



Research Article

Politics of Arab Aid and the African Economic Predicament in the Post-Yom Kippur War Arab Oil Boycott of 1973

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After the 1967 six-day war Arab diplomacy of African involvement in the Middle East conflict increased considerably and was subsequently climaxed with the Yom Kippur (October) war of 1973 when nearly all the Black African nations broke diplomatic relations with State of Israel. Many factors, bordering mainly on oil, colonialism, Apartheid, and the readiness of the Arab States to offer financial aid to the poverty-stricken Black African nations readily accounted for Black Africa's dramatic support for the Arabs against their Israeli ally. But among these many factors oil was seen as major deciding factor. The oil weapon which came by way of Arab boycott of petroleum supply to pro-Israel nations was not necessarily directed against the Black African nations but its effects came up heavily against the latter more than it did to the targeted nations. While the boycott adversely affected the flow of periodic Western financial aids, the expected financial aid from their new Arab allies was not forthcoming neither was the more enduring Technical Aid from Israel. This was the diplomatic predicament the Black African nations found themselves in the wake of the Arab oil boycott which the present the study seeks to explain.

Keywords: OAU, Arab League, Yom Kippur War, Oil, Black Africa, Aid.

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Article History

Received: 23rd August 2021

Accepted: 9th November 2021

Published: 30th November 2021

Cite Article:

Nwaezeigwe, N. T. (2021). Politics of Arab Aid and the African Economic Predicament in the Post-Yom Kippur War Arab Oil Boycott of 1973. *Archives of Political Science Research*, 2(3), 30-40.

INTRODUCTION

The role of oil as a weapon in the Middle East conflict dates back to the very early periods of the League of Arab States. By 1946, just one year after the formation of the Organization, the members of the League of Arab States, then made up of only seven States – Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Transjordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Lebanon, had begun to envisage the idea of using oil as an instrument of compulsion against the growing power of Zionism. In that year, the League members met in the Syrian city of Blouden and unanimously approved the principle of suspending oil production as a means of putting pressure on those nations supporting the Zionist Movement (Maachou, 1982).

Unfortunately, the policy could not be carried to the letter because the United States in particular, the chief ally of the Zionists, was still depending heavily on Venezuelan oil. Moreover the Arab oil-producing countries were still pawns in the hands of the multinational oil companies. Thus, in spite of the existence of a special petroleum committee in the League's secretariat, the attempts to use oil as a political weapon could not see the light of the day. Maachou (1982) confirms this position when he wrote:

“Under the pressure, firstly, of events, and then of public opinion, the Arab countries gradually began to use oil as a way of supporting their policies, especially in the conflict with Israel. For political motives at both a regional and an international level, which for structural reasons were linked to the multi-national companies’ almost total domination of the Arab oil industry, oil played only a minor role in the 1956 and 1967 wars; this was undoubtedly because the industrialised countries’ dependence on Arab oil was at that point far from being a determining factor“.

Be that as it may, the Arab League, notwithstanding their inability to use their oil resources for their political end, soon began to initiate new strategic means of converting this source of international power to a veritable weapon. Part of this strategy involved, among others, the “co-ordination of the Arab countries’ oil policy”, and “the search for ways and means of drawing the greatest advantage from oil in the political context” (Maachou, 1982).

One would wish to ask, with these objectives already internalised within the framework of the League of Arab States, if it could have been possible for them to exclude the question of oil supplies in their various behind-the-scene diplomatic pressure and intimidation against Black Africa penultimate the latter’s massive diplomatic break with Israel? This question comes at the behest of some arguments which tend to exclude oil as an important determinant of the nature and course of Arab diplomacy in Black Africa, viz-a-viz the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973; particularly given the strategic importance of oil imports to the economy of the continent’s poor States.

The Oil Factor in Black Africa’s Involvement in the Middle East Conflict

The Arab-Israeli war of 1967 to some extent coincided with a period of increased energy demands by the industrialized nations. It was at this point that the Arab countries began to apply oil as an effective weapon in the Middle East Conflict. In fact, the emerging importance of petroleum as an Arab instrument of international politics could be roughly measured by the following assessment of the Saudi Arabian case by Campbell (1982):

Saudi Arabia was by far the Middle East’s leading producer and exporter of oil. With the sharp fall in exports from Iran and Iraq, Saudi oil was absolutely essential to the West, and Saudi oil policy was crucial because that country accounted for close to

half of the production of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). By keeping the level in the neighbourhood of 10 million barrels per day, the Saudis could play the leading role in OPEC and exert downward pressure on world prices.

