

Nigerian Foreign Policy in a Globalising World: The Imperative of a Paradigm Shift

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Abstract

The end of East-West hostilities in 1991 brought to the fore of international relations, some issues that had hitherto either been ignored or trivialised. One of these is the phenomenon commonly referred to as globalisation, which is more or less a euphemism for westernisation. Like colonisation, globalisation is propelled not by any moral considerations or an abstract concept of humanitarianism, but by the more economic exigencies of finding reliable markets for the industrial goods and services of the developed world as well as ready sources of raw materials for the industries of the world's major economic powers. For developing countries like Nigeria, where political leadership influences not only domestic policies but foreign policy as well, there is a compelling need to embrace the globalisation with cautious optimism. For one thing, globalisation is a powerful force for growth and development. For another, it is a process that presents both challenges and opportunities. Such opportunities, however, must be exploited against the background of a dynamic foreign policy that sees the welfare of Nigerians as its major objective.

Keywords: democracy, diplomacy, foreign policy, globalisation, human rights, national interest

1. Introduction

Every nation's foreign policy objectives reflect its national interest. Thus, in the course of pursuing such objectives, every state is under obligation to use every legitimate means at its disposal to assert, project and protect its image in the international system. Nigeria is no exception, and a critical look at her foreign policy posturing over the years would show that its international relations have been purposive, though with varying degrees of success. In other words, the country's actions and reactions to events in the external environment have been guided, to a reasonable extent, by her foreign policy objectives. Yet, there is no denying the fact that in today's globalising world, the consolidation of these objectives must of necessity be affected by the new imperatives of globalisation. That is why there is need for a paradigm shift in Nigerian foreign policy. This has to be if the country's economy as well as her unity and stability must be maintained and safeguarded. That is the main purpose of the paper. Put differently, the country's foreign policy objectives have to be re-ordered, such that in the course of trying to retain and maintain friendly relations with other state and non-state actors in the international system, she does not lose focus of the primary national interest of ensuring the citizens' well-being and protecting her territorial integrity, independence and freedom.

Thus, one of the important issues which this paper seeks to address is the need for Nigeria to embrace globalisation with cautious optimism. The idea is to ensure that in as much as the country has to move in tandem with the tenets of contemporary globalisation, she has to do so in the hope of achieving her foreign policy goals. This is an important objective of this essay. In order to facilitate a better appreciation of the topic, this essay has been divided into three substantive sections, dealing, respectively, with Nigerian foreign policy objectives, aspects of globalisation and the challenge to Nigerian foreign policy, as well as the imperative of a paradigm shift. There is also a section on conclusion.

2. Clarification of Concepts

2.1 Globalisation

This defies any precise definition partly because it is a multidimensional phenomenon, and partly because it is subjective, that is, it is amenable to as many definitions as there are authors and scholars working on the concept. It is therefore, a misleading concept, especially when viewed against the background that it is not a recent development. Although globalisation has been given many and varied definitions, Afigbo (2000:2) conceptualised the phenomenon to mean:

...the contemporary form of that system of relationship between peoples and societies, which is perhaps as old as human history, in which those who find themselves advantaged politically, socially and economically seek to impose themselves on all others around them.

A major reason for adopting this definition is that globalisation as a process, has been underway since the inception of history and it cannot justifiably be removed from its contemporary historical context. For example, with the possible exception of China, all the

other powerful states in the world belonged to economic areas where processes of integration of varying stages of development were underway.

In its contemporary forms, globalisation has been accentuated by the production made possible by the advance of science and technology, and as J. A. Scholte (2000:15) has rightly observed, globalisation has come to mean internationalisation, liberalisation, universalisation, deterritorialisation, and westernisation or modernisation.

2.2 Foreign Policy

This is a coordinated and articulated strategy with which institutionally-designated decision-makers seek to manipulate the international environment in order to achieve a set of national objectives. It is, in other words, a nation's actions and reactions to events in the external environment and the domestic circumstances under which policies are formulated to take care of such events. By implication, a state in the international system can either precipitate an event in the external environment to which other actors would react or react to events precipitated by other state or non-state actors. In both cases, deliberate planning is necessary in dealing with the situation which could either be a challenge to the state's national objectives, or an opportunity to advance and protect such objectives.

