1 Introduction: Nigeria as Africa’s Major Power

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Nigeria is in some important respects Africa's most powerful nation.

Andrew Young [1]

Our economy is still oriented outwards and locked into dependency on the West ... Our ruling class appears to be largely confined to the role of ensuring the existence of the political conditions of accumulation. Many are quite happy riding piggy-back to affluence on Western capital ... We have performed poorly in our quest for development ... economic failure poses problems of legitimacy for those in power.

Claude Ake [2]

Nigeria is going to rule the entire world of man as from 1989 ... The future of Nigeria is very bright more than any country on earth. The country has a very important role to play in reshaping the future of man.

G. O. Okunzua [3]

... we do not think that Nigeria the neo-colony of the sixties is the same as the neo-colony of the seventies.

Sonni G. Tyoden [4]

Recognition of Nigeria's relative influence and affluence is now commonplace in Africa, Europe and elsewhere. Yet scepticism remains about the stability of Nigeria's state and status. The country clearly has potential for expanding its capabilities and choices, but whether it can either realise or utilise these is still problematic. This book is intended to contribute to the growing debate about the bases and effects of Nigerian power. The debate is of
relevance not only to students of Nigeria in particular or of Africa in general but also to students of Third World foreign policies as a whole, especially those of Newly Industrialising Countries (NICs). For Nigeria is one of very few African states aspiring successfully for a place in the 'semi-periphery'. Its position between 'core' and 'periphery' in the global system remains somewhat tenuous although the nature of its political economy and development strategy points towards such a role or status, particularly in the medium-term future.

Nigeria has always been *primus inter pares* in black Africa, but with the advent of changes in the global political economy in the 1970s as well as with the ending of its own civil war, Nigeria became ever more indisputably Africa's leading state [5]. Its claim to being the natural leader of the continent is reinforced by the emerging character of its political economy. For, as in Brazil, the archetypal semi-peripheral country, so the central feature of Nigeria's political economy is 'a complex alliance between élite local capital, international capital, and state capital ... "the triple alliance"' [6]. This book seeks to put Nigeria's foreign policy, development strategy and political economy into perspective by offering a description and projection, explanation and evaluation of this continuing evolution of Africa's major power.

GROWING EMPIRICAL AND ANALYTICAL IMPORTANCE IN AFRICAN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Since independence, Nigeria has always been Africa's largest country: the size of its territory and population and the diversity of its peoples and resources distinguish it from most of the continent's other fifty states. But under the initial B alewa government, Nigeria was both conservative and cautious: Africa's 'sleeping giant'. If the first civilian administration failed to mobilise Nigeria's potential in international affairs the first military regimes were preoccupied with civil strife and then civil war: Gowon had little time for foreign policy when it affected the outcome of the national conflict.

But if the 1960s were characterised by passivity the 1970s were characterised by activity in Nigeria's African and global diplomacy. The new tempo of Nigeria's external affairs under the successive post-civil war Gowon and Mohammed/Obasanjo regimes [7] was the result of an historic conjuncture at the beginning of the new decade: (1) the ending of domestic hostilities and internal crises, and