One other important question that readily comes to mind in the light of the above assessment is, given the fact that the Arab nations constituted about 90 per cent of the OPEC membership, what then was the importance of the non-Arab OPEC member countries? In other words, could the non-Arab members have constituted a stumbling block to the pursuit of Arab interest within the framework of OPEC?

There was no doubt that the few non-Arab countries of OPEC, although constituting a minority still exercised substantial influence in the policies of the OPEC. Thus, it was evident, that even though the Arabs constituted a solid majority in the Organization, yet it was impossible for them to initiate exclusive pro-Arab policies within the organizational framework of OPEC without the possibility of creating dissension. It was therefore in order to have an exclusive Arab organization for the pursuit of their exclusive objectives that eventually led to the founding of Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) in 1968, barely a year after the 1967 Six-Day Arab-Israeli war. It was also believed that the foundation of OAPEC was consequent to Saudi Arabia’s regret for initiating the limited oil boycott in the course of the 1967 six-day war.

The Saudi authorities were said to have complained against the adverse effects of the suspension of oil export to the Western nations, which not only saw the country losing revenues, but also caused her to pay compensation to those countries that directly fought the war.

It will be recalled that at a summit conference of Arab leaders held in August 1967 in Khartoum, Sudan, Saudi Arabia agreed to provide the sum of 50 million pounds sterling to assist Jordan and the UAR, then comprising Egypt and Syria (The Middle East & North Africa, 1989). The Saudi authorities in pledging this amount persuaded their fellow Arab leaders to lift the suspension of petroleum exports against the Western Nations which they initiated immediately after the war. Since it had become obvious to the radical group of Arab states, such as Egypt, Syria and Iraq, that the conservative group led by Saudi Arabia were sympathetic to the West, given their bilateral economic and military commitments, it was believed that the formation of such exclusive Arab Petroleum Organization would enable members to act in one accord in future. The organization has as its principal objective the cooperation of its members in various forms of economic activity in the Petroleum industry. It further aims to realize the closest ties among them in the field of Petroleum production as well as the determination of ways and means

of safeguarding the legitimate interests of its members in the Petroleum industry, individually and collectively among other objectives, (Maachu, 1982).

Viewed in the light of the aims and objectives of the all-embracing OPEC in which the Arabs have a commanding majority, what could be said to be the essence of the OAPEC except for a political objective? This objective though concealed, had revealed itself since the inception of the League of Arab states in 1945. In other words, how impossible was it for the Arab states to meet the above objectives within the framework of OPEC? Whatever may be the case, the presence of a special committee on petroleum within the framework of the League long before the founding of OPEC had already indicated the exclusiveness of Arab oil policy, which OPEC could not be entrusted to accept.

One cannot therefore deny the fact that the formation of OAPEC was predicated on the Arab desire to collectively and exclusively utilize their obvious oil resources without internal hindrance, in their combat against the state of Israel and those supporting her. The first sign of the exclusive political role of OAPEC came during 1971 and 1972, when three radical members of the Organization— Algeria, Libya and Iraq nationalized their petroleum companies, thereby stripping the multinational oil companies of their enormous power. One consequent of the action was an increase in the producer states' access to their own oil wealth. The rising profile of Libya as a potential world oil power was becoming increasingly undisputable.

Immediately after the coup in 1969, Libya commenced negotiations with the oil companies operating there. This negotiation ended in April 1971 with Libya extracting a new five-year agreement which raised the total posted price for Libyan crude oil to US\$ 3.447 per barrel. During the concluding part of the negotiations which took place in Tripoli, the Libyan government was said to have represented the interests of the Algerian Iraqi and Saudi Arabian governments. The Libyan government employed the threats of an embargo on the export of crude oil as a lever in the negotiations.

The result of this Libyan exploits was that, within ten years, the country had moved from one of penury and dependence to one of power, especially with regard to its ability to cut off oil supplies. Gaddafi's pronouncements in December 1971 nationalising the assets of British Petroleum in retaliation for the United Kingdom's failure to stop the Iranian occupation of the Tumb Islands in the Gulf was a clear signal to the West that oil might not be left out in the Middle East conflict (The Middle East & North Africa, 1989). It should also be recalled that Saudi Arabia had earlier warned the United States of America to reconsider her Middle East policy or risk suspension of crude oil supplies (The Middle East & North Africa, 1989).