Specifically, a given state's foreign policy orientation encompasses her general attitudes and commitments towards the external environment, and her fundamental strategy for accomplishing both her domestic and external objectives and aspirations. A given state's strategy results from cumulative decisions made in order to adjust objectives, values and interests to condition both the domestic and external environments (Franknel, 1975:58).

2.3 National Interest

Every country's foreign policy is shaped by the cardinal principle of "national interest". This refers to those values and ideals which a nation so cherishes that she would rather go to war than compromise. Foreign policy is indeed a strategy for defending a given state's national interest through the instrumentality of diplomacy. When diplomacy fails, the same national interest may be defended through war and the force of arms. Included among the components of national interest are: territorial integrity, sovereignty, welfare of citizens, political culture et cetera.

2.4 Diplomacy

This refers to communication and negotiation between state and non-state actors who, as participants in international relations, seek cooperative solution to contentious issues instead of going to war.

3. Nigerian Foreign Policy Objectives

The principles and objectives of Nigerian foreign policy were formulated in the immediate post-independence period, and were articulated, affirmed and elaborated in Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's address to the United Nations General Assembly on the occasion of Nigeria's admission as the 99th member of that world body on October 8, 1960. It was

affirmed by the First Minister of External Affairs (as he then was), Jaja Wachukwu, in the Federal House of Representatives on September 4, 1961.

These objectives have ever since been frequently reaffirmed by successive administrations, and are:

- 1) To promote national interest and world peace
- 2) To have Africa as the centre-piece of Nigerian foreign policy, with a view to achieving cooperation and progress among African states, and achieving total independence in all African states.
- 3) To promote international friendship, cooperation and neutrality
- 4) To respect the sovereign equality of all states, irrespective of size, and to honour the principle of non-interference in other countries' internal affairs.

Successive administrations in Nigeria have tried, with varying degrees of success, to actualise these core objectives. As stated earlier, a major component of every nation's foreign policy is the advancement and protection of its national interest. It is only natural, therefore, that the welfare of the citizenry should be the pivot of every foreign policy agenda.

Nigeria's inability to pursue and sustain a dynamic foreign policy posture is basically a function of its dependence status in international relations. Over the years, international relations have been conditioned by three variables, namely, national interest, conflict, and power. Every nation in the world wants to project and protect its national interest and that makes conflicts between states inevitable. However, the ability of a given state to survive any conflict occasioned by her foreign policy posture is a function of its power in the comity of nations. By power we mean the ability of one state to persuade, coerce, manipulate, or compel other states to accede to the progress of her national interest.

The nature of the Nigerian economy is basically monocultural, and according to Nuhu Yaquub (2003:41), this situation has been accentuated by the contemporary (almost historic) dominance of oil in federal government's revenues and exports. Nigeria's dependence on the countries of North America, Europe and Japan has taken four major dimensions, namely,

- a) Trade dependence;
- b) Investment dependence;
- c) Monetary dependence; and
- d) Aid dependence.

The country trades mostly with the developed countries of the world, and because her exports do not generate enough revenues to run her government, she is compelled to borrow from international financial institutions to pay for her imports. The implications of her trade deficits and dependence on foreign aid include her inability to industrialise and provide socio-economic amenities for her citizens. Her dependence on foreign investment exposes her to the predatory and manipulative antics of foreign multinationals. Similarly her national currency has continued to fair poorly vis-à-vis the currencies of the major powers like the United States, Britain, France, and Germany, among others.

Rather than changing her unenviable position in the international arena through the pursuit of a realistic foreign policy, Nigeria has stagnated and indeed adopted domestic and foreign policies which tend to deepen this dependence. For instance, since the return to democratic rule in 1999, corruption and leadership ineptitude have combined to increase the poverty level in Nigeria (Ota, 2012:203-217).

4. Aspects of Globalisation and the challenge to Nigerian Foreign Policy

Globalisation has assumed four major aspects:

- 1) Trade (with Africa faring poorly vis-à-vis Asia),
- 2) Capital movement (especially to Eastern Europe),
- 3) Movement of peoples (with Africans desperately moving out of the continent to other parts of the world, with the attendant risk),
- 4) Technology (especially information communication technology).

