

Nigeria's Foreign Policy, Reciprocity and Africa Centeredness: The Need for a Reconstruction in the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria foreign policy in the 21st century has attracted a great deal of attention, as the dynamics on the world stage and domestic realities continue to impose challenges for the citizens. While many countries have appreciated the new realities of world politics and have however adjusted to the new global situations, Nigeria is yet to adjust her foreign policy with domestic realities. Thus, the study explores Nigeria's Africa centeredness' policy with the view to ascertain its relevance or otherwise in the 21st century. Descriptive research method with explanatory variant are used. Findings show that, for as long as the objective of Nigeria's foreign policy is to ensure protection of black and African interest, Nigeria cannot but find it necessary to offer solidarity with African states. However, because very little has happened to show that she has made so much sacrifice in African affairs, the study recommends amongst others that the scope of Nigeria's reciprocity should be restricted to issues that are more apparently in consonance with her national interest.

Keywords: Nigeria, Foreign Policy, Reciprocity, Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Nigerian foreign policy, especially in the 21st century has continued to attract a great deal of attention, as the dynamics on the global scene and the domestic realities continue to impose challenges for all actors. While many countries have readily appreciated the new realities of world politics and have however, adjusted to the new global situation, using foreign policy to improve the quality of their international engagements, to address major domestic issues or problems, Nigeria on the other hand, appear not to use her foreign policy to resolve the many contradiction of national realities that have continued to weigh down her development efforts.

Nigeria is hardly different from other African countries where lack of development is the distinguishing hallmark, yet, it is a common knowledge that Nigerian's foreign policy revolves essentially around Africa problems. Africa centeredness of Nigeria's foreign policy holds that solidarity with other African countries is the fundamental interest of their foreign policy. Inside the

confines of the broad objectives, that are routinely upheld and promoted is the practice of reciprocity.

This study invariably assumes two core objectives first involve conceptual clarification. Here the study would attempt conceptual analysis of two major concepts, foreign policy and reciprocity. These concepts must be decoded and elaborated in its entirety to remove any ambiguities or contradiction to our understanding of their usage in the context of this discourse.

The second objective and perhaps the major objective is to identify and isolate for discussion and critical interrogation dynamics and manifestation of reciprocity in Nigeria's African foreign policy. Actually, the presumption is that reciprocity really exists as an international relations practice. In a complex world of interdependence, application of reciprocity is an essential tool used by sovereign states in all facets of inter-state relations. States actions are restrained by reciprocity. This is because the action of state toward one another is a matter of give and take. In this sense, a measure state gives is the same measure it expects or actually gets back from the beneficiary of its favour (Tred, 2010).

The principle of reciprocity in Nigeria's foreign policy, especially Africa centeredness approach deserves some intellectual investigation, because some Nigerian international relations analysis calls for a paradigm shift in reciprocity behavior of Nigeria with Africa, while others demised such shift, saying, it is a manifest destiny for Nigeria to address African problems. This, invariably implies that there are contending issues in this regard.

CONCEPTUAL/THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

Foreign policy

Foreign policy is the entire range of activities a nation pursues in its day-to-day relations with other nations, to achieve its national interest, as defined by its leaders. Foreign policy is a country's response to the world outside or beyond its own frontier or boundaries, responses which are products of environmental factors (Northedje, 1968). Foreign policy is a product of both domestic and external influence. Domestic factors, for example, help to determine the national interests and the specific objectives. In the same vein, External environment has a great deal of influence over the shape and even the mechanism, methodology and instruments of nation's international engagements and diplomacy.

Every nation's foreign policy is in the service of its national interests which among others include security, socio-economic welfare, and power (Bassey, 2015). However, a remarkable thing about the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy in Africa is that, it lacks conscious effort by the decision makers to link her various foreign policy engagements on the continent to the desideratum of transforming the structure of the nation's economic underdevelopment as a strategic objective.

Reciprocity

Etymologically, the concept "reciprocity" is derived from French words "reciprocate and reciproque", and Latin word "reciprocus", which means "return action, response, reaction and exchange (vide Dictionary bac, 2013). Reciprocity is one of the most and widely acknowledged practice in the field of international relations. However, its conceptualization remains a matter of controversy. Much of the confusion and controversy stems from the fact that it

means different things to different people. Moreover, the trouble continue as the concept is not very straight forward, this is why Goldstem and Treemon (1990) acknowledge it as pattern of state interactions; as an agreement believed to be enforced by threats of reciprocal retaliation against defections from the agreement.

The definitional problem notwithstanding, attempt have been made by scholars to conceptualize it, to fill the knowledge gaps in the understanding of the workings, the logic and role of reciprocity in international relations.

