

Challenges Confronting Nigeria-South Africa Relations.

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Abstract

A consistent orientation of Nigeria's foreign policy since it attained political independence is the emphasis on Africa as the centre-piece of her foreign policy which implies that Nigeria will pursue policies that strengthened the overall interest of Africa. However, the apparent altruistic nature of the attendant challenges as revealed by this paper has constrained its efforts to the accomplishments of its Afrocentric policies. This study highlights that despite changes in government, composition of the dominant class (differences in size, the nature of control established over state institutions, relations or alliances with external forces), and relative growth in material wealth of the Nigerian state, there has been a striking challenge beyond slavery and colonialism. The paper placed emphasis on factors such as post-colonial African leadership, ethnic diversity, poor economy and xenophobia as core challenges. It further recommended that the general populace of South Africans especially the youths needs to be given an orientation and education on the role Nigeria played to

liberate them from the racist enclave and, Nigeria should concern itself on how best to restore its image as the 'giant of Africa' in the international environment.

Keywords: Challenges, Confronting, Nigeria, South-Africa, Relations

Introduction

Before independence, Nigeria's African leadership potential was anticipated internationally and domestically. Foremost Nigerian nationalist and first President, Nnamdi Azikiwe, referred to Nigeria as 'Nigeria-African' a symbolism of Nigeria's inseparable and intricate tie to African interest. The west also referred to Prime Minister Balewa as the 'Golden voice of Africa,' owing to Balewa's spirited profession of African interests. Nigeria from independence promoted Africa-centred foreign policy expressed through aggressive decolonization and anti-apartheid campaigns, economic aid, identification with African unity and development initiatives, as well as solidarity

with black diaspora. Afro-centricism implies an African spirit of brotherhood or being ones brother's keeper and emphasising on African cooperation and liberation.

The history of Nigeria's foreign policy towards South Africa as a case study can be traced from the time when the anti-colonial struggle and the crisis of collective racial identity of colonised people were critical issues in world politics. It was therefore in the context of decolonization process as a global political phenomenon, involving peoples of colour, and its ideas generated, that self-determination and self-government came to provide the core foundational, conceptual and philosophical building blocks for Nigeria's nascent foreign policy. Nigeria's most definitive and national outlook turned out to be a sense of endowment in size and power that entitled it to play a leadership role in the black world and assuming responsibilities far beyond her borders.

In this regard, the prime minister was of the view that with good etiquette and diplomatic finesse, "Nigeria will have a wonderful opportunity to speak for the continent of Africa such that "Nigeria might fulfil her destiny as the leader of the African continent".

In fact, this became the reference point for the successive Nigerian governments in their African policies. Thus, each successive

government, military or civilian inevitably became a shade moderation, militancy or radicalism of the first one (Bukar, B. 2000).

This article examines the challenges constraining Nigeria's Afrocentric efforts with emphasis on South Africa whose issue was one of the most constant concerns of the Nigerian government since the attainment of independence. At the first debate in the House of Representatives in November 1960, the Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa in apparent reference to South Africa reassured the leader of the opposition that on the issue of South Africa, "Nigeria has a duty to see that there is equality of treatment to all mankind". Concerning overt demonstration of commitment, (under cooperation) the 1960 saw Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa in the frontline of diplomatic battles (in the OAU and Commonwealth councils) against Pretoria's Apartheid system of government. Balewa, in his speech to the United Nations General Assembly, outlined the contours of Nigeria's foreign policy and her position that apartheid was unacceptable to the Nigerian people. And in a relatively more aggressive stance, the prime minister further addressed the House of Representatives Prime Minister's meeting in London in March 1961.

"As for South Africa, we shall continue to press in every way possible and at every opportunity for reversal of their present policy of racial discrimination".

