly the think-tank of his reforms team. The changes have been likened to routine checks made in the clinic to ascertain and ensure the improvement in the health of patients. The routine checks on his executive were to ensure that they do not become rusty, power drunk or spent of ideas. It was also an attempt to create vibrancy in the team as every one made efforts to do well in the face of a possible removal in a reshuffle exercise that may come up. One remarkable example of changes made was the movement of the high-profile Finance Minister and former World Bank Vice-President Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala to the Foreign Affairs and fellow reformer Oby Ezekwesili from Solid Minerals to Education. The action was probably informed by the excellent score-sheet of this duo, which he wanted replicated in the two other areas.

In order to assist him in the executive tasks, he assembled some of the best men and women as ministers and members of the executive council. The appointment criteria were: ability, integrity, competence, shared vision and good character. The performance of all ministers, who would have targets, would be carefully monitored and assessed to ensure effective implementation of policies in their respective ministries. The structure of the Presidency was critically reviewed to include a monitoring unit that followed up and reported on the effective implementation of policy decisions.

There is no doubt, that Obasanjo's changes of his own executive and presidency were to reform executive power, but the anti-climax of this was the head-on collision with his deputy. This rift had untoward implication for Nigeria's political existence.

Economic Reforms

This is perhaps one of the crucial areas in which President Obasanjo's scorecard is enviable. The ongoing privatization advances considerably and government has been able to concentrate on its assignment of providing an enabling environment for optimal productivity in manufacturing. The government has encouraged small and medium scale industries, which have been attracting substantial amount of funds from commercial banks. It is evident that the industrial sector is now a vital segment for jobs and income for a large number of Nigerians. Privatization of the telecommunications sector has also revolutionized that industry, as it empowers even the less privileged and develops the information sector. However, there are certain drawbacks in the power sector and there are no visible improvements in other privatized sectors such as the social services and tourism. The recapitalization exercise and mergers in the banking sector is a first. This has put paid to the mortality rate of banks, financial infidelity and losses incurred by millions of customers, which characterized the pre-reforms era.

A vital component of the economic reforms during the second term of President Obasanjo's administration were civil service reform in the federal government, starting with the restructuring of four pilot ministries. These reforms were now being expanded to encompass the public sector more broadly, in order to tackle the erosion of capacity, organizational duplication, outdated mandates and overstaffing that had characterized the public sector in Nigeria for the past two decades.

In the oil and gas sector, there were more improvements during the Obasanjo years than in the previous thirty years. The quantum leap in this sector brought Nigeria closer to the target of earning substantial revenue from gas, in comparison to crude oil. However, there is still the lack of functional oil refineries in Nigeria,

which explains the perennial fuel scarcity and the importation of petroleum products at very prohibitive costs.

Obasanjo himself mentioned that the persistent drive to attract foreign investment has resulted in an increase in the number of foreign investors who have either invested in the country or are planning to do so. The government could however encourage more of foreign direct investment, which has today launched India and the Asian Tigers to the forefront of economic advancement.

There have been markedly improved conditions of service for public sector employees. The private sector is also reporting significant increase in business activities and legitimate profits.

Social Reforms

In an address, President Obasanjo pointedly remarked that social systems are reformed with the strong consideration that such social systems desperately needed to be rationalized and made wholesome. The administration identified as imperative, the need to restore the rule of law. According to Obasanjo: "Our social institutions had to be firmly based on principles of equality, justice and peaceful co-existence. We recognized that we must enshrine the ethics of transparency, accountability and responsible leadership. And we also recognized that, in order to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life, we had to put in place an economic regime that was efficient, productive and capable of delivering perceptible results."

Statistics of social indices show considerable improvements in the quality of life, as measured by higher income and stronger purchasing power. The greatest gain of all is the increase in social capital, as measured by the amount of faith and trust that citizens now have in their social system.

In terms of infrastructure, the government embarked on what can be called a vigorous policy of investment in roads, energy

and water supply. This policy, as from 2004, began to yield noticeable results. The government started an aggressive policy of roads rehabilitation and construction of new ones, with the view to improve transportation and ease the movement of goods throughout the country. The government also had the intention of improving the quality of power supply and expanding output to at least 10,000 Megawatts by the end of 2007, in recognition of the need to industrialize.