One scholar whose work profoundly influences our understanding of “reciprocity” is Eze (2010). In his words, reciprocity is

The exchange of roughly equivalent values in which the actions of each party are contingent on the prior actions of the others in such a way that good is returned for good and bad for bad.

Bassey (2015) and Okon (2015) in their separate intellectual discourses maintained that reciprocity implies actions that are contingent on rewarding reactions from others and that reactions cease when expected reactions are not forthcoming. Without running a repeat of all the scholars' postulations, it is apt to point out that the logic of this principle centre around collective good problem. It is generally believed that collective good problem could be solved through the driven forces of reward and punishment. In this regard, Nation states are expected to contribute to matters that serve the interests of mankind (Nweke, 1983).

Accordingly, countries that contributed immensely to the achievement of “collective good” should be positively rewarded, either by the beneficiaries of good gestures or group of nations that find support in their external exploit from reciprocal behavior, while punishing those that pursue self-interest at the expense of others. Therefore, the concept implies power relations based on mutual “extension of reward” and mutual application of sanctions, compensatory or retaliatory, striving or underpinning, requital, retribution, counter-attack, counter-blow, revenge, and vengeance.

In international relations, the practice of reciprocity must be consistent with the principle of sovereignty and self-help. It is for this fact that Akutermios (1995) advise that, Nigeria's African foreign policy should be redesigned, while not ignoring Nigeria's solidarity with African countries, he suggested certain restraint in the country's pre-occupation, a serious understanding of and perhaps commitment to Afro-countries problems, as not careful articulation of this principle and practice could hamper the achievement of national realities.

Reciprocity involves behavior that returns ill for ills (Negative reciprocity) and as well good for good (positive reciprocity). This is an affirmation of the Biblical principle “that everyone shall be treated accordingly.” International jurisprudent theorists recognize both perspectives, and argued that reciprocity take positive meaning, in the context of economic relations, where cooperation for cooperation, give and take relationship enhanced mutual benefits for both parties and on the other side, a negative meaning when reciprocity, as retaliation include retorsion and reprisal (Okon, 2015).

Generally speaking, reciprocity is a tool that guides the implementation of nation's foreign policy, international agreements, external attitude and more importantly, assist in the conduct and management of difficult relations. Reciprocity determines and also guarantees the protection of national interest. In all, the practice of reciprocity in the diplomatic cycle is based on mutual benefits and disadvantages. It is a practice that confines states to behave reasonably and choose the implementation of foreign policy in a way that would encourage other states to act cooperatively and avoid confrontation.

It emphasized either mutual dependence on one another or mutual exchange of rights, privileges or obligations and of all the component actors whose actions enable the enforcement of acts of reciprocity. Bassey (2015) pointed out in his argument that, the people and government believed that in times of direct national emergencies, Nigeria needs the solidarity of other African countries governments to ensure collective survival. In his words;

The enduring solidarity exhibited by the members of the (OAU) with the federal course in the civil war which, more than any other factor deterred non-African government from recognizing the succession of Biafra in spite of the machinations of France and South Africa

Again, it is an indisputable fact that African regional organization, especially (OAU) now AU, is potentially a viable vehicle of Nigerian foreign policy. Through reciprocity principle with Africa, Nigeria could properly mobilize other African states of (AU) to functionally advance her political goals in the continent and also in the global setting. Regional and sub-regional security is another premise for the adoption and practice of reciprocity in her foreign policy exploit, particularly with African countries. In this direction, Bassey (2015) averred that, the diverse developments in the form of acts of external aggression and intervention particularly in the West-central Africa have a potential impact on national and sub-regional security and independence. Apparently, by the above analysis or observations, Nigeria should at all times, champion essentially African course by demonstrating regional leadership base on solidarity.

The value of solidarity, as discussed by Bassey (2015) engendered by reciprocity formed the fundamentals, why Nigeria must stand firmly by other African countries for in doing so its national priorities, security and independence would be guaranteed. From the view raised above, the thought-provoking question is, are there any linkages between Nigeria's reciprocal behavior and the pursuit of her national interest in Africa and beyond?