All these events were no doubt, sign-posts pointing

towards an impending application of the oil weapon, which the Black African states should not have been ignorant of. But Cervenka (1977) had argued in line with Ali Mazrui, that oil was never a factor in Pro-Arab OAU member-states stances. He remarked that Afro-Arab alliance was formed as a political pact long before a number of European countries became converted by the oil weapon from Israeli support to friendship with the Arabs. He further argued that there was no evidence either that the Arabs ever mentioned the possibility of using the oil weapon against African countries or that the African countries threw their support behind the Arabs with financial benefit in mind.

If one accepts Cervenka's view that because, there was no evidence that the Arabs mentioned their intention to use the oil weapon against their Black African counterparts; or that the Africans were not enticed by the Arab petro-dollar, how can one then explain first, the various diplomatic trips to several African countries by particularly the Libyan leader, Muammar Gaddafi, and the Saudi Arabian king Feisal? Secondly, how could one reconcile the facts of these visits with the subsequent financial gifts and pledges to those nations visited as well as several other countries? Thirdly, how can one explain the fact that barely one month after the November massive break of diplomatic relations with Israel by the remaining Black African countries, the OAU Council of Ministers met and predictably,

Concluded that the price of oil alone would rise by 400% within a year, resulting in an increase of \$700 million in the cost of imports for non-oil producing African countries? (Azeved, 1988)

Thirdly, what explains the immediate demand by the Black African states that the Arabs impose oil embargo on South Africa, Portugal and Rhodesia, had they not been aware of the eminent Arab oil weapon? The above question is well explained by Cervenka (1977) in the following words:

After completely endorsing the Arab position on the Middle East, the Black African members of the OAU then demanded that an oil embargo applied to Israel should immediately be applied also against South Africa, Portugal and Rhodesia. They also asked for better terms over oil supplies to African countries which had been severely hit by increased prices and by the shortage of oil products (the import of which was suspended on account of the embargo imposed on their Western exporters).

One thing that needs to be noted in the study of diplomatic

and international relations, is that most crucial policy decisions are never made public except by their outcomes. Rather, the most sensitive aspects of international diplomacy are often conducted behind closed doors, away from the purview of the press and public. A few examples suffice to be mentioned. The secret part between Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin was only made manifest when both countries invaded and partitioned Poland. Furthermore, as it will later come to be revealed, the stalemate in the Middle East conflict as well as the oil embargo imposed immediately after the *Yom Kippur* war was broken by the several visits to the Middle East especially Egypt and Israel, by the then United States Secretary of State, Dr. Henry Kissinger. As Daoudi and Dajani (1985) put it:

At a time of intense secret diplomacy conducted by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, one cannot but support the conjecture of many analyses that an agreement was being reached behind closed doors... In support of this, it is significant to note that Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, who was establishing a close rapport with Kissinger was one of those adamantly insisting that oil embargo be terminated to give the United States an opportunity to prove the sincerity of its new even-handed posture in the Middle East.

From the foregoing, is it not possible equally that both the Libyan and Saudi leaders might have made some intimidating propositions regarding their petroleum powers, in the course of their diplomatic promenades to the Black African States? Otherwise how would the Black African states have reacted so swiftly in their demands for sanctions against South Africa, Portugal and Rhodesia, as well as concessional oil supplies? However, whether the Black African rapport with the Arab States was without strings, again can better and fully be explained by the trend of events that followed the Arab response to the Black African demands.

Oil Crisis and the Politics of Arab Aid to Black Africa

In the crucial OAU Council of Ministers Summit held in Addis Ababa from 19 to 21 November 1973, the Algerian Government had brought up a proposal entitled "Consideration of the current Middle East situation with particular effects in African", which was tabled for discussion (El-Khawas, 1975). In his report on the Algerian proposal, the then Secretary General, Nzo Ekangaki conveying the position of the Council of Ministers, stated that:

The countries, which are our worst enemies, depend considerably on us for their energy

supplies. In the circumstances, it would be reasonable to think that the time has come for our Arab brothers to use the oil embargo as a weapon against these countries (Akinsanya, 1976).

In response to the above request, the Arab Heads of State, in a Summit that lasted from 26 to 28 November, 1973, in Algiers, evidently reacted positively. The result was imposition of an oil embargo on South Africa and Rhodesia. In addition, the Arab Summit proposed an African-Arab Summit to further expand the basis of the emerging rapport. It should be pointed out that the effects of the Oil embargo against the West adversely affected the Black African States, more than it did to the targeted purported enemies. So while the oil weapon worked effectively towards achieving the cause, it nevertheless brought economic chaos to some Black African States. This grave situation soon precipitated the formation of an OAU Special Committee of Seven, which was charged with the objective of finding ways to resolve the crisis in concert with the Arab oil producers.

