HISTORY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Afro-centrism as the centerpiece of Nigeria’s foreign policy: A historical misnomer in the aftermath of xenophobic attacks in South Africa

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Abstract: This study examines the relationship between Africa centeredness of Nigeria’s foreign policy and the recurring xenophobic attacks on Nigerians in some African states. It argues that Nigeria’s utilization of her human and material resources for the greater good of African states was unrewarding and a commemoration of ingratitude and thus create the imperative for foreign policy review. The study argues that national interest consideration must be of primary importance as it necessarily explains the attitudes of states in the international system. It further held that the inappropriateness of “big brother” role in the face of palpable shortfalls in the management and running of the state manifests as a tacit admission of failure in governance. Using largely secondary sources and a few primary data, the study concludes that given the realities on ground in this new decade, there is an overbearing imperative to rejig Nigeria’s foreign policy to permit a wider and deeper consideration for the national interest.

Subjects: African Studies; International Politics; International Relations; Security Studies - Pol & Intl Relns; Education - Social Sciences;

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The major challenge to scholarship as conceived by the Moving Train Research Team has been the issue of research collaboration in the arts and humanities. This challenge, therefore, defines the key role of the research activities of the group. For the past 5 months, the senior members of the group have been involved in deliberate and accelerated mentorship of junior colleagues in the area of research in a diverse area of the humanities. Weekly workshops and paper presentations have yielded research papers especially in the area of medical humanities, foreign policy, oil extraction and a ready volume on Covid-19 pandemic. It is our considered opinion that in no distant time, the research group will grow bigger and diversify into the broader area of social sciences and pursue research grants for a more and greater engagement for deepening our focus.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The paper is important as it discusses the xenophobic “war” between Nigeria and South Africa, Africa’s two biggest economies. It centres on one of the most nagging issues confronting not just the continental Africa but the entire continental system. The paper explores the relationship between Africa centeredness of Nigeria’s foreign policy and the recurring xenophobic attacks on Nigerians in some African states with particular reference to South Africa. It informs of Nigeria’s use of the totality of her resources for the greater good of African states but frowns at the unrewarding outcome of such engagement with the constant and regular killings of Nigerians in these countries. The major submission of the paper is what could be referred to as the commemoration of ingratitude of certain African states to Nigeria’s big brother role in ending colonialism in the continent. On account of the above, the paper argued for a foreign policy review for Nigeria that accommodates greater focus on national interest as against continental interest.
Keywords: national interest; good neighborliness; Afro-centrism; foreign policy; Frontline States

1. Introduction

Nigeria is signatory to multilateral and bilateral agreements at the continental and sub-regional levels. Most of those protocols made the country a beast of burden yoking with responsibilities without direct link with prioritizing its national interest in a transitional world system that many states are struggling to find their bearings.¹

The lowering of the Union Jack on 1 October 1960 marked the formal independence of Africa’s most populous nation-Nigeria. The foreign policy architecture of the newly independent state was crafted around the imperative of Africa being the centre piece of her external relations. This gave birth to the Afro-centric posture and principle that underpin the relations with the outside world since 1960 to date. Challenges of nation-building notwithstanding, Nigeria has remained committed and consistent in her foreign policy without any visible shift. Nigeria demonstrated capacity and capability in championing the wellbeing of the constituting members of the African community. With massive oil income and a succession of forward looking leaders, Nigeria went to work in kick-starting the decolonization project. Quite a number of African states were on colonial lock-down and a commitment to reverse this trend became a clarion call. Accordingly, Nigerian foreign policy endeavors supported and funded the delegitimization of the white minority rule in South Africa, Angola and a plethora of other countries especially through liberation movements. Nigeria’s involvement in Africa at this period would seem devoid of self-interest as evidenced in her diplomatic maneuverings. At the international fora, Nigeria campaigned vigorously in support of colonies under the yoke of colonial domination and racist regimes. The tempo, financial and material commitment to African liberation gulped billions of dollars for which Nigeria located thousands of kilometers away became a Frontline State. In 1994, South Africa gained her independence and embraced black majority rule. table 1

