

Nigeria and the African Continent : Under the Brunt of Western Imperialism and the “Free Market”

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The Need for Nigeria to Redefine Her Foreign Policy at 51

Upon gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria made the liberation and restoration of the dignity of Africa as the centerpiece of her foreign policy and played a leading role in the fight against the apartheid regime and others. Nigeria foreign policy was soon tested in the 1970s after the country emerged united from its own civil war and quickly committed itself to the liberation struggle that was going on there. Though Nigeria never sent an expeditionary force in that struggle, it offered more than rhetoric to the African National Congress (ANC) by taking a committed tough line with regard to the settler regime, in addition to expediting large sums to aid anti-colonial struggles. Nigeria also played significant roles in the eventual independence of Angola and Zimbabwe. She was a founding member of the OAU (now the AU), and has tremendous influence in West Africa and Africa as a whole. Nigeria has additionally founded regional cooperative efforts in West Africa, functioning as standard-bearer for ECOWAS and ECOMOG, economic and military organisations respectively.

The question that begs for answer is; despite what Nigeria did for the continent of Africa, what has she gained from such goodwill? Nothing! It was this that prompts me to write this column. At 51, the economic and development well-being of Nigeria should henceforth be the mainstay of our foreign policy. In the name of African unity and good neighbourhood, Nigeria continues to sacrifice for our continent. That is admirable but the southern African countries have forgotten the sacrifices made by Nigeria to bring them out of their woes, Sierra-Leoneans and Liberians have forgotten the loss of Nigerian soldiers in their efforts to return normalcy into these countries. While I am not advocating that Africa should be abandoned, it is high time Nigeria's interests came first in our foreign policy analysis and objectives. Retired General Danjuma was not saying anything different when he lamented “Right now, we are becoming the United States of ECOWAS at very great cost to us. We think this is unaffordable to us now.”

According to Professors Fawole and Amadu Sesay, two reputable scholars of international relations in Obafemi Awolowo University, The Guardian of the 29th March, 2011 quoted them as saying that it becomes imperative that Nigeria redefined its foreign policies to meet the realities and dynamics of the rapidly globalizing world of the 21st Century. They said the move was expedient for the country to fully assert itself truly as the giant of Africa.

According to these erudite scholars, “Nigerian political leaders should know that significantly, the world had moved away from the scenarios of the 1960s when the country

appeared on the international stage as a new sovereign state into an era marked by the end of apartheid, emphasis on good governance and democracy, respect for human rights, multi-party system, free, fair and credible elections and reforms in the UN, especially the expansion of the Security Council.” This is why I feel that Africa as the centerpiece of Nigeria’s foreign policy is no longer sufficient; a broader outlook is required. None of the important international diplomatic actors, such as the USA, France, Britain and even China, build their foreign policy on only one pillar. My country should not be an exception if she wants to play an important role in the contemporary high tech diplomatic circles.

While it is noteworthy that President Goodluck had expressed his government’s willingness to address this issue, the president’s action must go beyond Africa if he truly wants to take the country out of the wood. At the international circles, the country also need to checkmate the manner in which she subjects her policies to the dictates of other international actors such as IMF, EU etc and governments such as UK, USA etc. This is particularly true in respect of the formulation and execution of sensitive social, economic and foreign policy programmes in directions that clearly subvert the sovereignty of the Nigerian people. The foregoing situation is a far cry from the patriotic and progressive zeal of the late 1970s when even under General Murtala/Obasanjo’s military regime; Nigerians were able to hold up their heads high anywhere and in any circumstance.

Today, what subsists is a pervading subservience of our country’s social and economic policies and our image to the dictates of Western imperialism and its ‘globalised’ market forces. Today, the agents of these imperial forces are now in Aso Rock Villa setting agendas of recolonisation of our country. In a country that over 92% of her citizens are living below \$2 per day, they are still threatening to remove the petroleum subsidies! These institutions have also cloned their tentacles in the state governments across the country. At yet another alarming level, there is now a reported apprehension that Nigeria’s national security may be compromised by the presence of contingents of foreign (American) security personnel on our lands under the pretexts of combating terrorism.

Beginning from 1978, the forces of International Finance Capital and Multinational Corporations began to seize the country’s economic initiative and thereby set out the process of recolonising Nigeria (1978 to 2007). That process started in the military regime led by General Olusegun Obasanjo. What has been happening in Nigeria since 2007 is the consolidation of that recolonisation agenda. Every element of the current crisis vis a vis the collapse of industries, educational and health facilities, infrastructures (power, transportation, water supply), degeneracy of the environment, inflation, currency weakening, ethnic and religious violence and collapse of public security is traceable to this incessant attempt to consolidate the recolonisation process. A good leader that is committed to the Nigerian people will reverse this disastrous trend in which the political, economic and cultural interests of the Nigerian people are subordinated to those of the dominant forces in USA and Europe that supervise global exploitation.

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