It is important to note that, Nigeria's objectives in South Africa as opposed to colonial rule and racial injustice are similar to those of the OAU and majority of members of the United Nations. Nigeria supported the establishment of black majority rule, stating in its policy that "only majority rule based on free and fair exercise of universal suffrage by all the people in a non-fragmented South Africa can lead to a just and lasting solution of the explosive situation prevailing in that country (West Africa, 1986). To implement this policy, the Nigerian leaders attempted to employ three strategies: (i) direct economic and political sanctions; (ii) appeals to western powers to initiate and support sanctions, including encouragement of hostile world opinion against continued colonial rule and isolation of the Pretoria regime in social and cultural activities; and (iii) the offering of moral and material support to African liberation movements. Since independence, African elites have chosen to participate in external relations with fellow African States despite being limited by a dearth of resources. They, (African elites), have sought to resolve trade-offs between national and continental identity which proceeds from the desire to unite disparate geographical units, to pull resources in concerted action and to increase the leverage of the continent as a whole in the global and regional affairs of new African States.

The states are also determined to solve the challenges of sovereignty, differentiation and national identity through which they can maximize individual political autonomy, strengthen territorial borders and guarantee unilateral advantages from relations with external actors. To achieve this, a continental union of all independent African states (OAU) now (AU), was formed to champion the African cause. Its charter embodied several objectives but its character and mainline activities is defined primarily by two objectives which are;

(a) The promotion of unity and solidarity of African states and serving as the collective voice for Africa in the international community,

(b) Eradicating all forms of colonialism and racism in Africa.

Therefore, it was created as a forum for the aggregation of the interests of African states and an instrument of collective diplomacy on such cross-cutting issues as decolonization, bringing an end to racial regimes in Africa as well as interstate conflict resolution and economic cooperation. Nigeria's activist role in furthering the cause of decolonization, and eradication of apartheid regimes was critical in strengthening the capacity of the OAU to achieve its objectives in these areas. In fact, the Nigerian government took up an African-centre policy as stated in the speech of the prime minister of Nigeria, Sir Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa who mooted this idea in his

first address to the UN Assembly on October 7, 1960. According to him, “Nigeria hopes to work with other African states for the progress of African territories to a state of responsible independence “.

The cardinal objectives of Nigerian foreign policy as enunciated by the Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa, was the promotion of African solidarity and working towards the decolonization of all African States. The political independence of Nigeria in October 1960, stands as a profoundly significant event that provided a unique opportunity to craft coherent foreign policy towards the international community in general and Africa in particular. Thus, Africa became the centre-piece of Nigeria’s foreign policy. On the issue of colonialism, the Minister of External Affairs, Jaja Wachukwu unequivocally declared as an official position of Nigerian authorities that colonialism and all its manifestations must be ended and that Nigeria would be failing in its duty if it did not use its full resources, intellectual, moral and material, in the struggle for the emancipation of the rest of Africa. This pronouncement was reiterated by Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa during the 1963 Africa Summit that established the Organisation of African Unity, when he emphasized that Nigeria would never compromise her position on the question of colonialism and racial discrimination in Africa.

These pronouncements were clearly declared and vigorously pursued by various

administrations in post-independence Nigeria. Hopes and expectations were quite high that Nigeria would harness her immense resources to create a good life for her citizens and the less-endowed neighbouring countries (Olusanya, S.O 1986). However, Nigeria did not pursue her afro-centric policies with the vigour at which the policies were articulated due to several factors which posed a great challenge to her. These challenges will be discussed based on the phases in Nigeria-South Africa relations which is the Apartheid and Post-apartheid era respectively.

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Ethnocentrism as a sociological concept explains the issue of xenophobia in South Africa. It is said to be a cultural narrowness in which the “the ethnically centred individual rigidly accepted those who were culturally alike while just as rigidly rejecting those who were culturally different (Summer, 1906)”. The notion of ethnocentrism is psychological creations which make every people believe that it occupies the highest place of superiority among their contemporary. An ethnocentric personality accepts own group, occupy the position of the group as a standard for evaluation of others. In this case, own group occupy the position of the best while other groups are worse. It is a believe system that presents the in-group as he centre of everything and is superior to all out-groups-an obligatory for xenophobic practices

(Levin & Campbell, 1972). The condition classically defines the South African case who by reasons of self-imposed superiority has classified the “others” as inferior. This is exemplified in the ascription of the local derogatory word “MAKWEREKWERE” to African immigrants. This attitude by SAN has created a sense of bewilderment amongst Africans that despite the unprecedented commitment of the “so-called” other African brothers especially Nigerians to the liberation struggle, South Africans doesn’t seem to regard or remember such efforts.