In 1973, the value of Black Africa's total oil import was put at approximately 500 million US dollars. It was expected that the more-than four times rise in oil prices would bring it to about 1.3 billion US dollars (El-Khawas, 1975). Cervenka (1977) thinks that the most seriously affected African countries were those with neither oil nor refineries. He named these states as Botswana, Burundi, Cameroun, Chad, Benin, Gambia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Lesotho, Somalia, Swaziland, Uganda, Upper Volta (Burkina Faso) and Togo. Added to this, is the fact that eight of these countries are land-locked, which makes them dependent on transit facilities granted by their neighbours. Although having a relatively low oil consumption, which amounted to only about 10 million tons per annum, the increase in oil prices cost them an additional \$1809 million in 1974. For the thirty non-oil producing African countries, the cost of oil imports rose from \$500 million in 1973 to \$1,300 million in 1974.

On the overall effects of the oil embargo on the African economy, it was discovered that the industrialized countries added the increased costs of fuel to the prices of their exports of manufactured and industrial goods. Even the costs of fertilizers, pesticides and other chemical by-products from petroleum increased sharply than the cost of fuel oil. This adversely affected those countries dependent on agricultural production with a special severity. Worse still was the fact that all these coincided with worldwide food shortages and soaring prices. Working in tandem with this same state of economic affairs was the fact that none of the non-oil producing African countries was compensated by an increase in the prices of her own exports. Incidentally, these prices dropped, and in some cases very rapidly, from the levels achieved in 1973.

Thus as the Igbo would say, *Ndi Oji Afrika kpata nku na-*

eme ha anwuru, (The Black Africans gathered for themselves the smoky fire-woods to their homes). The Arab Heads of State had previously during their Algiers Summit proposed an "Arab Bank for Industrial and Agricultural Development of Africa" with an initial capital base of 231 million US dollars. This was followed by the January 1974 Cairo meeting of Arab oil Ministers, during which a proposal was made for the establishment of a special Arab Fund for Africa with an initial capital commitment of 200 million US dollars, for emergency purposes (Cervenka, 1977).

Against these Arab proposals, the seven-man OAU committee had proposed a two-tier pricing policy which would enable the affected Black African states purchase oil lower than the world prices. The Arab countries rejected the proposal. Their argument was that Black Africa after all depended entirely on American and Western oil companies for their petroleum needs, making it impossible to restrict such policy exclusively to Black Africa. Thus, the proposed preferential treatment for Black Africa, which involved the supply of all the petroleum products required by them, and provision of interest free credits to enable them buy oil, did not provide the expected result. As Amate (1986) put it:

The initial Arab response as expressed by the Arab summit in Algiers in November 1973 was favourable. But when it came to translating this response into dollars and practical action, the Arabs were not as forthcoming as the Africans had expected.

The OAU Council of Ministers meeting in Mogadishu, Somalia, in June 1974, had accepted the 200 million US dollars emergency but requested that the money be transferred to the African Development Bank (ADB), which would implement the disbursement on behalf of the OAU. The Council further recommended that Africa be made to contribute to the fund. Additionally, the Council recommended a special preference for the land-locked and drought-affected OAU member states.

The committee of seven in conjunction with the OAU oil-producing states were mandated by the Council to work out the terms and conditions for members applying for the fund (Amate, 1986). It was during the same occasion that the idea of an Afro-Arab Summit was mooted. The OAU Secretary-General was mandated to liaise with his Arab League counterpart to work out its possibility. Unfortunately, the OAU position on the disbursement of the fund was unacceptable to the Arab League, who rejected the idea when they met in Rabat, Morocco on October, 1974, Amate (1986) explained:

They insisted on keeping the fund firmly under the control of the Arab League and ruled that each African state that wanted to

benefit from the fund was to negotiate an agreement with the Arab League before funds could be released to it.

As a palliative gesture towards the apparently disappointed Black Africans, the Arab League in the same Summit proposed an increase in the capital base to 350 million US dollars. Subsequently they sent nine of their Foreign Ministers to the disenchanted African state for reassurance of their friendship, and proposed an Afro-Arab summit to establish a framework for co-operation between the two peoples.

