



thruMYeyes

with PROF. BOLAJI AKINYEMI

THE WEEKLY FOREIGN-POLICY BRIEFING

SESSION 160 · THURSDAY 05 OCTOBER 2023 · FROM THE ARCHIVE · Syncterface Media

FROM THE ARCHIVE · FOREIGN POLICY

SOMEONE ELSE PAYS

From a cholera apology the UN won't give to a diaspora that leaves the bill at home — this week keeps finding the same pattern: someone runs it up, someone else settles it.

Session 160 · Thursday 5 October 2023

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FROM THE ARCHIVE

Someone Else Pays

From a cholera apology the UN still won't give to a diaspora whose loudest voices leave the bill with people back home, this week keeps finding the same pattern: someone runs it up, someone else settles it.

A hundred-minute episode with no single flashpoint, built instead around a pattern that keeps recurring wherever Prof. Bolaji Akinyemi looks: Kenyan police inheriting a mission the UN underfunded, Mediterranean states inheriting a migration crisis two Western interventions caused, Global South governments overcharged for vaccines by other Global South governments, and diaspora communities whose advocacy abroad lands, unevenly, on relatives back home. **He returns to the same question from six different directions: when the consequences of a decision fall due, who actually answers the door?**

An archive edition, recorded 5 October 2023, the week the UN Security Council authorized a Kenya-led mission to Haiti and India and Canada expelled each other's diplomats. Events and figures are described as they stood that week.

01 · A MISSION KENYA VOLUNTEERED FOR, AND AN APOLOGY THE UN STILL WON'T GIVE

The session opens on the UN Security Council's approval of a Kenya-led mission to Haiti, where gangs are estimated to control roughly three-quarters of the country. Prof. Akinyemi calls the intervention overdue but wrongly shaped: on his account, a police force sent under a peacekeeping mandate repeats the mistake that discredited UN missions in Haiti and the Democratic Republic of Congo before it, where limited rules of engagement left troops unable to confront the fighters they were sent to contain. A peace-enforcement mission, backed by a military rather than a police

mandate, is what the moment calls for, he argues — while noting Kenya would not be the first African-led UN force, after Nigerian, Ghanaian and other African commanders in the Congo and Lebanon.

He's pointed about why Haitians distrust the UN going in: a previous peacekeeping deployment introduced cholera to a country that had never had it, and the UN's response, on his account, was not the outbreak itself but its refusal for years to apologize, admit responsibility, or compensate victims. That history, he suggests, is why Kenyan and allied police may find a hostile welcome regardless of the mission's intentions.

“What was shameful wasn't the outbreak. It was the United Nations' refusal to take responsibility for it — and I think that is very disgraceful.”

— Prof. Bolaji Akinyemi

02 · A REPARATIONS BILL HAITI PAID INTO LIVING MEMORY

Prof. Akinyemi widens the Haiti discussion into history: the first Black nation to win its independence by defeating France militarily was then forced, with tacit American backing, into a reparations arrangement compensating former slave owners — a debt he says Haiti was still servicing when African states began gaining their own independence in the mid-20th century, with only a partial write-off decades later. He's candid that Africa did not return the solidarity: colonial-era narratives, absorbed rather than questioned, left African states as indifferent to Haiti and Cuba's struggles as the colonizers who wrote those narratives in the first place.

His prescription is specific rather than sentimental: he wants the African Union to formally adopt Haiti's recovery as a continental project, and he's openly critical of the AU's choice to admit Arab states with their own histories of enslaving Africans while leaving Black nations in the Caribbean and Pacific outside the tent.

03 · GREECE, GADDAFI, AND A MIGRATION CRISIS EUROPE BUILT ITSELF

Turning to Greece's push for EU-wide sanctions on states that refuse deported migrants, Prof. Akinyemi traces the migration pressure squarely back to the intervention he says caused it: NATO's removal of Gaddafi, who had explicitly warned that his government was the barrier holding migration flows out of Europe. On his account, that warning has been vindicated from beyond the grave, and Italy, Greece and Spain are now absorbing a burden that a promised EU burden-sharing plan never actually distributed.

He reads Greece's proposed sanctions less as cruelty than exhaustion: with richer EU members declining to share the load, the frontline states are left proposing to withhold aid from countries that won't accept their own deported nationals — a policy, he argues, born of running out of better options rather than malice.

HOW A DIASPORA BILLS THE HOMELAND

THE PROFESSOR'S READING OF THE INDIA-CANADA CRISIS



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How a diaspora's advocacy abroad becomes a homeland's liability, per the Professor's reading of the India-Canada crisis.