NIGERIA'S RECIPROCITY BEHAVIOUR WITH AFRICAN COUNTRIES

South Africa

South Africa was one of earliest European colonies in Africa (Barkindo, 1994). The history of South Africa is very unique because of her racism policy. In practice, South Africa experienced perpetual economic and political domination of their land by the white or European minority. There were segregated in nature reserves, suppressed in the towns and in the industrial undertakings. This was the case with South Africa apartheid situation for a very long time. In her commitment to South African Liberation, the government of Nigeria, in 1977, nationalized British petroleum (BP) and, again in 1969, the Barclays Bank was similarly nationalized. This action, according to Madu (2013) were based on the fact that these companies had effective trading relationship with those that favour apartheid policy. Besides, several measures put in place towards Liberation of South Africa

include ban on the importation of South African goods into the country, Nigeria also spearheaded the suspension of South Africa from the commonwealth in 1961, mobilized other Black Africans to sanction South Africa politically and economically. She denied South Africa rights, privileges associated with commonwealth membership enjoyed in Nigeria (Jonah, 2008)

Angola

In her conscious effort for the total decolonization of Africa, the government of Nigeria under President Murtala Mohammed, supported the *movimiento popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA). In this, Nigeria voted in favour of (OAU's) recognition of the (MPLA) (Charles, 2012)

Zimbabwe

In the Zimbabwe struggle for independence, the government of Nigeria, donated a whopping \$20 million to assist not only SWAPO's Sam Nujoma in Namibia's elections but equally ensure that, they denied South Africa, the attempt to install a puppet government in 1989. The government of Nigeria also contributed financially to the Liberation movements in Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe that were increasingly and unprecedentedly troubled by South Africa. (Charles, 2012).

Liberia

One outstanding feature of Nigeria's foreign policy, particularly toward Africa and indeed the world, is its commitment to international peace and security as manifested in its peace keeping role, a role Julie (2017) (Charles, 2017) said the country is actively participating in the post-cold war peace keeping operation. A good example is her ECOMOG initiative in Liberia.

The Liberia-ECOMOG initiative was a watershed in her peace keeping role in Africa. In the 1980s' Nigeria undertook peace keeping operations in Liberia, Chad, Angola, and Namibia. From the 1990s to date, Nigeria involves in Liberia, Western Sahara, Gombadia, Somalia, Rwanda, Sudan, Haiti, Sierra-Leone and many others. So, in the spirit of reciprocity, the role of Nigeria in Africa clearly demonstrated her genuine solidarity to the African cause.

Julie (2012), in her comment noted that events and realities of the immediate post-cold war era forced Nigeria to redefine its policy stance to address security concerns on the continent in a way that gave it teeth. This position, she further explained came up following the realization that African problems, particularly conflicts, were no longer a primary focus for the West, especially in the aftermath of the post-cold war era.

In peace-making on the continent, Nigeria had played pioneering and critical roles of very great cost both material and human resources. Several detailed accounts of Nigeria peace keeping experiences have been recorded. Suffice it to mention here that, in most cases, especially in Africa, Nigeria provided the back-up of manpower and took the heaviest losses. In Chad, Nigeria provided 8107,000,000 (Abor, 2004). In Liberia, Nigeria provided over \$18 billion (Oluyemi-Kusa, 2007). Nigeria has also provided several Aid or technical assistance to many African states mostly through the African Development bank (ADB).

Given the enormous specific; financial military and socio-cultural assistance to the other African countries, Nigeria deserves favourable response in all situations concerning her interest in Africa and beyond but what is the situation.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE BENEFIT?

If they believed by rational reasoning that issues of reciprocity is give and take, one should expect that African countries, especially beneficiaries of Nigeria's benevolence, would make strategies choice of policy to compensate huge sacrifices made in the context of Afro-centric policy behaviors. But sad to say, the reverse is the case. Instead of returning good for good, it is the case of returning bad for good. This aptly captures Liberia's response to Nigeria quest for permanent membership seat in the United Nations Security Council. During this context the AU had agreed to vote massively and enbloc for any African state that wound context in the election. This position was taken based on the agreement and beliefs, that if such a state won, it would represent the interest of Africa as a whole and not exclusively its own interest.

Looking at African countries, Nigeria's credentials put her ahead of others. Akinterinwa(2005), found Nigeria's credentials to be very strong and impressive. Akhigbe(1998) found Nigeria's credentials to be intimidating. To Akindele(2011), Nigeria's outstanding record, within the UN system is superlative. According to UN figure(2010), Nigeria ranked the 5th largest contributor of uniformed personnel to UN operations with (877 police, 76 military experts and 4888 troops, totaling, 5841(58%) of UN total) as at December, 2000.

Nigeria has been in over 40 Peacekeeping Operations under various UN mandates in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. Above all, Nigeria is a country with the largest concentration of black people in the world. With these, Nigeria is the most qualified African state expected to clinch the African slot.

