



## **Non Alignment and Nigerian Foreign Policy with Her Neighbours**

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**Abstract:** *The common objective of non-alignment is the development of peace even in the face of diversity of interests. It believes in peaceful co-existence insisting on “living and letting live”. Non-alignment emerged on the international scene in the early 1960s in the context of the cold war as a sustainer of the independence of new states and as a guarantor of their development and political stability, which gradually became an attribute of sovereignty, supporting disarmament and international organization. It is in this context that we are going to discuss the influence of non-alignment in the foreign policy of Nigeria with her immediate neighbours.*

**Key words:** *Non-alignment, Nigeria foreign Policy, neighbours*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Non-alignment as a movement and policy emerged at a time when the bipolar wars were tearing nations apart. It emerged simultaneously as most of the Afro-Asian states that formed the bulk of the Third World countries were getting independence from their colonial masters. As a result of their economic, political, technological and military levels of their development in the face of the bipolar divide. They felt that they should not align with either the Western or Eastern powers in their political, economic, social or military activities. This was to enable them get aids from both sides for national development as well as for the maintenance of peace at the international level. Prominent members of the Non-aligned groups were nation states from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

The first conference of the Non-aligned nations took place in Belgrade in 1961 under the leadership of President Tito of Yugoslavia. Other leaders that graced the occasion were leaders from the emergent nation states such as Nehru of India, Surkano of Indonesia, Balewa of Nigeria, Nkrumah of Ghana. Abdu Nassir of Egypt, Sekuo Toure of Guinea and a host of others. These leaders before now had been involved in discussions on how best to preserve their independence, promote the development of their nations as well as be active in World Affairs. Thirty five powers attended the epoch making conference and the policies and programmes adopted, particularly at the UN level in 1960s and 1970s, had far reaching effects on international politics. Today, NAM consists of 120 countries. Non-alignment contextually was based on two important premises e.g. (a) that an independent states political, economic and social policies should be based on domestic interests rather than on the bases of the interests of external powers (b) that the weak nation states were determined to avoid the destructive consequences of war between the great powers. These emergent new states 60% of them are

UN members. Therefore the movements decision-making are important and the existence of such a movement is very significant for the world peace.

Non-alignment as a policy was formulated by the emergent nation states after the end of World War II, 1945 not to align with either the Western or Eastern powers in their political, economic, social and military activities. Prominent members of the Non-align group were nation states from Africa, Latin America and the Middle East, (Kumar, 1984) Incidentally, just about the time the movement to attain independence was gathering momentum, the ideological rivalry between the USA and Russia was getting to its peak. Consequently, the growth of African nationalism followed immediately with the attainment of independence which took place with the awareness that the African nation states would be concerned about the effect of their future as a result of the ideological divide between the great world powers. Non-alignment as a policy became the instrument that would guide the emancipation of the new states in an ideologically divided world.

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was created and founded during the collapse of the colonial system and the independence struggles of the peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin America and other regions of the world and at the height of the Cold War. During the early days of the Movement, its actions were a key factor in the decolonization process, which led later to the attainment of freedom and independence by many countries and peoples and to the founding of tens of new sovereign States. Throughout its history, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries has played a fundamental role in the preservation of world peace and security.

While some meetings with a third-world perspective were held before 1955, it is believed that the Bandung Afro-Asian Conference is the most immediate antecedent to the creation of the Non-Aligned Movement. This Conference was held in Bandung on April 18 to 24, 1955 and gathered 29 Heads of States belonging to the first post-colonial generation of leaders from the two continents with the aim of identifying and assessing world issues at the time and pursuing out joint policies in international relations.

The principles that would govern relations among large and small nations, known as the "Ten Principles of Bandung", were proclaimed at that Conference. Such principles were adopted later as the main goals and objectives of the policy of non-alignment. The fulfillment of those principles became the essential criterion for Non-Aligned Movement membership; it is what was known as the "quintessence of the Movement" until the early 1990s.

In 1960, in the light of the results achieved in Bandung, the creation of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries was given a decisive boost during the 15th Ordinary Session of the United Nations General Assembly, during which 17 new African and Asian countries were admitted. A key role was played in this process by the then Heads of State and Government like Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Kwaine Nkrumah of Ghana, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Ahmed Sukarno of Indonesia and Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, they later became the founding fathers of the movement and its emblematic leaders.

