

A Philosophical Assessment of the Challenges of Sustainability of Nigeria's Foreign Policy Image Between 1960-2013

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a philosophical assessment of the challenges of sustainability of Nigeria's foreign policy image between 1960-2013. The problem which led to this research was the failure of the Nigerian state to secure a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. This shows that Nigeria's image problem is clearly a treat to the country's progress in international politics. In this way, the paper is significant in calling attention to Nigeria's image problem. The central argument which this paper raised was that while the "survivability" or "unsurvivability" of Nigeria's foreign policy image cannot be discussed without recourse to the Nigerian civil war(1966-1969), the actual challenges to sustainability which this paper alleges include among other things; -1) prolonged years of military misrule in Nigeria, 2) identification of Africa's interests as Nigeria's National interests, and 3) the absence of an efficient public relation department in the Nigerian foreign policy industry for that same purpose.

Keywords: Nigeria foreign policy image, sustainability and challenges.

Introduction

It is one thing to identify among other things the following elements;- the prolonged period of military misrule in Nigeria, the continuous identification of a diversity of Africa's interests as Nigeria's national interests, and the absence of an efficient public relation department in the Nigerian foreign policy industry, as major challenges to the sustainability of Nigeria's domestic image in the international community of nations between the country's independent year of 1960 up to present-day reality in the 2013 administration by president Goodluck Jonathan; While this should form a major part of our discussion in this paper; it is quite another thing to argue as this paper has done, namely, that the prolonged period of military misrule in Nigeria, the complex politics of the Nigerian civil war(1966-1969)which preceded successive military rule in Nigeria, and the lack of competent ambassadors and other personnel in the Nigerian foreign policy industry; are among the many reasons for the "unsustainability" and "unsurvivability" beyond the 1960 Balewa's administration, the Nigerian independent era's international image as the "giant of Africa". The 1960's image of the country as the all-round "giant of Africa" soon got discontinued by the outburst of an ungodly civil war and a successive period of prolonged military rule retrospective of the fact that even at the country's return to civilian rule on May 29th 1999, successive leaders of the nation have not done enough in terms of giving true meaning to the country's 1960's image as "giant of Africa".

According to "Nigeria-Foreign Relations", www.pointblanknews.com, posted, Dec. 12th, 2013, 'the reality is such that instead of sustainability and continuity, the Nigerian civil war, instead, introduced a new problem;- the problem of internal instability into the country's image problem'. Today, most people are tempted to associate new forms of instability in the country such as the Niger-Delta militancy, religious and ethnic clashes in the country, and the seemingly insoluble problem of *Boko Haram* Insurgency, etc, as the perfection of that original seed of national instability which was in the early years of the country following the outburst of the Nigerian civil war. And as a continuation, in addition to the image problem caused by the country's 'ungodly' civil war, Oyebode Akin goes on to say in his online article, "*The Image Issue In Nigeria's Foreign Policy; Some Matters Arising*", (free post of June 16th, 2013), namely, that successive military rule did no better than added more injury to the Nigeria's image problem by making the Nigerian state what he referred to in his article as a "shadow of itself". And while putting Oyebode's description in perspective, Y Z Yau's article, "Media, Message And Meaning"(Adagio Onoja, 2000;19) highlights the point that at the return of the country to civil rule in 1999, despite efforts by successive civilian leaders, 'all we hear about Nigeria is a country ravaged by war, diseases, poverty and illiteracy, etc, as if the country's ministry of foreign affair had no public relations department. In this way, the statement has come true that the return of the country to civil rule which ought to eradicate the damage done by military rule to the country's image has itself not done well.

Consequently, this paper has been written to advocate a rebirth of Nigeria's foreign policy image (domestic image as a nation) together with its foreign policy industry to the extent that Nigeria shall, once again, be put at the centre of world politics being as it was on its independent date of 1960, namely, a "giant" and "true representative" of Africa in the international community of nations. Other arguments advanced herein are here summarized as follows;

- 1) That a global look at things and not merely taking a cursory glance at the Nigerian situation reveals that the international image of any country duly constitutes the domestic determinant of the country's foreign policy strength or weaknesses before the international community of nations.
- 2) That in respect to our particular situation with the Nigerian state, the country was apt to acquire for itself and in the early years of the country's independence in 1960, a formidable name and image, namely, as an all-round "giant of Africa" by virtue of achievement of the country's 'afrocentric' foreign policy industry.
- 3) That this amiable image soon got shattered by the sudden outburst of an ungodly civil war in 1966 and that while it was further destroyed by prolonged military rule in the country, civilian or post-military rule has tended to compound the Nigerian image problem by focusing indirectly on priority policies or developmental policies, such as job creation, rather than directly facing the country's dwindling image before the international community of nations.