For the health sector, more resources were put into hospitals and healthcare delivery system, not just to improve but to stop preventable deaths and raise the national life expectancy. To this end, the University College Hospital (UCH), Ibadan and Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH) got financial lifelines and material resources to bounce back to the primacy they were known for in the 1970s.

In the education sector, the introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) as a priority policy underlay the commitment to provide opportunity for the education of citizens. This was intended to develop their innate abilities and empower them to fully participate in the development of the country. On its completion, the UBE should allow the Nigerian society to enjoy the privilege of having in school, all children of school age. In its reform agenda, the Obasanjo administration planned to complete the refurbishment of the federal educational institutions at all levels in order to make them fully operational, qualitatively and quantitatively, so as to meet Nigeria's educational needs and skill development.

The agriculture sector continued to grow as a result of a policy to ensure food security through increased crop production, improved livestock husbandry as well as new marketing strategies for better returns for farmers. The administration pursued the



various strands of agricultural policies with the objective of improving the level of food security.

However, the social life of Nigeria was marred by ethnic politics, conflicts and sectarian violence. The political scene was almost hijacked by groups, who politicized religion and started embarking on instituting the *Sharia* as the state law in some states. There were also some very ugly episodes like the Odi, Zaki Biam, Ife-Modakeke and Niger Delta, that acted as encumbrances to the reform process.

Anti-Corruption

The anti-corruption crusade is, perhaps, the most commended as it is the most vilified. Obasanjo's anti-corruption regime was to engender a social organisation that would be free of corruption and pervasive indiscipline. By this, the citizens could dream of a restoration of social values and the reinstatement of self-pride. Corruption, fraud, and other financial and economic crimes had etched so deeply into the fabric of the nation and had terribly dented Nigeria's image that the country no longer commanded any respect from the international community, not even from the tiniest and poorest nations of the world. The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act (ICPC Act) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Due Process Act were the three means by which the government attempted to revamp the hope held by many to rescue the nation from the edge of a precipice.

The EFCC and ICPC have, however, come under severe attacks, particularly from scholars and politicians from the opposing camps. The greatest criticism is that the two agencies are selective and prejudicial in their approach to cleaning the Augean Stable, that the targets are opponents of the ruling party. Whatever the misgivings towards the anti-corruption bodies, the

twin-bodies have demonstrated government's ingenuity and doggedness in tackling the legendary albatross of corruption in Nigeria, with ministers sacked, governors removed, a police chief unseated and other hitherto untouchable individuals exposed and demystified.

Electoral Reforms

There have been lots of criticisms against the electoral reforms of the administration. The reforms are seen to be done largely in favour of the ruling party. While the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is regarded as another political party in alliance with the ruling party, or an extension of the presidency doing its bidding, one cannot overemphasize the novelty and success of the election tribunal in Nigeria. All over the world, elections manifest various degrees of imperfection. It is for this reason that the election tribunals were instituted as an avenue for all those who may have grievances to seek redress. The election tribunals served to add credibility and faith to the electoral process.

Political Constitution Reforms

President Obasanjo instituted the Oputa Panel to look into the many cases of Human Rights Violations and Other Related Matters from the beginning of military rule in Nigeria to 2003. This measure was a very welcome development as it attempted to redress all outstanding issues of military and governance high-handedness that had exacerbated state-people hostilities and relations. It was also to restore the people's faith and confidence in government. Fashioned after the Bishop Desmond Tutu-led Reconciliation and Truth Commission in post-apartheid South Africa, the Oputa Panel, headed by Justice Chukwudifu Oputa and made up of credible Nigerians including Reverend Father Matthew Hassan Kukah, met in different parts of Nigeria and

allowed its offices to be inundated with petitions with the view to addressing the complaints of all aggrieved persons. However, the many cases that were tried ended up being mere public hearings that could accord no punishments or assuage the victimized; as several persons, including former military ruler, General Ibrahim Babangida defied and snubbed panel summons

The administration has worked cooperatively with the National Assembly in attempting to guarantee press freedom. In the process of ensuring such, the Freedom of Information Act was initiated. A bill titled, "The Freedom of Information Bill" introduced in 1999, was however, slowed down by soft opposition on account of the potential for the law to grant foreigners access to sensitive information that might compromise national security. The law would guarantee journalists access to government documents and records as well as enhance the right of the press to carry out their functions.