Six years after Bandung, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries was founded on a wider geographical basis at the First Summit Conference of Belgrade, which was held in September 1 to 6, 1961.

The Conference was attended by 25 countries: Afghanistan, Algeria, Yemen, Myanmar,

Cambodia, Srilanka, Congo, Cuba, Cyprus, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Lebanon, Mali, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Yugoslavia. The Founders of NAM have preferred to declare it as a movement but not an organization in order to avoid bureaucratic implications of the latter.

The membership criteria formulated during the Preparatory Conference to the Belgrade Summit (Cairo, 1961) show that the Movement was not conceived to play a passive role in international politics but to formulate its own positions in an independent manner so as to reflect the interests of its members.

Thus, the primary objectives of the non-aligned countries focused on the support of self-determination, national independence and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States; opposition to apartheid; non-adherence to multilateral military pacts and the independence of non-aligned countries from great power or block influences and rivalries; the struggle against imperialism in all its forms and manifestations; the struggle against colonialism, neocolonialism, racism, foreign occupation and domination; disarmament; non-interference into the internal affairs of States and peaceful coexistence among all nations; rejection of the use or threat of use of force in international relations; the strengthening of the United Nations; the democratization of international relations; socioeconomic development and the restructuring of the international economic system; as well as international cooperation on an equal footing.

Since its inception, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries has waged a ceaseless battle to ensure that peoples being oppressed by foreign occupation and domination can exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries played a key role in the struggle for the establishment of a new international economic order that allowed all the peoples of the world to make use of their wealth and natural resources and provided a wide platform for a fundamental change in international economic relations and the economic emancipation of the countries of the South.

During its nearly 50 years of existence, the Movement of Non Aligned Countries has gathered a growing number of States and liberation movements which, in spite of their ideological, political, economic, social and cultural diversities, have accepted its founding, principles and primary objectives and shown their readiness to realize them. Historically therefore, the non aligned countries have shown their ability to overcome their differences and found a common ground for action that leads to mutual cooperation and the upholding of their shared values.

### **The Ten Principles of Bandung**

- Respect of fundamental human rights and of the objectives and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.
- Respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.
- Recognition of the equality among all races and of the equality among all nations, both large and small.
- Non-intervention or non-interference into the internal affairs of another country.

- Respect of the right of every nation to defend itself, either individually or collectively, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.  
Non-use of collective defense pacts to benefit the specific interests of any of the great powers,  
Non-use of pressures by any country against other countries.
- Refraining from carrying out or threatening to carry out aggression, or from using force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country.
- Peaceful solution of all international conflicts in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.
- Promotion of mutual interests and of cooperation and respect of justice and of international obligations.

### **THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study is to highlight the importance of the non-aligned principles and objectives and the need to adhere to it. Nigeria's adherence to the non-aligned principles and objectives have helped save the country by preventing the immediate neighbours from joining hands with the Boko Haram terrorists in fighting against Nigeria its unity and interests from much devastation. It has also prevented Nigeria from carrying out irredentist policies to reclaim those Hausa/Fulani and Yoruba speaking Nigerians from Benin Republic, Cameroon and Niger Republics.

### **ORIGIN OF THE WORD NON-ALIGNMENT**

Non-alignment had its origin in India's colonial past experience and the non-violent Indian independence struggle which left India determined to be the master of its fate in an international system determined politically by cold war alliances and economically by Western capitalism and soviet communism.

The principles of Non-alignment as articulated by Nehru and his successors, were for the preservation of India's freedom of action internationally through refusal to align India with any block or alliance, particularly those led by the United States or the soviet Union non-violence and international cooperation as a means of settling international disputes.

The term "Non-alignment" was coined by V.K. Menon in his speech at UN conference in USA, 1953. The term was later used by Indian Prime Ministers, Jawaharlal Nehru during his speech in 1954 in Colombo Srilanka. In his speech, Nehru described the "Five Pillars" to be used as a guide for Sino-India relations. These were first put forward by the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai called "PANCHEELA" (five restraints), these principles would later serve as the basis of the Non-Aligned Movement. It must therefore be stated that Jawaharlal Nehru was the architect of the Non-aligned movement.