However, for us to adequately understand the challenges to the sustainability of Nigeria's 1960's independent image as an all-round "giant of Africa" between the Balewa's regime of 1960 to the Jonathan Goodluck's administration of 2013; it is imperative that this work should clear the cloudy content of this paper through a historical and theoretical exposition of the problem as here captured below

Theoretical And Historical Overview Of Nigeria's Foreign Policy And The Sustainability Of Nigeria's Foreign Policy Image In Theoretical and Historical Perspective Pre-Independent/Independent Era; Nigeria's Foreign Policy Industry; and Nigeria's External or Foreign Image Projection

Prior to Nigeria's independence, in 1960, it was impossible to speak of Nigeria's external image. The country's foreign policy as a whole was subsumed under the foreign policy objectives of Britain. But this did not last indefinitely; the situation received a new lease following announcement of Oct, 1st 1960 as date for the country's independence from colonial Britain. The new challenge for the nation was as it still is today, namely, the challenge of evolving at independence, a foreign policy industry with a dual focus of ensuring both the welfare of the nation and that of the international community by means of securing the welfare of the African continent. As Jonathan Ajare would argue in his article, "*Regional Voluntarism: The Sustainability of Africa's Afrocentrism*", (ir.info/2013/07/19/regional.....), the situation during the pre-independent/independent era was such that;

Before independence, Nigeria's Africa's leadership potential [and foreign policy drive] was anticipated [at two levels] internationally and domestically.....[thus] Nigeria's nationalist and first president of the country, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, referred to such [a dual policy image] as a Nigerian-African vision; a symbol of Nigeria's inseparability from Africa.

In another development, the country's Oct. 1st 1960's Prime Minister, Sir. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, supported this aforementioned pre-independent and independent aspiration in a lyrical piece where he mentioned thus that for the same sake of running an Nigerian-African and an African-Nigerian foreign policy objective (ibid);

"Nigeria would speak for Africa" by virtue of its foreign policy formation.

The point, however, is that even before the country's independence in 1960, Nigeria had as a nation aspired to run a foreign policy industry whose dual objectives would consist in the welfare and image of the country as well as the welfare and image of the international community via its priority focus on the African continent; and in the thinking of most people, this dual vision until the advent of an ungodly civil war and successive military rule in Nigeria, was strongly adhered to. The only conclusion one can reach from this preamble is that while the outburst of the Nigerian civil war duly initiated the image problem with the Nigerian state, the creation of an amiable foreign policy for itself by the Nigerian state is centered around the country's achievement at independence.

Independent And Post-Independent Era; Nigeria's Foreign Policy; And Nigeria's External Image

Although the first and primary foreign policy pronouncement in Nigeria came after the country's independence on Oct. 1st, 1960, the issue of acquisition of an amiable foreign policy image, however, transcended the country's independent date. Reference is to be here made in respect of Udumage John Green's argument in his article, "*The Problem Of Re-defining Nigeria's National Interests In The Context of Global Diplomacy*", www.pointblanknews.com (posted Dec. 5th, 2013), that 'the story of Nigeria's international recognition as an all-round giant of Africa is one which transcends independence and goes forth to the birth of the OAU on May 25th,

1963; and it goes also to the fact that the organization on its own provided the requisite platform for making for itself as a country the true image of the country as giant of Africa'. Udumage's excerpt are quite informative as he explains in his own words as follows;

The formation of the OAU on May 25th, 1963[provided a platform which] enabled Nigeria to [acquire for itself an external image of high repute since it allowed the nation's foreign policy drive to] put an end to colonial rule in Africa.....secure the unity of the continent.....destroy the evil of apartheid rule in South Africa.....and contribute[meaningfully] to the UN Peace-Keeping Mission[outside the shores of Africa to as far as Bosnia in the Balkans]