Another noteworthy legislative reform that has been introduced in Nigeria is the liberalization of the broadcast industry -- a departure from the past when the industry was owned and controlled by the State. Liberalization of broadcast industry began in 1992 with the enactment of the "Electronic Privatization Decree" 1992. The law empowers the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) to issue licenses for private broadcasting. Section 2(1b) of the law provides that the commission will be responsible for "receiving, processing and considering applications for the ownership of radio and television stations including cable television services, direct satellite broadcast and any other medium of broadcasting." There has been an increase in the number of licenses since 1999. However, some of those stations that have succeeded in going on air are doing well. For example, Daar Communications (owners of Africa Independent Television/Ray Power) which pioneered private radio broadcasting in the country

now has broadcast facilities and structures in several cities outside of Lagos. The cities include Port Harcourt, Kano, Jos, Gombe, Agenebode and Ogarifo.

To forestall the historical tendency of military intervention in Nigerian politics, the Senate on November 15, 2001, passed a bill that makes a *coup d'etat* a constitutional offence. The law punishes coup plotters with jail terms even when they are out of power. The bill titled, "The Prohibition of Unconstitutional Take Over of Government," provides for a life jail sentence for anyone who participates in a forceful overthrow of the government. This is in addition to a 14-year jail sentence for anyone who serves in such an illegally constituted government. The new law strengthens the provisions of Section 1(2) of the 1999 Constitution which states that: "The Federal Republic of Nigeria shall not be governed, nor shall any person or group of persons take control of the Government of Nigeria or any part thereof, except in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution."

This constitutional reform is a milestone because it has potentially institutionalized and legalized civil disobedience against a forceful overthrow of democratically elected governments. It however, discourages members of the armed forces from plotting coups as a strategy for leadership transition in Nigeria, and, therefore, helps the process of consolidating democracy and democratic norms such as civil liberties and fundamental human rights especially, freedom of expression.

Local Government Reforms

In respect of the local government reforms, the administration made spirited efforts to clear the rot at this level of the federal system. The Federal Government impounded funds meant for local governments in states that conducted elections in state-created local government areas. President Obasanjo also

decried the tampering and deduction of funds meant for local governments by state governors in addition to other perceived distortions in managing local government funds. In the sweep of reforms at this level of government, several local government chiefs have been indicted and removed after ICPC and EFCC investigations showed their culpability.

In another sweep of local council reforms, the Obasanjo administration and the National Assembly reduced the tenure of elected local council officials as against four. This was against the backdrop of the idleness and development-disorientation the local administration had rendered itself over time.

It is very apposite to work out a tangible devolution of specific economic policies to the local governments. The reason is simple. With little or nothing to do in economic policy management, local governments have only become fortresses for revenue allocation to private pockets. As it is said, an idle mind is the devil's workshop. Since they cannot afford to build good roads, schools, hospitals, and the like, they simply share what is left after paying their usually over-bloated overhead costs. For example, I suggest that the local government councils should be made to manage such grassroots' based economic policies as the nation's agricultural policy. The task of ensuring the national goal of food security should be in their domain. The local governments can do this through the establishment of farm settlements based on the crops cultivatable in their areas. In doing this, the local governments can play a major role in SME development, job creation and ultimately reverse the maldistribution of wealth. This should attract a review of the revenue allocation formula in favour of the local governments. The federal government can then set up mechanisms within the National Planning Commission to assess the local governments and provide matching grants to the best performing ones in addition

to their allocations from the federation account. The states can also follow suit.

When practiced in its most elementary form, democracy helps to instill habits of transparency and accountability, which eviscerates corruption. A good example can be found in various town unions. Members of town union executive committees are usually elected in the freest democratic settings possible. Once elected and in office they strive to manage their affairs in as transparent a manner as is possible. Democracy in our local societies remains a bulwark against corruption and economic mismanagement. Undoubtedly, building democracy has its pains but in the long run, the gains make the process worth the while. As untidy and difficult as the development of democratic traditions is, we must continue to be more willing to blunder in straggling for democracy. Oftentimes in a true democracy, the people may choose terrible or mediocre personalities but such instances will ultimately be a scattering of exceptions and not expectations to the rule. They will eventually pale in significance.