Though Africa is the centre-piece of Nigerian foreign policy, her foreign policy arena extends far beyond the African continent. This is because her foreign policy agenda include issues and problems that have a global character. Three broad issues on which the country has shown great interest and has been playing an active role are: disarmament and arms control; the issue of a new and more equitable international order, and international peace-keeping (collective security). All of these constitute part of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives.

Her position on the first issue is that arms and armament are closely linked to insecurity while disarmament is a veritable ingredient of peace and development. On the second issue, Nigeria's image of the social structure of the world system is like a two-sided portrait, with one side showing the fundamental cleavage between the colonised and the colonisers and the other side depicting a confrontation between the economically developed and the economically underdeveloped and dependent parts of the globe. Nigeria has thus been at the forefront of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Group of 77 demanding for a New International Economic Order (NIEO). Finally, on the issue of collective security, Nigeria has always supported the idea of international peace-keeping involving an interposition of armed forces to separate combatants in order to prevent an escalation of conflict while the search for a political solution goes on.

However, at the domestic level, globalisation has elicited a lot of impact on the Nigerian state. There is no denying the fact that Nigeria's foreign policy options are closely intertwined with the globalisation process. That of course shall be treated later in this paper. On the economic front, which is the main focus of globalisation, Nigeria has adopted policies aimed at redirecting the economy to enable it meet up with the demands of globalisation. Prominent among these policies is the privatisation of and commercialisation of public sectors, which implies divesting government of the responsibilities of maintaining and sustaining public institutions and facilities. This move, of course, has elicited negative responses. According to Femi Aborisade (2002:3), for instance, privatisation will lead to loss of employment security and thus undermine democracy, among others.

From the political, socio-cultural and environmental policy options of Nigeria in relation to

the process of globalisation, it is obvious that like other Third World countries, Nigeria lacks the political will to determine the outcome of international political events because of the positive correlation between economic power and political relevance in international relations. Nigeria and many other countries of the Third World were former colonies of the western world, and because they are still largely dependent on these developed countries, they lack the power to determine, conduct and implement dynamic foreign policy options that are people-oriented.

Globalisation does not also accord with the spirit of sustainable development. This has generated international debates, especially on how the process can help to improve the environment and increase social responsibilities in the newly industrialised and developing countries (Uba, 2001:43). It has also come to have socio-cultural implication for Nigeria and other Third World countries. Because globalisation is about a new global village where economic activities will flourish without regard to national boundaries, social and cultural practices also prevail from this direction. Although the process of globalisation may generate some positive impact on global cultural and social values, the attendant negative impact is generally greater than the former. Implicit in this observation is the fact that Nigeria is a multiethnic and multilingual country with divergent socio-cultural values, norms and beliefs. By implication, the process of globalisation is a threat to the homogeneity of these cultures and social values. The influences of technology and the media (especially telecommunications) is the major source of the negative impact of globalisation on the socio-cultural values of the people.

5. The Imperative of a Paradigm Shift

It is obvious and discernible from the foregoing, that Nigeria cannot escape the onslaught of contemporary globalisation. For the country to remain relevant and steadfast in the pursuit of her national interest and foreign policy objectives, she has to review and reinvent aspects of her foreign policy objectives. Put differently, Nigeria's world view needs to be restructured to accommodate the new realities occasioned by globalisation. This has to be so because there are aspects of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives that appear to be out of tune with developments in contemporary international relations.

For instance, the comfort and general well-being of the citizens, as well as political stability and economic progress of the country should be prioritised vis-à-vis commitments to events in the external environment. It is common knowledge that Nigeria's most debilitating problems are those of corruption, national unity/ integration, and economic development. These problems hinder national power, and their resolution is a pre-requisite for Nigeria's claim to a leadership role in Africa in particular and the world in general. But successive governments in the country have ignored the inevitability of the impact of the domestic environment on the formulation and conduct of a dynamic foreign policy.