The Non-aligned movement was never established as a formal organization. The newly emerging independent nations were impressed and influenced by the towering figures like Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia, Balewa of Nigeria, Fidel Castro of Cuba, Nkrumah of Ghana and others, that dotted this body and what they stood for. They therefore

had no option but to be identified by it. Especially as a result of the bifurcated world brought about as a result of the bloc politics and alliances. The name Non-alignment therefore refers to the participants of the Non-alignment countries.

### **THE FIVE PRINCIPLES OF NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT**

**The five principles of NAM were;**

1. Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty
2. Mutual non-aggression
3. Mutual non-interference in domestic affairs of members
4. Equality and mutual benefits
5. Peaceful co-existence

### **NIGERIA'S NEIGHBOURS**

Nigeria is a leading country in the West African Sub-region as well as a leading country in NAM. It is bordered in the West by Benin Republic about 809km and in the East, with the Republic of Chad about 85km, with Cameroon in the East again about 1,975km, Niger Republic in the North about 1,608km. Its coast lies on the Gulf of Guinea in the South and it borders Lake Chad to the North East.

Contextually, Non-alignment was based on two important premises namely (a) that an independent states political, economic and social policies should be based on domestic interests rather than on the bases of interest of external powers. (b) that the weak emergent nations states were determined to avoid the destructive consequences of war between the great powers.

Before the conference of NAM which took place in Belgrade in, 1961 under the leadership of president Marshal Tito, the leaders of the emergent states such as, Nehru of India, Tafawa Balewa of Nigeria, Sukarno of Indonesia, Nkrumah of Ghana, Abdul Nasir of Egypt, Sekuo Toure of Guinea amongst others had for a while been involved in discussions on how best to preserve their independence, promote the development of their independence, promote the development of their nations and be active in World Affairs. Yet, despite the increasing role of Africa in World Affairs, in situations that non-aligned policy could enhance, politics in Africa continues to be determined by world politics and world economics.

### **OBJECTIVES OF NON-ALIGNMENT**

According to Kumar (1984), "Peace itself is an objective and rather a difficult objective. To maintain peace for economic development, therefore, is one thing and to avert the danger of a third World War is quite another. The peculiarity of non-alignment is not so much in its recognition of peace as a condition of progress as in its assertion resulting from it can be meaningful only if and so long as an all-out nuclear war does not occur."

In view of this, the concept of non-alignment is an emphasis on the rights of nations and materialization of peace and security through participation in resolving international issues.

### **THE OBJECTIVES OF NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY**

The foreign policy objectives of Nigeria was enunciated as well as defined by the Balewa administration soon after Nigeria's independence in 1960 and the policy makers just came out of colonialism and were not exposed to the intricacies of foreign affairs.

Nevertheless, the 1979 constitution of Nigeria as amended articulates the following objectives of Nigeria's Foreign Policy.

- a) The prosperity and the progress of the country.
- b) The establishment of Nigeria as a pre-eminent and great power in Africa through its leadership in OAU and African affairs;
- c) Fight against all forms of colonialism, imperialism, neo-colonialism, apartheid and racism.
- d. Non-involvement in power blocs or military alliances, and promotion of non-alignment,
- e. Solicitation of foreign aids from all quarters for economic development as the country cannot develop in isolation
- f. Active roles in NAM, UNO, the common wealth of Nations, OPEC and ILO.
- g. Promotion and support to the cause of disarmament especially the prohibition of manufacturing, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons.

General Obasanjo identified the permanent fundamental foreign policy objectives" of Nigeria as follows (Wayas: 1979).

1. The defense of our sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity
2. The creation of necessary political and economic conditions in Africa and the rest of the world which would foster Nigerian National self-reliance and rapid economic development. This would facilitate the defense of the independence of all African countries.
3. The promotion of equality and self-reliance in Africa and the rest of the developing world.
4. The promotion and defense of social justice and respect for human dignity, especially the dignity of the black man, and
5. The promotion and defense of world peace.

Thus, Nigeria's location and the size gave her a central position in the West Africa and Africa politics. It becomes imperative for Nigeria as a state with it size, resources, and geographical location to regard itself as a great power in the continent and the world at large.

Nigeria's pre-eminence in terms of its resources over other African states is great that all the major powers outside the continent recognize its position. Being the most populous country in the continent, with her size and location in the West African subregion, Nigeria enjoys a certain position in her relations with the Economic Community of West African States

(ECOWAS), the AU, other African states, and the Western powers at large especially the USA, France and Britain.