To say much on the subject is to express the fact that it is one thing to assert as Udumage John Green has asserted, namely, that the question of Nigeria's foreign policy image goes back to the early years of the country's independent era; at the same time, we need not be told to know that Nigeria's foreign image as the 'giant of Africa' would not have been possible without the country's landmark achievements during its early years of independence as a country. The country at this time lived out a foreign policy objective which, although it was afrocentric in nature, concerned itself with issues at a global scale aware that whatever affects one part of the world affects Africa; it is therefore not surprising that the foreign policy vitality of Nigeria's early years of independence earned the country not only the name but also a global respect for the Nigerian state as the 'giant of Africa'. Consequently, the questions which remain for us the true issues in this paper are two, namely, how Nigeria's independent image got bastardized and the inability of the country to recover this foreign policy based 1960's independent image.

Nigeria's Civil War Era And The Creation Of Nigeria's Foreign Policy Image Problem

The actual problem with the Nigerian state would in the thinking of most people not consist in the Balewa's creation of a foreign policy image which was admired by all and sundry but its sustainability or survivability beyond the civil war and the Gowon's administration that fought the war. Any other country could have, like Nigeria, become the giant of Africa through its peace-keeping operation and foreign policy achievement and other contributions to the international community. Nevertheless, the real problem with the lack of sustainability or survivability of Nigeria's good image beyond the Balewa's administration is in the thinking of the internet blog, www.mungabe.com in its online article, "*Nigeria-Foreign Relations*", posted Dec. 6th, 2013, reflected in the fact that by proceeding to introduce into Nigeria's image problem a new question of internal instability, the Nigerian civil war(1966-1969) and the Gowon's administration that fought the war is to be seen as an era which 'marks a distinct break in the Nigerian foreign policy industry. Thus, commenting on how the civil war and the Gowon's administration which fought the war both made Nigeria a "shadow of itself" while marking a distinct break in the Nigerian foreign policy industry, the article has explained as follows;

The civil war[and its Gowon's administration] marks a distinct break in Nigeria's foreign policy. The action of various countries and international bodies during the [said] civil war[however, brought] increased awareness about Gowon's policy alignment within and outside Africa.....white-dominated African countries[just like what Britain and US did] supported the course of the Biafra nation....[consequently]Nigeria [for the first time] turned to the Soviet Union for arms[thereby turning Nigeria's Balewa's non-alignment objective of the Nigerian foreign policy up-side-down]

Thus, the question which immediately arises from the conduct of the civil war and the way-about of the Gowon's government is that of how the impact of the civil war and the conduct of Gowon's government affect Nigeria's external image as a country? To address the question, Nigerians as well as the international community had expected after the civil war that the Gowon's administration would engage in a 'comprehensive' image clean-up. But there was little or nothing to show that the said government was interested in repairing the country's external image as much as it was interested in empowering Nigeria over the other African states. The body language of the Gowon's administration rather indicated a firm commitment to strengthen Nigeria's lordship over Africa, hence, it headed for the establishment of ECOWAS in 1975 thereby maintaining by means of ECOWAS as a platform Nigeria's political control over Africa instead of embarking on a comprehensive image clean-up as the world had expected. Apart from the formation of ECOWAS other interests of the administration which were those of re-populating a decimated Nigerian army and re-building of physical infrastructures in the country etc did not in clear terms include an agenda for repairing Nigeria's external image. In particular, while the post-war government embarked on massive state creation both to stabilize internal politics and facilitate infrastructural development; it went on to establish the National Youth Service Corps(NYSC) in 1973 aimed at injecting educated officers into the Nigerian army while in the same process of filling up the army population which at the end of the civil war was already decimated beyond words.

