

Nigeria's National Interests in a Globalizing World

Nigeria's National Interests in a Globalizing World: Further Reflections on Constructive and Beneficial Concentricism. Ibadan: Bolytag International Publishers, 2007 (volume three), edited by Bola Akinterinwa.

a book review

by

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There has been an increased interest in adopting the concentric circle in analyzing Nigerian foreign policy since the time of Ibrahim Gambari as External Affairs Minister of Nigeria between 1984 and 1985. He has often argued that more will be gained if scholars and policy-makers develop the layered approach to the study of Nigerian foreign policy. By this, it means that Nigeria's interests in global affairs should be located in the physical Nigeria and her immediate neighbours in West Africa, larger Africa, then the rest of the world and international organizations. This, Ibrahim Gambari and others who believe in the thesis of concentric circle argue, is the best way for Nigeria to go in protecting her interests.

Although this theoretical school has been accepted as a way to look at Nigeria's foreign policy, the tenure of Olu Adeniji between 2003 and 2006 as Foreign Affairs Minister of Nigeria was to witness a further elaboration on the thesis to accommodate the centrality of Nigerians in the whole conception. And this has led to the concept of beneficial concentricism.

The new elaboration is the focus of the book *Nigeria's National Interests in a Globalizing World: Further Reflections on Constructive and Beneficial Concentricism* edited by Bola Akinterinwa. It has twenty-four chapters divided into three sections and contributed by a carefully selected academics and practitioners of diplomacy.

In section one of the book, seven articles are accommodated, all addressing the interests of Nigeria in West and Central Africa. The section begins by identifying Nigeria's interests in West Africa and factors that have contributed to consistency and change in the country's attitude towards West-Africa from 1983 – 1999. In the view of the first section, there has never been any radical departure from the traditional good neighbourliness policy of the country despite many regimes that Nigeria has had.

However, the negative impact of Shagari and Buhari's policies on illegal aliens was well noted. Nigeria's commitment to peace support operations is another issue that engages the attention of the section. While noting the positive impact made on this score, the book canvasses for a better regime of peace support operations for the country. Lake Chad and its immense importance as well as the threats facing its resources are also considered in this section. For so many years to come, the loss of Bakassi to Cameroon by Nigeria will continue to engage the attention of scholars and this book also addresses it. The richness of the Gulf of Guinea and the need to brace up to the challenges facing the country from the area are discussed in the first section of the book. The section closes with the efforts of Obasanjo civil administration in tackling the debt problem of Nigeria, leading to the celebrated debt relief of July 2005.

In section two of the book, six chapters are contained. The first chapter addresses Nigeria and the potential of Africans in the Diaspora, while the second chapter considers the challenge that the Arab Maghreb States pose to Nigeria's ambition of becoming a permanent member of the enlarged UN Security Council. Two other chapters discuss the after math of Nigeria's support to liberation efforts and Nigeria – South African relations. From the two chapters, it is clear that beyond the political advantages derived from the decolonization policy, Nigeria has to do more to make meaningful returns from her huge investment on decolonization in Africa. Nigerians are no longer being treated with respect and dignity in the liberated countries in Africa. One other important issue raised in the section has to do with Nigeria's relationship with the African Development Bank (ADB). Unlike in the 1970s when Nigeria was not a borrower of funds from the Bank, she is now a provider and borrower of funds from the Bank. And this reality, with other developments, are diminishing the shareholding power of the country. The section is concluded with the African defence and security challenges for Nigeria.

In the third section of the book, ten chapters are accommodated. Nigeria's relations with the Group of 77 and the Caribbean are discussed. Equally discussed are the challenges and opportunities in Nigeria's relations with the USA especially against the backdrop of the democratic rule in the country. The section also discusses the country's relations with China and Japan, European Union and the UN Human Rights Commission. The challenges of globalization for the Nigerian Navy and the kind of global agenda pursued by President Obasanjo are considered in the section. The section is concluded by chapters on international public administration and further elaborations on Nigeria's national interests in a globalizing world.

Given the topical issues raised in the book and the wide coverage, some comments are deserving on some of the salient issues raised. One, the good neighbourliness policy being pursued by Nigeria is commendable. However, given the changing times, we argue that it is high time the country moves away from the ad hoc approach. For instance, Nigeria's participation in peace support operations is not totally satisfactory because the environment for the policy does not complement the experience which the country has acquired from it over the years.

Two, from the book, Nigeria's preoccupation with liberation has not translated into any concrete benefit to the country. Nigerians are still not being respected in virtually all countries where the nation had committed huge resources in liberating. This development cannot escape the charge of untidy policy environment. Three, Nigeria's relations with South Africa as indeed relations with the Maghreb States must be watched to facilitate the country's emergence as a member of the enlarged Security Council as a permanent member. One way of doing this is to close the gap that may exist in the relationship through the cultivation of a special relationship via robust bi-national commissions where they are not already in existence.

Nigeria's National Interests in a Globalizing World is a major contribution to the literature on Nigerian foreign policy in the contemporary time. The adoption of concentricism in locating the layers of Nigeria's national interests in the globe is another good side of the book. The backgrounds and variety of the authors represent another positive side. However, as it should be expected these have robbed on the quality of some of the articles.

Notwithstanding, this book edited by Bola Akinterinwa is a major resource material and companion in the hands of students, scholars, policy makers and the reading public who are interested in knowing what has been transpiring in inter- state relations especially from the Nigerian perspective. It is therefore recommended to all those who are searching for resource materials on contemporary Nigerian foreign policy.