That is why there is need for a paradigm shift from the present lackadaisical posture to one that is both realistic and pragmatic. For instance, the policy of good neighbourliness should be anchored on and sustained by the principle of reciprocity. This means that Nigeria should treat her neighbours as they treat Nigeria. There is no denying the fact that the foreign policy goals

and leadership ambitions of Nigeria in the West African sub-region have often been seen as obtrusive by her immediate neighbours. Incidentally, these countries sharing borders with Nigeria (Benin Republic, Cameroun, Chad, and Niger) are former French colonies and still remain very strong economic, social, cultural and security relations with France (Ahmad, 2011:3). They also do not accord Nigeria the respect she deserves despite her commitments towards maintaining cordial relations with them. On the contrary, they have, on a number of occasions, taken actions which were quite an affront to Nigeria's national interest and security. For instance, the dispute between Nigeria and Cameroun over the Bakassi Peninsula and which involved the development of troops, was a challenge to Nigeria's military capabilities. Similar provocations have also come, at various times, from Benin, Chad, and Niger Republics (Obayuwana, 2012:13).

The principle of reciprocity in international relations is embedded in Article 2:1 of the United Nations Charter which is on the sovereign equality of states. Also, Article 2:7 of the Charter requires all member states, in the spirit of reciprocity, to fulfil their obligations as provided for in the said Charter. No state, for instance, except within the ambit of international law, should intervene or interfere in the domestic affairs of any other state. It is on the basis of these provisions (which have been domesticated by both the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States) that Nigeria has continued to endure the unbecoming attitude of her neighbours. Yet, Nigeria's immediate neighbours are unrelenting in their lack of trust and respect for the country. One example will suffice here, and that has to do with Nigeria's systematic betrayal by her immediate neighbours when she ran for the presidency of the United Nations Security Council in 2011. Nigeria got 186 votes out of 190 from states seated by the count. Four African countries, namely, Liberia, Togo, Sierra Leone and Guinea denied Nigeria the opportunity of winning the election because they withheld their support from her (Obayuwana, 2012:13). That is to say, if these countries had voted for Nigeria, she would have secured the required 190 votes. Yet, Nigeria had spent over ten billion United States dollars during the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s. Also, she regularly sent her presidential jets (at least by the close of 2011) to pick the presidents of these two countries to attend an ECOWAS Heads of State summit in Abuja, Nigeria. The argument here is that Nigeria should re-adjust her foreign policy objectives to accord priority to her domestic needs because in today's globalising world, even our neighbours and other African countries are likely to call her bluff. In fact, as Eze (2009:10) has rightly pointed out:

Reciprocity is central to a proper ordering of international relations that is both fair and balanced. Given the principle of the equal sovereignty of states, states are expected to act in the spirit of give and take.

Nigeria should therefore review her relations with her neighbours as a matter of necessity and urgency to incorporate the principle of reciprocity.

Although it has been argued that in today's globalising world, the principle of national interest (which is the cornerstone of the realist theory) does not serve any nation's interest again, (Lawani, 2011:79) the fact remains that every nation still pursues those values and ideas which it believes will enhance its international respectability. Will any nation give up its

sovereignty and citizens' well-being for the sake of globalisation? Obviously, no country would compromise these core values for anything, because doing so will amount to its abdication of its statutory obligations.

In more specific terms, Chapter II of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy) provides that, "The security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government" (1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria). By obvious implication, the citizens' welfare and security should not be compromised because that is the very essence of government. Thus, in as much as the realist or power politics theory in international relations was a necessity during the Cold war years, its relevance in this age of globalisation cannot be diminished by any abstract argument on the universalisation of values and ideals which apologists of globalisation have been advancing. Globalisation has not ended economic rivalries between states, and the developed countries of the world have not been keen in acceding to the demand by Third World countries for a New World International Economic Order, one that will encourage international interdependence in trade and the transfer of technology to the Third World.

The imperative of a paradigm shift in Nigerian foreign policy also implies that there should be a fundamental restructuring of domestic political and economic institutions to create the enabling environment for citizens to enjoy their basic human and material needs. These needs include access to adequate and nutritious foods, shelter, clothing, education, health facilities, gainful employment, security, freedom, equality and justice, among others. They are provided for in Chapter IV of the 1999 Constitution (Fundamental Rights), sections 33-46. The well-being of Nigerians outside the shores of the country is also a veritable core objective of Nigerian foreign policy.