Less attention was paid by the Gowon's government to Nigeria's external image; and apart from this, the Gowon's administration as a whole seemed to have wished that the seed of instability which the outbreak of an ungodly civil war had sown would continue uninterrupted by anybody. This has been said from the background that when Britain and the US broke relations with Nigeria as a way of discouraging the proceed of the Nigerian civil war; the Gowon's government in power at the time abandon these members of the allied West and headed

for an alliance with Communist Russia who supplied Gowon's government with weapons to sustain the war; the Gowon's government did so in exchange for Nigeria's own *Ajaokuta* Iron Ore. In this way, it may be said that the inability of Gowon's government to adequately deal with the up-crop of ethnic and military politics rather than administrative negligence of the Gowon's government is to be seen as a factor which sowed a lasting seed of instability against Nigeria's foreign policy image at independence in 1960. What most people have done is to draw a connection between present-day forms of instability such as Niger-Delta Militancy, religious and ethnic tensions, Fulani Cattle Insurgency and *Boko Haram* Extremism as off-shoots of the unsolved problem of national instability created by the Nigerian civil war.

Successive Military Regimes And Nigeria's External Image Problem

As Ruben Abati duly explains in his editorial article titled, "Obasanjo's Foreign Policy", (The Guardian, Aug. 29th, 1999), successive military rule as a whole did no less than take advantage of Nigeria's afrocentric foreign policy objectives to keep themselves in power and to build personal CVs out of the country's fortunes. In the thinking of Abati as most people would agree it is clear that successive military rule in Nigeria was neither interested in the people's fortunes nor in saving the country's dwindling image from total collapse. In the words of his excerpt Abati went on to express this opinion in line with opinion held by countless Nigerians as follows;

In my opinion [Abati goes on speaking] successive [military] dictatorships in Nigeria have [done no better than] used the African cornerstone [that is, Nigeria's afrocentric foreign policy industry as a platform] to lure like-minded African regimes to support their unpopular rule. This [according to Abati] is the prize that Nigerians had to pay for supporting the many years of military dictatorship in the country.

Although it is quite clear that Ruben Abati in the above extract did not clarify whether he was by his editorial caption commenting on Obasanjo's foreign policy as a Military Head of States in 1979 or commenting on Obasanjo's foreign policies as a Civilian President in 1999; the one thing that goes without argument is that at some times successive military leaders took advantage of Nigeria's afrocentric foreign policies to sustain their interests in power and at other times they made use of continental organizations such as; -OAU, ECOWAS and ECOMOG, etc, to lure like-minded African leaders to support their military dictatorship in the country. Against these two suggestions it may as well be said that the image problem which successive military rule in Nigeria left uncorrected was that of poor human rights record. Okpokpo Ebenezer on this makes a strong case for the poor human right record of successive military rule in Nigeria where he held thus in his article, "*Challenges Facing Nigeria's Foreign Policy In the Next Millennium*" (www.africa.ulf.edu/asq/V3/V3i3a/6.html);

When Ruben Abati mentioned that [successive military rule, especially, the Abacha and the] Babangida's military regimes [which were at all times notorious for their poor human right records did no less than] gave a lethal blow to Nigeria's image [abroad] and to Nigeria's foreign policy in particular... Abati gave a further example with financial waste.... [all of which he said were coming] at the hills of such an era in which the world makes democracy, human rights..... financial accountability... or transparency the essential determinants of good governance [in any country].

The public execution of Ogoni 9 on Oct. 10th 1995 by (late) Gen Abacha adds up to the well known believe that successive military rule did in many ways spend a great deal of time and resources showing their involvement in what could be described a poor human right record; even at that, much is to be said about military rule in respect of core economic interests such as financial corruption, looting and mismanagement of public funds; Thus, with corruption, poor human right record and abuse of power, it was practically impossible the Nigerian state as having a good image in the international community of nations. In this way, when Oyeode Akin said in his article, "The Image Issue In Nigeria's Foreign Policy: Some Matters Arising", (www.nigeriavillagesquare.com/article/t...), said that a combination of Nigeria's civil war and the prolonged period of military rule that followed it did no better than made Nigeria a "shadow of itself", Oyeode's assertion here quoted can clearly be understood, especially, as it relates to Nigeria's external image.