Nigeria's boundaries with her neighbours, like most of the international boundaries of former colonial areas, were arbitrarily demarcated during the period of the "scramble of Africa" at the Berlin Conferences of 1884 and 1885. Obviously therefore, these boundaries were not natural in the true sense of demarcation by striking physical features of separate distinctive cultural groups (Schwarz- pill.) This unhealthy definition brought together diverse entities with its implications in the foreign policy of the country. In the same way it is of great importance to mention here that, an important portion of the Southern part of the Benin Republic (Nigeria Western neighbour), is inhabited by the Yoruba speaking people, and a large area of Niger Republic (the northern neighbour), is inhabited by the Hausa/Fulani speaking people since Nigeria has no territorial ambitions, no leader, no irredentists leadership had come up to make this an issue in its foreign relations. This may be attributed to the fact that she has accepted her frontiers as were left behind by the colonial masters.

Secondly, there is the influence of both the British, and French colonialism on the political elites who differentiate neighbouring French and English speaking territories as a whole rather than have pre-colonial cultural or tribal bonds that may transcend or fragment those regions (Coleman, 1963: p. 38).

Furthermore, Nigeria has been influenced in not carrying out irredentist policies to claim back these territories passed over to both Benin and Niger Republics, due to the influence and her maintenance or adherence to the five principle of Nonalignment in her relationship with the neighbours, (Aluko.) These pancheela (five restraints) principles as mentioned earlier. These principles also found a place in the OAU charter. This means that, the non-alignment influences also prevailed in the drafting of AU charter in 1965 (AU 1982).

Finally, Nigeria is surrounded by small states, as a result has preferred to keep a low-profile foreign policy for fear of being labeled expansionist and hegemonic. The same accounts for her low military security perceptions, until the introduction of the east/west rivalry into the continent which in turn ushered in the arms race and in recent times, the emergence in the country and the dreaded faceless Boko Haram terrorists in the North-East.

## **CONCLUSION**

Non-alignment has been a consistent feature of Nigeria's foreign policy since the 1960's when Nigeria joined the forum and, enjoyed strong almost unquestionable support among the Nigerian elites both military and civilian. Nigeria also benefited immensely as a nonaligned nation during the 1967 to 1970 civil war. The immediate neighbouring countries of Nigeria that are French speaking could have supported Biafra but, were dissuaded from doing so because of Nigeria's brotherly relationship with them and their adherence to the five principles of non-alignment most especially, the respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty and mutual non-interference in domestic affairs of other states. This is succinctly stated by the former Nigerian Foreign Minister Bolaji Akinyemi (1979) when he said that ... "the status, whereby, one out of every five Africans is a Nigerian puts Nigeria, inevitable, at the forefront of African affairs. There can be no question that Nigeria has discharged its African responsibilities

creditably". We have remained faithful to the goals and ideals of African unity, and have made Africa the centre-piece of our foreign policy. In spite of our relative size and resources, we have eschewed interference in the internal affairs of other African states, and have bent over backwards to demonstrate to our neighbours that we have neither expansionist nor hegemonic intentions. Furthermore, we have been ever ready to lead our good offices in a mediatory capacity in regional conflict situations (Ogoloma 1993; p. 223).

### **SUGGESTIONS**

1. It is suggested that, Nigeria should continue to observe the pancheela principles (five restraints) of non-alignment with her neighbours and the entire continent and not interfere in their internal affairs.
2. Nigeria should be reminded that, all her immediate neighbours are French speaking and, France might not have forgotten its quest to see that Nigeria is bifurcated realizing its support to Biafra during the Nigerian civil war.
3. Nigeria should always maintain good neighbourliness even if, it means bending backward to satisfy them. She should also invest in these countries economically and otherwise to help raise their level of economic, social and cultural developments.
4. Conversely, Nigeria should not allow her neighbours to be used as a spring board to destabilize her.
5. Nigeria should always be in the forefront fighting destabilizing forces with her immediate neighbours for what affects them will invariably affect her.
6. Nigeria should help in strengthening ECOWAS and its principles. In doing so, the neighbours and the sub-region will be more united and strong enough to attend to all the perennial issues confronting the sub-region.

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