In an apparent move to neutralize the Black African request for the involvement of their all-exclusive African Development Bank (ADB) in the disbursement of the Arab funds proposed for Black Africa, the Arab League in January 1975 established the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), with headquarters in Khartoum, Sudan. With an initial capital of 231 million US dollars, the bank was expected to act as the principal clearing-house for all Arab funds meant for Black Africa. It was therefore an attempt by the Arabs to firmly dictate the pulse of Black Africa's dependence on them. A statement by the pioneer President of the bank, the Tunisian-born Chedly Ayari, is insightful:

It is a development agency with a political purpose—and which international development institution is not political? It serves the political purpose of Afro-Arab solidarity and co-operation. Its primary objective is not to invest in profitable ventures but to help development in non-Arab Africa on a broad front, taking account of economic as well as social considerations (Sylvester, 1981).

Black African reaction to the establishment of BADEA was expectedly clear. Amate (1986) rightly observed that, to the African Foreign Ministers, the increase in the emergency assistance fund to \$350 million was still far short of what they considered the Arab-Oil-producing countries were capable of. They questioned the sense in establishing another bank, the ABEDA, to perform the same functions which ADB was well equipped to perform. Further, they expressed their misgivings on the transfer of the emergency assistance fund set up to help hard-pressed non-oil producing African countries to the ABEDA, which was organized to operate as an ordinary bank. Above all, they suspected that the main reason why ADB was not allowed to operate the funds was to ensure that only those African States who toed the Arab political line benefited from the funds.

Black Africa's worries arose out of their earlier experience with the Special Arab Aid Fund for Africa (SAAFA), which was established in 1974 and administered

directly by the Arab League. Though the fund was aimed at helping African countries who found themselves in temporary financial difficulties owing to the high cost of oil created by the boycott, it was later re-directed to help finance projects on Arabic and Islamic Studies in Africa (Sylvester, 1981). However, in spite of these seemingly differing expectations on both sides, the proposal for an Afro-Arab Summit was pursued with high expectations. Membership of the Committee of Seven was expanded to twelve with an added mandate to see to the convening of the Summit. Constituted by an equal number from both the Arab League and OAU, the Committee, then renamed "Committee on Afro-Arab Cooperation," first met in Dar-es-Salam, Tanzania, in April 1975, during which a draft document called, "Declaration and Programme of Action on Afro-Arab Cooperation" was prepared¹. This was later referred to the Committee's Council of Ministers who met in June 1975 in Rabat, Morocco. The document was subsequently adopted by the joint ministerial meeting of both organizations in July, 1975, in Cairo, Egypt.

In April 1976, a joint Summit of the OAU and Arab League Council of Ministers was held in Dakar, Senegal, to put finishing touches to the proposed Summit. The Conference, which ended on April 21, came out with what was described as the "Dakar Declaration", which was based on the "Algerian Document earlier adopted by the Fourth Summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Nations in Algiers (Africa Currents, 1976). The high point of the Declaration was the definition of the basic areas of cooperation and programme of action, departmentalised into political/diplomatic, economic/financial, commercial and social/educational/cultural/scientific/technical/information.

However, when the Afro-Arab Committee of Twenty-Four met between 24 and 26 of January, 1977 in Lusaka, Zambia, to give final scrutiny to the Dakar documents, a disagreement arose over an amendment introduced by Tanzania. The government of Tanzania had proposed the addition of a document entitled, "Urgent Measure to Implement the Programme of Afro-Arab Co-operation." The document had earlier been examined and adopted by the OAU Committee of Twelve in Lusaka, during its meeting of 20th and 22nd January, 1977.

The document observed that, whereas the financial reserves of African and Arab OPEC members rose between June 1975 and June 1976 from 43, 480 billion US dollars to 47,046 billion, an increase of 3566 billion US dollars, those of non-oil producing African countries during the same period

marginally rose from 2578.58 to 2806.61 billion US dollars. This represented a differential proportion of 20 to 1. The document therefore recommended an Arab financial contribution to the poor non-oil producing countries of Africa to reduce their budgetary pressure. They further recommended similar financial empowerment of the African Development Bank (ADB) (Amate, 1986). Amate observed that at the request of the Arab group discussion on the document was deferred to the last day of the conference. It was subsequently slated for discussion at 3 O'clock of the appointed day. However, when the African group arrived for the meeting, they found that the Arab group was conspicuously absent. For close to three hours, the African delegates waited restlessly, wondering what the Arab group was up to. Eventually, when the Arab group arrived, they came in with a new document which they entitled "Declaration on Afro-Arab Economic and Financial Cooperation".