04 • SAUDI ARABIA, THE UAE, AND AN ALLIANCE WASHINGTON WON'T PUT IN WRITING

On Saudi Arabia and the UAE pressing Washington for a formal security pact, Prof. Akinyemi frames it as a request to end decades of deliberate ambiguity: unlike NATO's codified Article 5, Gulf states hosting major US military infrastructure — Bahrain's Fifth Fleet, the UAE's Central Command presence — have only ever had informal understandings, dressed up in recent years as 'non-NATO ally' status. As Washington pushes them toward normalization with Israel, he says, they are pushing back for clarity on what the US actually owes them in return.

He's skeptical anything formal follows soon: any real treaty would need Senate ratification, and a Congress he calls too divided to function has little appetite for it — especially heading into a US election year.

05 • A SPEAKER UNDONE BY THE DEAL HE MADE TO GET THE JOB

Kevin McCarthy's removal as House Speaker draws one of the session's sharper lines: Prof. Akinyemi calls it another marker of American institutional decline, comparing the House floor to the Roman Senate's infighting as Rome's frontiers collapsed. On his account, McCarthy's ouster was the price of the concession he made to secure the speakership in the first place — allowing any single member to force a snap vote on his removal — extended to him by a hard-right faction he needed but never fully controlled.

He extends no sympathy toward the Democrats who declined to save him, noting McCarthy had launched impeachment proceedings against Biden without even bringing it to a floor vote. The larger point, on his account, is that no rival power engineered this dysfunction — Americans did it to themselves, in full view of a world that usually gets lectured by Washington about governance.

“Be careful about climbing onto the back of a tiger, because the only way to get off it is to end up inside it.”

— Prof. Bolaji Akinyemi

06 • VACCINE IMPERIALISM, AND AN UNCOMFORTABLE FOOTNOTE ABOUT INDIA

Prompted by a viewer question on unequal COVID vaccine pricing, Prof. Akinyemi confirms what he calls vaccine imperialism: Western powers banned vaccine exports to Africa and Asia while pre-buying supply they didn't yet need, then offered what remained to South Africa at roughly fifty times the price charged domestically. What he says genuinely surprised him, once the relevant agreements

were declassified, was that India — a fellow BRICS member — struck a similarly exploitative deal with South Africa despite its own advanced vaccine manufacturing base.

He declines to let Africa off the hook entirely: decades of underinvestment and poor stewardship, he argues, hollowed out vaccine-production capacity Nigeria once had, leaving the continent dependent on exactly the kind of exploitation it now condemns. His hope, as two malaria vaccines finally reach production, is that African states build their own manufacturing capacity rather than repeat the dependency.

“So what was BRICS all about, when dogs were now eating dogs within BRICS?”

— Prof. Bolaji Akinyemi

07 · THE DIASPORIC VIRUS, AND A CLOSING WORD FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

The India-Canada diplomatic rupture — expulsions on both sides after Canada accused India of assassinating a Sikh separatist leader on its soil — becomes the occasion for a concept Prof. Akinyemi coins on the spot: the "diasporic virus," where a vocal minority abroad reshapes its host country's foreign policy toward its homeland, while the people who actually live there absorb the consequences. He draws the same pattern from Ethiopian-American advocacy during the Tigray war, arguing that the loudest diaspora voices were never the ones who paid for the positions they pushed.

He closes the broadcast on a direct appeal to younger Nigerians, prompted by a viewer question about the country's leadership failures: stop letting tribal and ethnic sentiment substitute for judgment at the ballot box, he urges, because a generation that keeps voting "for my kin" will keep inheriting leaders who serve kinship rather than the country — the same misplaced-loyalty pattern, on his account, that runs through nearly everything discussed that evening.

THREADS TO PULL

- If a peacekeeping mandate keeps producing the same failures a peace-enforcement mandate wouldn't, why does the weaker mandate keep getting chosen?
- Does a formal apology and compensation from an institution like the UN actually repair trust, or does the refusal to give one do more lasting damage than the original harm?
- If a migration crisis was created by a specific intervention, does responsibility for managing it expire, or does it follow the states that caused it indefinitely?
- When a fellow Global South government profits from the same exploitative pricing as the West, what does that do to the idea of Global South solidarity?
- If a diaspora's political advocacy carries costs that land on people back home rather than the advocates themselves, whose interests is that advocacy actually serving?

Watch Session 160 in full on the Syncterface Media channel. New episodes every Thursday, 7pm WAT (7pm UK, 2pm ET).

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