

**Osita C. Eze (ed.) Reciprocity in International Relations: Nigeria's Foreign Policy in Retrospect (Lagos, NIIA, 2010)
pp3-220**

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The principle of reciprocity is a long standing value of international relations. Both citizens and officials conducting foreign policies of nation-states expect reciprocal gestures from other nation-states in the course of their interactions in the international system.

With respect to Nigeria, the voice is loud in support of reciprocity in the conduct of the country's foreign policy. Uptill today, the citizens though appreciative of the country's pursuit of an African focused foreign policy, still lament the failure of Nigeria to have her good gestures in Africa reciprocated by other African countries which have benefitted from the country's large heart over the years. Opinion, however, differs on why this is the lot of Nigerian foreign policy.

Reciprocity in International Relations: Nigeria's Foreign Policy in Retrospect is a book made up of fifteen chapters written to shed more light on the place of reciprocity in the conduct of international relations especially how it has reflected in Nigeria's foreign policy since the country's attainment of independence in 1960. The book starts with an opening remark which can be considered as a blunt submission from a former Ambassador and Nigeria's Minister of Foreign Affairs when he remarked that the problem with country's foreign policy is not lack of reciprocity but rather he holds internal contradictions responsible for the failure of the country to have her gestures toward other African countries reciprocated. In his own words;

...we must at least be able to respond to (issues) more effectively than we now do; or as well as we did in the past, when we were better organized and more respected as a people and a nation (pp8-9).

There is also the perspective that given the nature of the international system and based on the dominance of nation states, issues of lack of reciprocity are bound to happen no matter what a nation does. As a norm, reciprocity is not enforceable in the law court. Beyond retaliatory measures, it is doubtful if one can really hold a country down if she fails to reciprocate a good gesture extended to her by another country. This book makes the point that there are a few legal options that a nation state can take in enforcing reciprocity. All the same, the principle is famous and does explain to a large extent the variety of relationships that exist in the international system.

Can every state pursue the policy of reciprocity? The book presents different opinions of authors. For George Obiozor, Bolade Eyinla and to some extent, Olufemi George, it is only the strong or powerful nation-states that can expect and demand for reciprocity in their relations with other countries. Obiozor argues that the current international system shows much of

power considerations and to that extent, the amount of power at the disposal of a nation state determines whether other nations it relates with will feel obliged to reciprocate its good gestures or not. In a way, Olufemi George holds the view that every nation can demand for reciprocal relations with other countries irrespective of its level of development. He has used Nigeria's relations with Canada to illustrate his point. He posits that;

...it would be clear that on the issue of strict application of reciprocity between (Nigeria and Canada, the former) stands disadvantaged vis-à-vis Canada. However, this is not to say that Nigeria should not take appropriate action to protect her national interests (p90).

Based on the understanding that all nations can apply the principle of reciprocity, Alaba Ogunsanwo examines the application of the principle in Nigeria's relations with her neighbours in West Africa. He, however, concludes that there are many cases of non-reciprocal relations than instances in which other West African countries have reciprocated Nigeria's gestures toward them.

China and France have been noted not to have extended the strict application of the principle to their relations with Nigeria. China, in particular, has taken a number of actions against Nigerian citizens who live in the country. Both Chuka Udedibia and C.N. Odock provide more insights into the place of reciprocity in Nigeria's relations with these countries.

Bola Akinterinwa, in his chapter, devoted a considerable amount of space to discussing the concept of reciprocity and its application to Nigeria's relations with the United Kingdom. His central submission is that Nigeria was only able to demand reciprocal relations with Britain under the Military. He therefore concludes that the application of the principle has been more to the advantage of UK.

The strong point of the book lies in its submission that there is a correlation between the domestic environment and the external behaviour of a country. The more a country is perceived to be well administered at home, the more her ability to shape the context of her external behaviour and in the process, wins more gains for herself in the international system. It is therefore necessary to counsel foreign policy makers that they cannot demand for reciprocity unless they have reasonably succeeded in harnessing the elements of their national power. It serves as a major foundation upon which to apply the principle of reciprocity. This advice holds more for Nigeria whose citizens are increasingly lamenting the near absence of reciprocity in the conduct of their country's foreign policy.

I therefore recommend the book to all those who are interested in knowing where the norm of reciprocity stands in international relations and how it has reflected in Nigerian foreign policy. It is handy, easy to read and the quality of the editorial is commendable.