They subsequently replaced the former document, which had already been adopted by the OAU Committee of Twelve with the new one. Surprisingly, no member of the African group could summon the boldness to either demand for explanation for the abrupt change or insist that both documents be discussed side by side. Worse still was the fact that the said substituted Arab document was accepted by the African delegates without debate and eventually adopted by consensus (Amate, 1986). The above scenario clearly explains the popular saying that "a beggar has no choice."

By looking with a stretched neck towards Arab petrodollars, the Black African nations lost every will to bargain with strength. It further reveals what Akinsanya (1976) called a "patron-client relationship." It was no doubt a huge humiliating experience for the Black African States to swallow their pride just for the sake of Arab financial peanuts. The question here is, wouldn't both the African and Arab Groups have raised strong objections that border on neo-colonialism were that action taken by either the United States of America or Great Britain? Added to this, was the fact that the said document which substituted the one submitted by Tanzania lacked specific policy direction. As Amate (1986) opined again:

Unlike the Tanzanian draft document for which this was a substitution, the replacement made no attempt to quantify the needs of the non-oil-producing African countries or the volume of assistance that the Afro-Arab oil-producing countries would be able to give. By couching the document in rather general terms, the oil-producing Arab states left themselves much room to manoeuvre, but they also created a framework for a

¹ The members of this committee on the African side included: Algeria, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Mali, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Senegal, Tanzania and Zaire. While for the Arab League, they include: Kuwait, Lebanon, United Arab Emirates, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Morocco, Mauritania and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).

flexible long-term economic cooperation which was more under the direct control of the donor countries than the African countries would have wished.

It was under this disturbing situation that the Black African States entered into the Summit at Cairo on 27 March, 1977. As would be expected, the Conference was dominated with formal political rhetoric's as each side tried to emphasize its own conception of the cooperation. Thus, while the Black African States dwelt on the economic aspect of the cooperation, to the Arab States, the fundamental drive for cooperation rested on historical and political relations. In this regard they pointed to the Middle East conflict and Southern Africa situation. Disturbed by the apparent conflicting positions of the two groups, especially with regard to Black Africa's disappointment over the Arab approach to their proposed aids, the leader of the Nigerian delegation to the Summit, Joseph Garba, then the Foreign Minister, in a manner that ridicules the traumatic financial position of the non-oil exporting African states, stated:

We must always bear in mind the overriding concept of equality on both sides, and the inescapable fact that just as Black Africa has spontaneously supported the Arab struggle against Zionist aggression and expansionism, we expect in the same way the full-hearted support of our Arab partners for the equally vital struggles of the oppressed people of Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa to free themselves from alien colonial domination and racial discrimination... In our pursuit of the goals of closer cooperation and collaboration between Black Africa and the Arab world, we cannot afford to leave our Arab partners the impression that our relations resemble, even remotely, those between the beggar and the benefactor (Amate, 1986).

Nobody doubts the veracity of Joseph Garba's opinion. At the same time, viewed against the background of Nigeria's economic and financial strength, which put her on the same pedestal with the oil-rich Arab States, one could understand why she feigned insensitivity to the economic plights of the non-oil exporting Black African States. The truth however remains that such a commitment which was clothed in much sensational diplomatic outbursts should have been followed to the point of ensuring mutual benefits. After all the said economic crisis the Africans were facing was neither caused by them nor their erstwhile Western colonial rulers, but by the Arabs themselves through the instrumentality of their oil

boycott and subsequent increase in the price of petroleum products.

It is significant to note that dramatic diplomatic romance between the Arabs and Black Africa progressively led to the cut in the periodical aid that normally flowed from the Western nations. Worse still, the cumulative effects of the boycott and price hike finally rested on the shoulders of these poor Black African States. The unfortunate situation of these Black African States was best summarized by Bissel (1976):

The escalation of oil prices by OPEC also created an entirely new relationship between the Africans and the Arabs. It placed tremendous financial pressure on the Black African States, it discredited the Israeli development model and it gave the OPEC states the power that comes with money. The Black African States saw their balance of payments position destroyed overnight. Those with surpluses were reduced to marginal cases and the majority already in trouble, were faced with imminent bankruptcy. When, in the wake of the oil price rise, the United Nations created a new category of nations euphemistically called "most-affected countries," African States comprised nearly 70 per cent of the list. The limited sovereignty possessed by the African States was reduced even further as their credit ratings dropped out of sight. The ability of the African states to reduce petroleum consumption was far more limited than the ability of Western nations; most petroleum consumed in Africa was already being used for essential purposes.