Ethnocentrism is, “the narcissism of minor differences” where the self-love of the individual is expressed as antipathies and aversions towards strangers this narcissism of minor difference is a convenient and relatively harmless way of satisfying the inclination of aggression (Freud, 1921). The xenophobic person considers him/herself to be to be the standard of his/her cultural norm. in fact, the South Africans created the in-group in a continent whose history has been marked by fluid , boundaries and continual integration of strangers premised on the tripod of pan-Africanism. “where economies have been structured over several centuries through extremely brutal forms of economic-extraversion (Marshall,2009).

Challenges confronting Nigeria-South Africa Relations.

Both Nigeria and South Africa are post-colonial entities with domestic challenges that are inimical to stability and progress. How both are able to manage these challenges have implications for relations between them. these challenges stem from ethnic diversity to bad governance, poor economy, xenophobia attacks, political unrest and corrupt leadership as the case may be.

Ethnic diversity: Every developing heterogeneous society faces the challenges of finding unity in diversity and Nigeria’s first republic was not an exception. However, no nation weak at home politically or economically can be strong abroad, as put by Simon 1967 that, foreign policy is the function of home strength (Simon, A.). It displayed political inadequacies for pursuing an assertive foreign policy whereas the domestic environment was steeped in the traditions of ethnic politics and political parties divided along ethnic lines and owing their allegiance to their ethnic groups. (A.B. Akinyemi, 1974). This low level of national integration was compounded by the adoption of an inherently weak and lopsided federal system of government that was inherently unstable.

The Balewa government had to contend with very strong fissiparous tendencies and domestic constraints which represented a very major constraint on foreign policy formation (J.P. Makintosh,1963) and made her unable to brave into new areas of

relations in the international arena which was not only a challenge to Nigeria but to African states who had just gone through the painful processes of political emancipation from the shackles of imperialism and colonialism but have not yet acquired a very rich experience, skill and tradition in the conduct of international relations. The Nigeria's fragile political institution dictated her conduct of international affairs coupled with her inability to maintain a situation of domestic political stability which is vital for the pursuit of a consistent and coherent foreign policy.

In fact, the ethnic factor in the Nigerian context is a formidable and non-negligible domestic force that has raised questions on what makes it (ethnicity) so salient in the direction of disintegration rather than integration in the Nigerian settings. Political institutions became vulnerable as a result of ethnic diversity and political disunity, inherent feuds among political parties, lack of consensus on vital issues, the fledging political institutions and the lack of institutionalisation of the political processes, all created an atmosphere of political instability which impeded Nigeria's ability and capacity to actively engage in strong, credible foreign policy (U. Joy, Ogwu, 1986). A political system which is an essential ingredient in defining the scope of a nation's foreign policy was in the Nigerian setting, very problematic; empowered by the constitution, the three

regions that comprises the federation were parochial in character and never served as tools for national integration. Freely, they exercised their rights to nullify treaties even those concluded by the central government. The three regions which emerged out of cultural organisations were focused essentially on the interests of those cultural groups. Therefore, no single party had a national outlook but was centred on the idea of East for Easterners, North, for Northerners, West for Westerners and Nigeria for nobody. Over industrial developments and securing of loans, the regional governments possessed and exercised the same power as the federal government, her constituent states pursued its own foreign policy which was often at variance with the federal government and also controlled their own police whom they utilize to intimidate other political groups that does not protect their interests, while the federal government uses the army to its own advantage- this, according to Ralph Uwechue was termed "Constitutional Manipulation".