Post-Military (Civilian) rule in Nigeria And its Failures to sustain Nigeria's External Image

The general expectation was that successive civilian democracies would, following the return of the country from military rule to civilian rule on May 29th 1999, put right the country's external image already battered and shattered by the ravages of the Nigerian civil war and by successive military misrule in the country. As Oyeode Akin puts it in his, "The Image Issue In Nigeria's Foreign Policy: Some Matters Arising" (ibid), the situation is such that at the time;

It was generally acknowledge that the Nigerian civil war [and the prolonged period of military misrule that followed it] enabled the emergence of an even keen.... in Nigeria's foreign policy relation with other powers.... [this] it made the Nigerian state become a 'shadow of itself'..... [subsequently] great stock [began to be] placed on the up-coming administrations [following the return to civil rule on May 29th, 1999] in terms of refurbishing Nigeria's foreign policy industry, especially, Nigeria's vantage image as the political giant of Africa.

Yet, despite global expectations relating to the point that Nigeria's return to civil rule would guarantee the Nigerian state a credible foreign image, the story seemed to have taken an opposite turn. Instead of maintaining

consistency, continuity and compatibility with the Balewa's foreign policy image which regards Nigeria as the true giant of Africa, it may be said correctly that successive democracies in Nigeria have tended to compound the issue by diverting attention to establishment of priority policies which can only lead to national development and nothing more. The situation as Kelechi Anyanwu and Uzor Maxim Uzuata's "Start Afresh Nigeria" (free post of Wed. Nov, 29th, 2013), explains is one in which democratic leaders now put in so much in terms of job creation, youth empowerment, food security and infrastructure instead of a genuine fight against corruption and instability which among other things cleanses a country's image abroad.

Other Challenges To The Sustainability Of Nigeria's Foreign Policy Image As A Contemporary Reality

The question which arises from the foregoing is that of whether the implementation of priority policies, strictly so speaking, translates into the sustainability clause? Most people would agree with the argument in this paper, namely, that priority or developmental policies merely lead to questions of national development and for this reason they are not likely a direct fight against corruption, misappropriation, abuse of office and national instability which up to this day continue to disfigure Nigeria's image; the first question, however, is this; 'how have successive democracies fought this virus in the person of corruption before the international community?', the second, 'some may look at it as insignificant, yet, how have Nigerian ambassadors, embassies and other personnel in the public relation department of Nigeria's foreign policy industry tried to sell Nigeria's image abroad? The two questions were raised, apart from prolonged military rule in Nigeria which has already been discussed, constitute the second and the third challenges to the question of sustainability, hence, they are to be here discussed.

Absence of An Efficient Public Relations Personnel In the Nigerian Foreign Policy Industry

Ordinarily, the effort of successive civilian regimes in Nigeria ought to have produced the sort of domestic image required to validate the country's external image as the 1960 giant of Africa. But even in aspects where past and present democracies have done their best, their best has not been complemented by men in foreign missions and other members of the public relations department in Nigeria's foreign policy industry. The situation as explained by YZ Yau in his article, "Media, Message And Meaning" (Adagbo Onoja, 1999-2000; 19), is clearly pathetic, and according to this excerpt in which Yau was extensively quoting the British High Commissioner in Nigeria;

Nigeria clearly has a public relations problem so long as the world hears only of the failure of NEPA Supply and NITEL Communication, 419, Inter-communal violence and expatriate kidnapping in the country.

In this way, the failure of the country to also project alongside the good name and image of the country raises a big question about Nigeria's foreign ministry as a whole and about diplomats and other men of the industry in foreign missions? The question which the reality poses is this; 'does it mean there is no good thing to also be told about the Nigerian state? It is this gross and mass failure that Adagbo Onoja laments in the following lines (ibid);

As an image-maker of a country, the ministry of foreign affairs is [in Nigeria] usually entrusted in the hands of not just party faithful but keen political practitioner. This [act] has become even more significant [as a reality] especially in the [current] era of globalization and [at a time like this] when Nigeria has [fully] come out of many years of a murky and traumatic [era of] military misrule.

