

become trapped, and to revive and restructure the political economy so that the bases of foreign policy could be re-established and strengthened: from a Newly Industrializing to Influential Country, not *vice versa*. The new leader's domestic and economic preoccupations will divert him from the diplomatic concerns at first, although so much of Nigeria's difficulty stems from its place in the world economy (the oil nexus) and its disregard of domestic resources, particularly agriculture. Thus sustained political and strategic revival must await internal and economic transformation. Foreign Minister Akinyemi will be powerless until the economy is righted. Nigeria's claim to being a Newly Influential Country — made prematurely in the mid-1970s, a brief "missionary" phase — will be determined by its ability to become a really Newly Industrializing Country. But the escape from the periphery will be hard, even in West Africa, and nuclear status will remain elusive.

However, the Babangida coup at least clarifies two issues, one political, the other theoretical. First, of particular relevance to the Nigerian debate, external "power" cannot be exerted, let alone maintained, without internal resources: the ultimate cause of Nigeria's setbacks in Chad

and Cameroon, not to mention the rest of the continent, is its disarticulated "rentier" economy. And second, Nigeria's quest to advance to the semi-periphery — the leading producer as well as consumer and trader in West Africa — is dependent on the particular constellation of social forces: whether more national and technocratic or more comprador and bureaucratic interests are in the ascendancy.

Babangida seems determined to follow Mohammed rather than either Gowon or Buhari. Whether his regime can yet turn around the runaway Nigerian rentier state depends on (1) the social basis of his leadership — whether it can attract technocrat, worker and peasant support, (2) the related performance of the national economy, and (3) the state of the global economy and the response of international economic organizations. Unless the latest regime gets this internal and external mix right — a challenging task even for a long-surviving military officer like Babangida — Nigeria may rapidly become, a decade after the apex of OPEC, a Newly *Insignificant* Country in African and global affairs. □

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