It was a political atmosphere in which the area of foreign policy which was supposed to be cohesive rather became a "free for all" arrangement borne by the internal manifestations of the deep divisions between Nigeria's ethnic groups drawn by the British without a clear perception of the complexities of a heterogeneous society characterized by mistrust and fear of domination of one ethnic

group by another. Divergences of objectives even on national issues and an active unilateral regions virtually eliminated the central government as the principal actor in the political system. In the absence of a national consensus on foreign policy, the Balewa government had to move cautiously for fear of alienating any one of the powerful regions because a nation constantly in the throes of political crisis is hardly in a situation to play an active role in international affairs.

Therefore the survival of the nation becomes its major priority without which, it can have no role in the international community. As a result, Nigeria had to adopt a low profile in its external relations in the face of her powerful domestic political constraints with which she could only make little or no attempt at the formulation of a coherent African policy. The popular demand for immediate political union of Africa made little appeal to him and her response to African issues seem to be largely a matter of reacting to events on an adhoc basis. Despite Nigeria's huge size, population and natural resources when compared with other African countries, the image of Nigeria abroad was rather one of a shambling giant with no clear idea of what its role in Africa should be. It was never able to exert in Africa an influence that was commensurate with its size.

As I pointed earlier, Nigeria did not pursue her afro-centric policies with the vigour at which the policies were articulated. Rather,

it did pursue this role with caution and hesitance due to some challenges that constrained its effort at that same period. Balewa at first, tended to shy away from any direct involvement with liberation movements. He made determined efforts to discourage direct contacts between Nigeria and liberation movements. For example, leaders of these liberation movements like Harry Nkumbula of the Northern Rhodesian Congress provided ample testimony of Nigeria's hostility towards the movement when that came to solicit for help from Nigerian government, who refused to give them audience while the unfortunate amongst them were imprisoned and later deported. This placid and insensitivity by Nigeria's Prime Minister was borne out of another major challenge that bedevilled the country which was **poor economy**. It is important to note that, a world role will be impracticable and meaningless in the face of daunting economic problems. Nigeria's foreign policy has been conditioned by two major economic considerations. One, was the degree of external dependence on the economy. Note that a major factor of power in the international system is economic self-sufficiency, economy indeed was a major problem for the newly independent state who had inherited from British colonialism an immature economy predominantly oriented towards the production of raw materials in a fluctuating world market and unfavourable terms of trade.

The economic pull for Britain's intense need for Nigeria's agricultural resources and raw materials which was manifest in the colonial pattern of trade and established during the years before Nigeria's independence, was maintained because Nigeria provided its continuity that eventually solidified Nigeria's dependence on Britain for trade, making Nigeria's economy heavily dependent on British's fluctuating prosperity. This inescapable dependence on foreign aid and dependence made Nigeria incapable of financing a substantial part of her financial projects (Doughlas, 1964). Nigeria became a mere economic appendage of their colonial masters and her need for import of both capital consumer goods which were increasing faster than her GNP, caused her lack of influence on the price of manufactured goods and had her at the mercy of industrialised countries. As pointed out, Nigeria was still systematically linked to Britain and the West economically, educationally, politically and to a certain extent culturally (Imobighe, 1989). The second major economic challenge was the inability for Nigeria's economy to mobilize and deploy its productive forces.

At first, Nigeria leaders showed no desire to break away from the historical ties with Britain under whose tutelage they have been for virtually a century that is, (1861 to annexation of Lagos to independence) rather, they decided on the policy of non-aligned as

the guiding principle of the country's foreign policy which was contrary to what was obtained in other African countries like Ghana, Egypt etc. In fact, both Nigeria's mass media and its politicians exhibited an apparent sentimental attachment to the West bordering on looking up to Britain and the West for direction. They showed no inclination to diversify the country's external links and reduce its western entanglements for the sake of its own national interest. Nigerian leaders obviously allowed themselves to be disoriented during the 100years of colonial rule that was why Nigeria at independence was hardly a Nation but rather, a conglomerate of culturally diverse ethnic communities joined together for merely administrative convenience by the colonial power. And in spite of their sovereign legal status, all of them continued to be dependent in varying degrees on foreign powers usually their ex-colonial European powers which have not really ceased to dominate and control the economic life and natural resources of these newly independent states.