Thus as it would appear, at the Summit, Nigeria seemed to toe the line of the oil-rich Arab countries with which she reaped the oil wind-fall. Otherwise, Nigeria's vantage position should have given her the gut to impress on her co-oil-rich Arab OPEC members to fulfil their pledges to the financially prostrate Black African States. Two outstanding events of the Summit which attempted to soften, albeit temporarily, the swollen nerves of the Black African States were the sensational Arab donations that followed the speeches of their various leaders, and the appointment of a joint OAU-Arab League Standing Committee to oversee the implementation of the Summit resolutions.

The donations in form of loans to be placed at the disposal of the poor Black African States and for Liberation struggles in Africa included Saudi Arabia's one billion US dollar-credit. This was against the previous 500 million made available. In addition there were increased contributions to

the Khartoum-based Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), and African Development Bank (ADB). The Saudis were followed by Kuwait, which announced the provision of the sum of 200 million US dollars in form of low-interest loans during the following five years, with further contributions to BADEA, ADB and Liberation committee. Kuwait was followed by the Governments of Qatar, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Libya, Egypt and Jordan, with the total sum pledged amounting to 1.5 billion US Dollars (Amate, 1986). In effect, playing on the siege economic mentality of the Black African States, the Arab League turned the Summit to something of a “fund-raising ceremony”, as Amate (1986) in his description of the event best summarizes:

As each of the leaders of the Arab delegations concluded his address to the summit conference with the announcement of the money his government had decided to set aside to finance development projects in Africa, he was greeted with thunderous applause from the rest of the delegations. If the Arab leaders had accepted the Tanzanian proposal to commit themselves to set aside the much larger sums of money for the assistance of African countries through the ADB over which the Africans had full control, they would not have received half the applause they were given that day. Poor as most of their countries were, many of the African delegates to the summit conference must have been dazed by what sounded to them like astronomical sums of money being placed at the disposal of their countries by their rich Arab brothers. And so the first Afro-Arab summit conference ended on this happy note. Afro-Arab Cooperation had now become fully institutionalised, and was a going concern.

The above romantic description soon experienced a downward trend in Arab-Black African cooperation. The business of the Joint Standing Committee appointed by the Summit was to become the means through which the Black African nations let loose their subdued diplomatic restiveness.

But in spite of this, the Arabs using several subtle approaches again undermined the implementation of the joint decision. It was expected that the Arabs should have, in the spirit of the Declaration and Action programme on Afro-Arab Co-operation seen the wisdom of Black Africa's indifference to their attempt to play the role of the piper dictating the tune, as against the dancer having to contribute to the essence of the tune, since his dancing steps give form and meaning to

the tune.

These developments were subsequently greeted with criticisms by a cross-section of Black Africa. Calls for not only the abrogation of the purported co-operation, but also the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel emanated from all directions (Amate, 1986). Consequently, many Black African countries began to make contacts with Israel. Kenya's involvement in the Israeli commando raid at the Entebbe Airport to release Israeli hostages on June 28, 1976 was symptomatic of this development.

In May 1982 Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, eventually opened the door for Israel's diplomatic re-entry into the Black Africa sub-Continent, when he dramatically announced that he had re-established diplomatic relations with Israel. He was followed by Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia, and gradually by other Black African States. In his reason for going back to Israel, President Mobutu accused the Arabs of interference in his country's internal affairs, as well as what he described as the “vile threat of petro-dollars curiously aimed at a Black State”. He described the Black Africa-Arab friendship as booby-trap and said that his country would “not submit to the yoke of an Arab neo-slavery system” (Regaei and Mihssen 1976).

Arab response to the developments was predictable, as Arab countries, notably Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Libya, Kuwait and United Arab Emirate (UAE), severed diplomatic relations with Zaire. Shaken by the Zairean action, which had begun to have converts, the Arab League attempted to reconvene the moribund Afro-Arab standing commission that met in Yaounde, Cameroon once, but without success. Their further reaction was to cut petroleum export and aid to all those countries that re-established relations with Israel. But that did not however turn the trend of disenchantment against Arab diplomatic betrayal of trust and failed promises of economic support. The overall consequence of this apparent Arab diplomatic short-change is disastrous. The once well-pronounced Afro-Arab cooperation eventually collapsed. And with Egypt already on the trail of peace with Israel, Black Africa had no more moral basis to continue to be antagonistic to the State of Israel. It was therefore not long before streams of Black African nations followed the trail of Zaire and re-opened diplomatic relations with the Zionist State.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that Black Africa-Arab relations in the wake of the Arab-Israeli war of 1973 were in the main guided by the oil question. The Arab nations had imposed oil embargo on those countries that were said to be in support of Israel, mostly the European nations. Although embargo was not directed towards Black Africa, but because their economies were still tied to their Western patron-nations on whose financial aids most of them depended, the effects of the embargo soon recoiled back to Black Africa.