In specific terms, Nigeria’s onslaught against colonialism in Africa actually began 7 clear months before the 1 October 1960 independence celebrations. On March 1960, 69 blocks were brutally murdered in Sharpeville in what became known as the Sharpeville massacre with Nigeria reacting angrily to the event. Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa’s prompt response changed everything about South Africa as the country mobilized immediately for the expulsion of South Africa from the Commonwealth Organization in 1961. Nigeria began the immediate funding of the two foremost liberation groups in South Africa notably the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan African Congress (PAC) in 1961 and in 1970; the country began a 5 USD m annual subvention for both groups. Nigeria was essentially the big brother, picking up all the bills and sacrificing comfort for her African brothers. In a rare demonstration of commitment and love, Nigeria spent over 61 USD billion dollars with Nigerian students skipping or forfeiting their lunch to make donations “and just in 6 months, in June 1977, the contribution known as ‘Mandela tax’ to the Southern African Relief Fund (SARF) reached 10.5 USD million”. Out of this figure, the Federal Military Government under General Olusegun Obasanjo donated 3.7 USD m with a personal donation of 3,000 USD and each cabinet member donating 1,500 USD each. All civil servants and public officers in Nigeria donated 2% of their monthly salary.² Nigeria took in South African students to study in Nigerian universities for free with the arrival of about 86 students in 1976 following the Sharpeville massacre involving the gruesome killing by apartheid police of about 700 protesting students protesting the regime’s decision to change the language of academic instruction to Afrikaans.

Furthermore, a significant number of high-profile black dignitaries were offered asylum in Nigeria including former presidents Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki between 1977 to 1984 in the first instance and 1999 to 2008 later. At the diplomatic front, Nigeria led a consortium of African states to lobby for the creation of the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid.
She also chaired the Committee for uninterrupted 30 long years. A greater detail on Nigeria’s role in African liberation was captured by a scholar thus:

Between 1973 and 1978, Nigeria contributed huge financial sum to the United Nations Educational and Training Programme for Southern Africa, a voluntary trust fund promoting education of the black South African elite. As for trade, Nigeria had refused to sell oil to South Africa for decades in protest against the white minority rule. Nigeria had lost approximately 41 USD billion during that period. Above all, Nigeria was the only nation worldwide to set up the National Committee Against Apartheid (NACAP) as early as in 1960. The committee’s mission was to disseminate the evils of the apartheid regime to all Nigerians from primary schools to universities, in public media and in markets, through posters and billboards messages. The NACAP was also responsible for the coordination of Nigeria’s government and civil society joint anti-apartheid actions and advising of policy makers on anti-apartheid decisions. For over three decades the NACAP had successfully built alliances with labor movement, student groups, progressive elements and other international grassroots organizations within Nigeria for effective anti-apartheid activities. In fact, until 1960s, the ANC fight against the apartheid regime in South Africa was yielding very small results. The whole world was quite indifferent to the suffering of the black South Africans. Moreover, western countries strongly supported the apartheid regime providing it with technologies, intelligence and favorable trade agreements. Things started changing dramatically only after African countries became independent in the 1960s. Nigeria unequivocally took over leadership of the anti-apartheid movement worldwide. Despite the volatile nature of Nigeria’s politics and the passage of numerous military and civil leaders, Nigeria never abandoned its unwavering commitment to the freedom of our brothers and sisters in South Africa. From 1960 to 1995, Nigeria has alone spent over 61 USD billion to support the end of apartheid, more than any other country in the world, according to the South African Institute of International Affairs. The country has never let go of any opportunity to denounce apartheid, from the boycott of Olympic Games and Commonwealth Games to the nationalization of British Petroleum assets in 1979.3

Nigeria needed to be taken seriously because issues on South Africa needed action and not just rhetorics to give momentum to the struggle for freedom from the white supremacists. Nigeria provided secret military training using Kaduna first mechanized army division and provided other material, financial and diplomatic support to African National Congress guerrilla forces.

2. Conceptual issues in Nigeria’s Africa policy
The major issues in Nigeria’s Africa policy are linked to the fundamental question—whose interest? These issues include a clear understanding of what afro-centrism and good neighborliness presents or means and its linkages with the relations between Nigerian and other African states between 1960 and now.