The Niger Delta

The recent exclusive video documentary of the dangerous activities of the militants by Cable News Network's Jeff Konainge and the April 14 and April 21 2007 militants' attacks on the police and Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) clearly demonstrate the comprehensive failures in tackling the Niger Delta issue. This probably explains the consideration of President Obasanjo to pick a Vice President of Niger Delta extraction, suggesting his admittance of the genuineness of the agitation by the people of Niger Delta. Also, this probably informed the earlier speculated choice of Odili, and indeed his choice of Goodluck as Yar'Adua's running mate. Pertinently, it is a well considered view that the festering crises in the Niger Delta region, now threatening

the nation's economic survival could after all dictate that out of political expediency, a president of Niger Delta extraction is an automatic solution to the militant agitation, which is really in the nation's best interest.

Foreign Policy

It is pertinent to mention that Nigeria's foreign policy has been aggressively Africa-centred with enormous touch from Obasanjo himself. He has been radically disposed to good governance, democracy and poverty reduction, the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for Africa and general economic development with minimal external control, but maximum foreign participation that is Africa-oriented.

The New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), one of the institutions initiated by Obasanjo and Mbeki of South Africa, has been the African Union's sustainable continental strategy for political and socio-economic redemption, through sound economic reforms, respect for human rights, investment in indigenous human and material resources, environmental protection and international cooperation, based on shared values, peace, common security and development.

The African Union itself is moving ahead in its new mission of programmes for economic integration, together with measures towards economic stability and unity. Nigeria is in the forefront of actions to advance the progress of these programmes.

Challenges of Continuity and the Way Out

The greatest albatross in Obasanjo's reforms regime has been ethnic and religious conflict, followed by attempts to destabilize the government by forces against anti-corruption, and then the Niger Delta crisis. There are more. These three could have made any regime without political will to collapse, without

completing its reforms programme. There are copious anti-democratic and anti-Obasanjo forces that will frustrate any furtherance of such programmes upon Obasanjo's exit. There are many forces that are only biding their time for Obasanjo to leave, in order to pull down the legacies for the purpose of pursuing their personal interests that had been stalled for quite a while. Several disgruntled individuals in the banking sector who were beneficiaries of the rot in the pre-capitalization era, who are waiting and working for the current reforms in that sector, to fail. The reforms in the sectors thus face the grave challenge of intense pressure to fail and be pulled down, because they appear too radical for an already decadent system.

The second problem is the availability of political will and courage to pursue such radical policies as anti-corruption and several others. Some people aver that it is only strong-willed people such as Obasanjo that can carry out such radically reformist policies in Nigeria's social milieu. However, Obasanjo will not always be there. But, after him, how do we preserve the legacies and programmes of re-engineering he is leaving behind? Does a PDP government mean the same thing as Obasanjo's strong will? Does an AC or AD or ANPP government automatically translate to continuity?

No. For the PDP, it will be a matter of principles and personal convictions of the next leader. It is a matter of political will, courage and fearlessness. For other parties, it has to be a matter of the good of the whole, it does not have to be politicized: what is good is good and should be allowed to continue. For all, it is a matter of godliness and trust in God who can do all things. The Scriptures tell us that without Him, we can do nothing. It is a matter of patriotism and passionate, unrepentant love for Nigeria.

Finally, when the drawbacks in the ongoing sectoral reforms are taken care of by the next administration, there is the

likelihood of greater popularity for the changes, and by extension, a neutralizing effect on subterranean or actual moves to frustrate the programmes.

Thus, what can assure continuity, stall military or extra-democratic intervention after Obasanjo, is for his successor to correct the anomalies in the ongoing reforms and general policy administration of the present dispensation. Such a successor must be strong-willed, undaunted, courageous, innovative, depoliticized and godly. The political class must put Nigeria first in all their calculations and allow the reforms to outlive Obasanjo without bringing ethnic, religious or ideological sentiments to it.

The African Union and the Peace Process in Darfur

By
*Saka Lugman**

Introduction

While the United Nations has come to realize the great danger of inaction in the face of threats to peace and security arising from conflict, the organization is finding the need to muster adequate political will and resources needed for intervention. More and more the organization is failing to halt the spread of violence, conflicts and their attendant humanitarian disasters. Worst still, this is happening when expectations about the organization's roles in preventing conflict, promoting peace and security and enhancing sustainable human development are high.

Notwithstanding its glaring foot-dragging in the face of threats to peace and security, the UN and most importantly the United Nations Security Council, remains the world's most important body charged with the task of maintaining international peace and security. Since the 1990s activities ranging from

* Saka Lugman is with the Department of Political Science, University of Ilorin, P.M.B. 1515, Ilorin, Nigeria