On the other hand, most Black African nations having sided with the Arab nations against the State of Israel at the behest of the Organization of African Unity had looked up to the Arab nations for the most desired economic support to ameliorate the adverse effects of the oil boycott. But it became obvious that the Arab nations were not willing to fulfil the purported financial aid they promised to offer the Black nations in spite of all the choruses of Continental brotherhood and common destiny. It was also discovered that even the little Arab financial aid that trickled into Black Africa went to Muslim nations. At the end Black Africa had to turn back to their traditional foreign economic support base—the Western nations.

It was clear by the act of this diplomatic fault-line that Black Africa—Arab relations need a re-definition beyond the rhetoric of African Union. This is because the question of commonality of interest and destiny does not seem to properly fit into antecedents of history. From all extant historical evidence, to the Arabs Black Africa still remains a ground for modern neo-colonialism. Thus between the West and the Arabs, for Black it remains a matter of two neo-colonialisms and which is more rewarding to the African cause. And as the politics of post-Yom Kippur war has proven, the West in spite of all sensational accounts of colonialism and neo-colonialism remains a better option for enduring friendship and Africa's economic development.

The reason for the above assertion is obvious, and this can best be situated within the comparative trajectories of cumulative Arab aid destination to Black Africa as explained earlier, and the destination of cumulative Arab investments of the oil windfalls. In fact it will be plausible to begin with the query posed by Agyeman (1986) over Black Africa-Arab detente on the Middle East conflict when he asked:

And how did the Arabs repay this extraordinary African gesture? In the face of the emergency energy crisis that followed the Arab oil boycott, Africans asked for help and received a stingy response. Afro-Arab relations were quickly reduced, in Arab hands to inter-Islamic relations, or at least to small and sporadic aid flows. The so-called Bank for Economic Development of Africa turned out to be an Arab and not an African-Arab bank, with decisions on all projects under consideration made solely by the Arabs.

Agyeman's query was only one bit of the chain of blatant Arab renegade in their often orchestrated political connubiality with Black Africa. On August 4, 1974, the Editor-in-Chief of the Nairobi-based paper *The Weekly Review*,

Hillary Ng'sweno, reviewed the situation in the following words:

The irony of the situation is that in the critical 12 months following the devastating price increases, African nations received more emergency financial assistance from the Western nations who are supposedly enemies of Africa than from Arab States whose coffers were bursting at the seams with their newfound wealth. (*Africa Currents*, No. 5, Spring 1976)

The magnitude of the effects of the said oil embargo on the economy of the Black African States most of which are non-oil producing has remained indelible on the trails of their perennial economic hardship and underdevelopment index. It should equally be recalled that in 1974, that was barely one year after Black African States massively severed diplomatic relations with Israel on the instigation of Arab nations, and in which Oil embargo was willingly imposed on Apartheid South Africa, the East African Legislative Assembly sitting in Nairobi, Kenya proposed the diversion of River Nile so as to make the Arabs pay for its waters (Mazrui, 1975).

The question which most scholars of Africa-Arab relations have repeatedly failed to ask is did Arab oil-producing nations not find it either necessary or profitable to invest a proportion of their excess financial gains from the oil boom in Black Africa, even when the Western World continue to invest? Ojo (1982) has revealed how these enormous Arab capital investments in Western Europe and America paradoxically helped to strengthen the economy of Apartheid South Africa through increased capital in-flow by way of credit facilities. As he put it:

There is a correlation between the availability of Arab funds in Western countries and the expansion of loans to South Africa by institutions in these countries. For example, there is a noted increase in American loans to South Africa since 1974. Loans advanced by American lending institutions to South Africa had totalled \$2.3b by 1978.

The fact that the Arab nations who pretended to side with Black Africa in the struggles against Apartheid in South Africa were secretly supplying oil to the same Apartheid South Africa in breach of the same oil boycott they willingly imposed remains one of the paradoxes of Arab sincerity in their policy of friendship towards Black Africa. For want of space, this will form an entirely separate discourse.

Conflict of Interests

The author(s) declare no conflict of interest.

<https://www.worldcat.org/title/arabs-and-africans-co-operation-for-development/oclc/7612229>

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