With the glaring picture of Nigeria sacrifice, Nigeria, as argued by Emeka (2012) should have ridden on AU horse to earn global and continental respect. Unfortunately, against the principle of reciprocity, other African countries work desperately to deny Nigeria the opportunity to secure the UN permanent seat in the UN Security Council. The desperation of these countries, particularly Togo, Sierra-Leone and even surprisingly Liberia West African neighbors of Nigeria's, voted for themselves rather than Nigeria. To understand the logic of this argument, it is reasonably to put it clearer, that the three West African countries were not registered, neither enlisted, nor possess basic requirements for the position. But, instead of supporting Nigeria to actualize her interest, through the African continental cooperation and governments, countries that benefited from her became the main challengers to her global interest.

That apart, South Africa, one of the greatest beneficiaries of Nigeria's immerse benevolence and magnanimity that ought to respond favourably to the interest of Nigeria, like Liberia, also displayed unappreciative attitude toward Nigeria interest. Following the face-off between Nigeria and the west, on account of serious human rights abuse, South Africa not only voted for the expulsion of Nigeria from the common wealth but also threatened to impose sanction on her. The ugly relations that prevailed then, made Nigeria to boycott the final of the African cup of nations football competition in 1996 in South Africa. Before then, observers were highly suspicious of South Africa behavior. Istifanus and Freedom (2012), noted that, South Africa did not recognize Nigeria's critical role to her independence. Considering the significance role played in the struggle for independence, one should expect high level of cooperation between Nigeria and South Africa.

But it wasn't so, this was revealed when Nelson Mandela, on his release from prison did not make Nigeria his first port of call. Instead of the expected strategic partnership with Nigeria in order to move Africa forward, South Africa under Nelson Mandela demonstrated high level of hostility toward Nigeria. Recently, South Africa citizens attacked Nigerians– xenophobic, and the government of South Africa apologized to governments and people of other countries but refused to apologize to the people and government of Nigeria (Akundenmia,2012).

In the spirit of negative reciprocity, countries that Nigeria had desirously helped return nothing but disrespect, indifferent, overt and tacit actions to Nigeria's interest. It was on the basis of unkind response to Nigeria's quest for African assistance that Thomas (2012) averred that:

"Within the African circle, nothing has ever been a foregone conclusion when it comes to Nigeria's candidature for global Appointment and further advised that since Nigeria has always experienced shift competition even from unexpected quarters, the country should not be carried away by her impressive credentials"

The obvious, is that since the application of the principle of reciprocity in Nigeria's African policy, very little has happened to show that Nigeria has made so much sacrifice in her involvement in Africa's affairs. It is for this that, others, especially, those on the side of paradigm shift advised that the country should restrict the scope of Nigeria's leadership in Africa to issues that are non-controversial and which, more importantly, are apparently in consonance with a particular perception of her national interest. Obiozor (1997's) position is very relevant.

He was not only vocal but more direct and straighter forward when he submitted that Nigeria should do a stocktaking of those African states and other states in the world that she had once assisted to discover in what ways such assistance had yielded return for the country. He put this thought clearly in the following words:

What we are saying is that foreign policy that does not insist on reciprocity is simply moralistic and infantile, for the gain of nations there can be no permanent friends, or permanent enemies, for early circumstances determine which course a nation will take to protect its own national interest based on conditions and circumstance.

Alluding to the fact above, Akinyemi (1987) explained that Nigeria is the foremost black African power which has responsibilities towards Africa, in the same vein, other African countries should have responsibilities also to Nigeria, especially when it comes to using African platform to promote and protect her interest. Nigeria requires the support assistance of other African States. In the words of Akinyemi (1987), when we say that Africa is the centerpiece of our foreign policy, we mean that Nigeria should identify with and defend the legitimate interests of Africa. Collectively it should mean that Africa and African States should identify with and defend the interest of Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria has spent enormous amount of development needed resources to address Africa problems with little or no reflection of good response to her benevolent foreign policy attitude. It does not mean that Nigeria should stop reciprocity foreign policy. This is because in diplomatic circle, it embraces legal, political, economic and social benefits. For as long as the objective of our foreign policy is to ensure the protection of Africa interests, Nigeria, cannot but find it necessary to avoid hostility to any African country. As noted in the work, the problems of reciprocity arise from lack of

proper coordination, self-interest against public good and weak capacity to reciprocate good gesture. To this end, proper and effective coordination and management of Nigeria Africa policy should be put in place for an enduring acceptance of her leadership on the continent. Again, Nigeria needs to redirect her foreign policy with proper articulation to know when, under what circumstance and how it can be applied when African States are involved. Lastly, Nigeria should purge itself of negative tendencies such as corruption to earn good reputation in the international arena.

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