Non-alignment and Nigeria's foreign policy, 1960-1979: A historical perspective.

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Abstract:

This study is aimed at finding out the extent to which policy pronouncements by Nigerian foreign policy decision-makers on non-alignment coincided with or diverged from concrete policy actions in the period, 1960-1979. At independence, in 1960, Nigeria adopted the policy of not aligning with any power bloc 'as a matter of routine' - a deliberately vague, and perhaps confusing, hint at non-alignment.

However, as a result of her colonial heritage and the inability, even unwillingness, of the ruling elite to struggle for national economic self-reliance, Nigeria was unable to maintain a clearly non-aligned posture in her external relations. The balance of her foreign relations weighed more in favour of the western-bloc. The level of commitment to the 'West' was such that Nigeria's anti-imperialist and anti-apartheid drives were severely handicapped.

Therefore, throughout the period studied (though to a lesser extent since the end of the Nigerian Civil War) there was always a wide gap between policy pronouncements and concrete actions. Nigeria's experience throughout this period shows that an economically dependent nation cannot exert much influence (especially on a continuous and consistent basis) in international affairs.

Keywords: Anti-imperialist/ Anti-apartheid drives/ Independence/ Colonial-heritage

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