In fact, the intensification of the economic underdevelopment of most African states and their sheer impossibility of breaking out of this economic logjam puts them in political upheavals and instability from which the foreign powers are able to profit. With a weak and inhibiting economic situation, coupled with a grossly and underdeveloped

economic infrastructure, Nigeria depended mainly on the export of primary products. The private sector of Nigeria's economy was almost completely dominated by British-owned companies such as the UAC, and a subsidiary of Unilever which dictated the place of economic development in the country (P.C.Asiodu, 1967). Nearly 80% of all foreign investment in Nigeria was British owned, and Nigeria's capacity to generate capital internally for economic development was extremely weak. Nigeria therefore had to pursue a low-keyed policy conditioned amongst other reason, by the degree of external dependence in the economy. It was in these circumstances that the Balewa government considered its lack of material resources and choose to settle for a policy of moderation and accommodation.

Today, Nigeria stands amongst the poorest countries in the world and has huge domestic and external debts measuring consistently poor in all aspect of human development and is characterised by decaying infrastructure, high mortalities, low standards of living and illiteracy among others. However, the reality is that the nation is faced with some novel challenges, and efforts to fix most of these problems have been a difficult task, unfortunately the international community had responded to most of these challenges with mockery.

To make matters worse, the climate of the **African leadership failure** in the post-colonial era yielded a profile of absence of democratic culture, repression, human rights violations and underperformance which made corruption the bane of its development as state leaders engage in competition for oil revenue misappropriation. This climate of bad governance bequeathed by its long ruling military leadership has in fact, not improved. Elections are characterized by malpractices, constitution manipulation and violence because they see victory as opportunity for self-aggrandizement. Yearly budget allocations and money from the national treasury are largely syphoned with impunity while the citizens remain enmeshed in insecurity going by cases of seeming intractable sectarian crisis particularly in its northern region. Yearly, there is outbreak of ethno-religious conflicts with tragic consequences fuelled by huge population of willing, hungry, desperate, unemployed youths seeking avenues for expressing discontentment over underperforming governments at every level

Bad leadership in Nigeria has incubated deep poverty instability, and conflict in the region. African Government lacks effective and strong institutions, as power is managed at the whims and caprice of rulers. The reality is that the nation was faced with some novel challenges, and efforts to fix most of these problems proved difficult to the point

that other African countries and even the international community began to perceive Nigeria as being unable to brave into new areas of relation in the international arena. In addition to a widespread lack critical infrastructure necessary to galvanize growth and improve standards of living, Nigeria's political unrest and the sudden transition at the helm of affairs precipitated by the 1966 coup birthed an internal political strife that led to the 30month fratricidal war also known as the Nigeria civil war.

Xenophobia:

Furthermore, Nigeria foreign policy of Afrocentricism in the post-apartheid era, seemed again to be challenged against the backdrop of xenophobic manifestation in South Africa. When South Africa was liberated from the apartheid regime, the migration of foreign nationals was a triggered as there was an obvious availability of economic opportunities. The continuous outbursts of negative collective ideas, social stereotypes and prejudices especially to black immigrant is a share display of majority insecurity defined by the defensive internal identity, which is constructed on strong ethnic or national basis. South Africa's dramatic twist to a racially-free and de-segregated society, introduced a new dimension to the segregation, discrimination and prejudice that dominated the history of the past. This time the victim shifted to the foreigners living in South Africa.

Regrettably, traces suggest institutional connivance in this crime (Isike,C & Isike,E.2012). It was expected that South Africa would herald the birth of 'Africa Renaissance' which should underplay national boundaries and foster regional cohesion rather, African Renaissance experienced definitional re-conceptualization and re-evaluation to depict South Africa nationalism instead of Pan-Africanism. The outburst of xenophobia in south Africa, leaves a spate of both latent and manifest violence against immigrants especially African immigrants. Xenophobia is the fear of, dislike for, and a negative attitude towards foreigners. It is an outburst of negative collective ideas, social stereotypes and prejudices often disguised with the phenomenon of nationalism. Xenophobia has also been defined as one among several possible forms of reaction generated by anomic situations in the societies of modern states (Sichone, O. 2008).