It should be emphasised that the attainment of these objectives involves closer and better relations with other countries of the world, especially the developed ones. Such countries would help in facilitating and sustaining the economic development of Nigeria, thereby enabling the country to meet her constitutional obligations to her citizens. Yet, such cooperation is not without problems, because foreign powers may capitalise on Nigeria's high poverty level to penetrate the country in the name of foreign assistance and investment and mobilise the citizens against the government (Tijani, 2010:213). Thus, globalisation has to be subordinated to the national interest. After all, as a phenomenon, contemporary globalisation is not rooted in any sense of community but is structural from above according to abstract economic laws.

In sum, the incongruity between Nigeria's good neighbourliness policy and her realistic domestic conditions should be addressed in such a way as to engender citizen diplomacy which, according to Saliu (2010:321),

...connotes the conscious and deliberate efforts of a nation state to cultivate the support, understanding and eventually deployment of the citizens for the task of executing its foreign policy.

It should not be misconstrued to mean Nigeria's responsibility only to its citizens living within the country. Rather, it also includes the government fraternising with Nigerians living abroad. Similarly, citizen diplomacy implies reciprocity in International relations.

6. Conclusion

Historians have a responsibility to chart cause and effect. Through this, they can save Nigeria from falling into the same pitfalls over and over again. Globalisation is the fourth stage in the penetration of the African continent by external forces that have exerted negative social consequences on the continent's integral development (Moses, 2001:9). Africa's most precious resources (men and women) were sold to "global" traders from Europe and America during the first stage of the penetration of Africa (the slave trade). The second stage was marked by the introduction of Christianity by European missionaries as the socio-cultural partners of the first group, who carried it in disguise to ensure political control of the continent. The third stage represents the period of neo-colonialism, that is, the indirect control of the policies and economies of so-called independent African States. Globalisation may well be the last stage of the domination of Africa by outside forces.

Since historians are more like detectives rather than scientists, they have to investigate, question, and challenge records from the past to enable them chart a more auspicious future. They must accept that globalisation has brought challenges as well as opportunities. Indeed, it is almost impossible to resist the forces of globalisation. The process will impact directly and decisively on everyone and everywhere.

However, the benefits of globalisation for Nigeria could be maximised through the pursuit of a more realistic foreign policy; such that will bring about domestic stability as an incentive for foreign investors. There is also an urgent need for the adoption of prudent national policies and transparent institutions, in addition to tangible bilateral and multilateral efforts to safeguard the nation in times of economic crisis. However, globalisation will widen the gap between rich and poor nations because of the inability of the latter to compete with the developed countries in commerce, trade, manufacturing and technology.

As a major power in Africa, Nigeria should use her position to ensure closer economic relations among African states as a bulwark against the unmitigated onslaught of globalisation on African cultures and economies. But this must be on a reciprocal basis. Likewise, the deepening crisis of dependence needs a united multilateral not a unilateral effort and approach. History provides a ready and reliable reservoir of information on past mistakes and the concomitant lessons for the future.

For one thing, Nigeria foreign policy over the years would appear to have sought to advance the economic interest of the dominant military and political classes at the expense of the welfare of the generality of Nigerians. For another, her foreign policy objectives have been more in the area of rhetoric than action, especially in establishing the linkage between national interest and the imperatives of contemporary international relations. These are contradictions that have impeded the pursuit of a robust and dynamic foreign policy. They have also accentuated Nigeria's dependency status vis-à-vis the developed countries of the

world.

Thus, Nigeria is vulnerable to the imbalances arising from globalisation. In as much as contemporary globalisation is exploitative and unfair to countries of the Third World (because they were still colonies when most of the institutions and structures that determine and structure the global economy were created), the challenge for countries like Nigeria is to make locally produced goods competitive in both the domestic and export markets. Trade liberalisation policies should be handled in such a manner that tariffs would be used to effectively protect local industries.

Most importantly, in her international relations, Nigeria should adopt the principle of reciprocity. This is especially necessary in her relations with her immediate neighbours. The era of big brother and good neighbourliness foreign policy should be reviewed so as to make Nigerians the ultimate beneficiaries of both the domestic and foreign policies of the country.

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