Continuous identification of africa's interests As Nigeria's National Interests

Another challenge, this time, the third challenge facing Nigeria's image problem is the exchange of Nigeria's welfare for an African welfare that is in most cases not reciprocated. This posture, the wrong identification of Africa's foreign image as core of Nigeria's national interests, has throughout its history made the Nigerian foreign policy focus the building of Africa's external image rather than the saving of Nigeria's external image or both. Although this be wrong, it is to be understood from the background of which Jonathan Ajare tells us in his article, "Regional Voluntarism: The Sustainability of Nigeria's Afrocentrism" (free post of July 19th, 2012), that Nigeria's foreign policy industry as a whole was born out of the fear of the marginalization of Africa in the international community rather than the protection of Nigeria's welfare among the comity of nations. Most people are therefore conditioned to think from the foregoing that it is for this reason that some prominent men in Nigeria's foreign policy industry such as Hon. Sule Lamido (former minister of foreign affairs), have viewed Nigeria's foreign policy industry and Nigeria's question of sustainability as a paradox rather than a normalcy. While exposing the minister's position on this, Adagio Onoja has in his "Playing the Foreign Policy Pitch" (Vol.1, 1999-2000) I, 1999-2000; 32), quotes the minister as follows;

The first thing [we must know] is that the foreign policy objective of any nation is driven by the nation's national interest [unlike that of Nigeria which continues to be driven by Africa's interest, thus]...if Americans [says the minister] do not see us Nigerians as being all that important [since we do not see our own worth as a nation], then, this is something you must understand.

The minister was here calling attention to the paradox of indirect rather than the direct national interest objective of the Nigerian state. It is this sacrifice of Nigeria's own image in search of a good image for Africa which got in the way of politics when Nigeria lost her ticket as an African representative in the UN Security Council by virtue of its African-centered foreign policy industry. Although many people still believe that this was a matter of international bias and global politics against the background that the very refusal to grant Nigeria a permanent seat in the UN Security Council bothered on Nigeria's poor image as a nation before the international community.

Commentary and Evaluation of Nigeria's Foreign Policy Image Ordinarily, there ought to have been no link between Nigeria's foreign policy objectives and the judgment of the international community on the performance of Nigeria's domestic image since under the international law, findings reveal that, the doctrine of sovereignty allows the policies of any nation the exclusive rights of sovereignty and non-interference by nations. But two things according to Adagio Onoja,(ibid);- the phenomenon of globalization and the current emphasis on the realists conception of statehood, may be said to be responsible. According to Onoja;

Nigeria like other African countries have been grappling with challenges posed by liberal universalism and globalization, both of which are now setting limits to the old logic of statehood[based on the doctrine of sovereignty which gives the state supremacy over the international community]....[In this way]in Nigeria, there emerges the need for a systematic balancing between the demands of globalization and the realists requirements [of statehood].

Stating the issue otherwise, Nigeria's foreign image which got battered by the civil war and by military rule in the country, has since fallen short of global standards let alone sustaining the realists understanding of a giant nation or more so a sort of giant who should represent an entire continent in the international community. On our own we see the Nigerian state as the giant of Africa. This is in virtue of its foreign policy and her 1963 achievements through her foreign policy objectives. The paradox, however, is that back home in Nigeria the country is only surviving on old glories. Will it then be in the best interest of Nigerians to scrape its ministry of foreign affairs or undertake a reform in total overhaul of the industry? And is the Nigerian image problem not also inclusive as a leadership problem? If so, what is it that would best define the link between the fight for corruption, Nigeria's public or external image and the weakness of Nigeria's foreign policy industry? These and other mind-teasers are the central questions surrounding the question of sustainability of Nigeria's foreign policy image which this research as a whole tried to expose.

Recommendation and Conclusion

This means that on the question of sustainability of Nigeria's foreign policy image, it is to be said that the country's once upon a time's image is not the full story. After achieving sovereignty the next thing is to acquire dignity. This means that Nigeria needed more than anything else the sort of dignity befitting a country that be seen as the giant of a continent to enable it sell in the international community and back home be able to attract direct foreign investment. Hence, to sustain its 1960's independent image for these purposes this research recommends the following;- **passion, practical knowledge, caution and possibilities**. The question of sustainability is a question about which the people and leadership of Nigeria ought to be **passionate**. The **practical knowledge** has been lacking, both among military and civilian rulers, that the external image of any nation constitutes the domestic determinant of the country's foreign policy strength in the international community. It is therefore clear that Nigeria has not traded with **caution** in respect of its foreign image. It must now start afresh, subsequently viewing the achievement of a good foreign policy image as both a **necessity** and a **possibility**.

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