Xenophobia negates the principles of accommodation and tolerance and fragments the society into "we" and "them" –a model of social division upon which all forms of contestation are premised. Xenophobia is an aggregated psychological discontent which is often ventilated as outbursts of nationalistic expressions. The ascription of the local derogatory word "Buyelekhaya" (go back home) and "Makwerekwere" to African immigrants and a black person who they believed have no mastery of local South

African languages and who hails from a country assumed to be economically and culturally backward in relation to South Africa (Nyamnjoh, F.B. 2006). This ethnical tendency and self-imposed superiority by South Africans over immigrant Africans who they looked upon as 'inferior', makes one to question the fact that South Africans do not remember the unprecedented commitments of the so called 'others', African brothers especially Nigerians to the liberation struggles of South Africa.

South Africans considered themselves to be a standard of a cultural norm so they created the in-group in a continent whose history has been marked by fluid boundaries where economies have been structured over several centuries through extremely brutal forms of economic extraversion, and where radical, violent change has marked the past century and a half (Marshall, R. 2009) but, south Africans have no sense of appreciation of history to recognise the brutal partitioning of the continent at the detriment of black brotherhood and communality and rather exhibited deep sense of hatred for their African brothers and took to a violent rampage of xenophobic riots which is savagery, animalistic, senseless and irrational. In fact, this representation resonates with longstanding racial tropes that associate blackness with unrestrained passion and blind impulse (Sichone, 2008). This xenophobic tendencies are not only among the citizens alone but has

been observed to be an institutionalized stereotype readily manifested by governmental agencies, political structures and private sectors.

The South African police and the immigration service for example, demonstrate some level of brutality on foreign nationals to the extent of attracting scholarly attention (Vahed, 2013). The government of Jacob Zuma has been very economical with words concerning the incidents of xenophobia in South Africa. But within the tune of the statements lays some form of institutional solidarity like when a protester in the course of a riot chanted Zuma's campaign slogan "UMSHINIWAMI" (The Guardian Newspaper, 2015). This attitude adopted by South Africa is most worrisome for Nigeria who experiences a continuous humiliation especially from South Africa whom Nigeria had incredibly made contributions to, despite her domestic challenges. Yet South Africa has refused to come to terms with the leadership role of Nigeria in Africa.

Conclusion

In the preceding chapters, we have tried to explain the factors challenging Nigeria afro-centric policies with South Africa as a subject of study. To accomplish this task, we formulated a theoretical framework, which considered the overlap of the domestic and external determinants factors. Guided by its framework, this work identified and studied

the various challenges that characterized the relations between the two countries within the period. Nigeria is by all standards a supposed potential leader among leading economies in the world based on its natural attributes that could easily catalyse growth and development such as its fertile landmass, enterprising huge population and leader in oil and gas exportation. However, it measures consistently poor in every aspect of the human development index and is characterised by decaying infrastructure, high mortalities, low standard of living and illiteracy, among others. This paper therefore reveals that in as important as Nigeria's Afrocentric role may be, it is important to mainstream Nigeria's national interest to meet her demanded improvement in its political and economic management, as effective regional security community requires strong, stable states.

Recommendations

1. The general populace of South Africans especially the youths needs to be given an orientation and education on the role Nigeria played to liberate them from the racist enclave. This will help to disabuse their minds on their perceptions of Nigerians.
2. Nigeria should concern itself on how best to restore its image as the 'giant of Africa' in the international environment. It must work hard to develop its infrastructure, diversify its economic base and to brace up itself to show its ability to adapt to the ever bewildering

dynamic foreign policy environments of our time.

3. More importantly, efforts should be geared at achieving political stability in order to gain the confidence of foreign investors. Nigeria needs to arrest the infrastructural decay, pervasive corruption and ethno-religious conflicts.

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