3. Afro-centrism
Several studies show that foreign policy has always been seen in terms of the national interest of national entity that is formulating such policy. It is the very most important determinant of a country’s foreign policy expected to encapsulate the totality of the expectations in dealing with other state actors in the international system. Buoyed by its clearly conceived and unambiguous agenda to be a continental hegemon and to speak the “loudest for African concerns”, Nigeria saw colonialism and institutionalized racism ravaging the continent a ready-made avenue to justify her ambitions of continental leadership. It was to get this done that the Nigerian government articulated from inception to focus purely on African affairs in her foreign policy. The country was admitted into the UN as the 99th member in order to join forces with other progressive members to help lift this burden from the continent by untying the thumb of militant supremacist and colonial regimes. With an unclear anti-colonial agenda at the UN, Commonwealth and other international organizations, Nigeria’s admission into the global body added a prominent and forceful voice to the existing murmurs against colonialism. This was eminently captured by Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Nigeria’s first Prime Minister to the effect that “Nigeria hopes to work with other African states for the progress of Africa and to assist in bringing all African territories to
a state of responsible independence". (Balewa, 1964). While carrying out their official functions, all foreign policy technocrats in Nigeria saw reason to emphasize the “Africanness” in Nigeria’s external engagements. In so many instances, this came to the fore as:

Nigeria has established herself as a strong advocate and reliable defender of Africa’s concerns and interest at the United Nations-especially on the question of decolonization and the struggle against apartheid. On decolonization, it has been a cardinal aspect of Nigeria’s foreign policy to assist, within the limit of its resources, in the decolonization process in Africa. Nigeria’s role was central to the struggle against apartheid, the institutionalized form of racism in South-Africa, which was declared “a crime against humanity” and gross violation of universal declaration of human rights and an assault on the dignity of black man .

Furthermore,

Because of its interest and commitment to the issue of decolonization and racism, Nigeria since the mid-seventies had been consistently elected to the chair of the special committee on apartheid. The most significant of the committee’s achievements is that it has on numerous occasions with varying degree of successes sought to induce various organs of the UN to isolate South-Africa and to scrutinize more closely the inhuman policies of the white minority regime.

This unparalleled commitment to African cause is the total embodiment of the concept of Afrocentrism.

4. National interest
Many indeed have argued that Nigeria’s choice of Africa-centered policy is not driven by national interest but by an unclear consideration of the good and welfare of her neighbors seen more as brothers and sisters. A critical interrogation of this policy would reveal that no core interest in favor of the people was considered at the point of formulation in 1960 and at implementation thereafter. The firmness of Nigerian leadership on this has remained largely undiluted and unapologetic because “on the question of colonialism and racial discrimination, I am afraid that we in Nigeria will never compromise” and on the account of the killing of 31 women in Burkina Faso, it was reiterated that “as we have done all the time, we will stand with our brothers and sisters in West Africa in all situations”. This clearly would seem to suggest that the protection of African states remains very central to the country’s foreign policy. National interests represent the aims and objectives a state seeks to pursue in the course of its relations with the external publics. It is National interest that lubricates the wheel of diplomacy and drives the foreign policy actions of state and global actors. In specific terms, it is a country’s goals and ambitions whether in diverse fields of economic, military, political and culture. The concept is an important one in international relations where pursuit of the national interest is the foundation of the realist school. On the level of polemics and explanation, the concept of national interest is utilized to evaluate, criticize and rationalize foreign policy.

5. Foreign policy
Foreign policy is those set goals and objectives that states agree to pursue in her interaction with members of the international community. It represents the core and guiding principles that drive state actions in the international system. It does not admit just a single definition and thus has been variously defined to mean interplay between the outside and the inside, the general principles by which a state governs its reaction to the international environment, and above all it is “presumably something less than a sum of all policies which have an effect upon national governments”. In his twin definition of foreign policy, a scholar opined that it consists “of decisions and actions which involves to some appreciable extent relations between one state and another on the one hand and also demonstrates as ‘a dynamic process of interaction between the changing domestic demands and the support and the changing external circumstances’. On the whole, foreign policy is generally the reflection of a country’s national interests which are of
economic, political, military significance to its wellness".\textsuperscript{16} The realization of goals of foreign policy is often the handiwork of diplomacy which is the most treasured and valuable tool of foreign policy, just as war, alliances and international trade\textsuperscript{15} may all be manifestations of its reality.

6. The Frontline States

The intensification of anti-apartheid struggles in 1976 led progressively to the emergence of the frontline states by constituting states in Southern Africa region. It was the persevering and unyielding determination and tenacity of this group of states that brought pressure to bear on Pretoria leading to the collapse of the stronghold of the white supremacist regime in 1994. The major assignment and task of the group made up of Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe from 1980 after her independence from Britain were to “to co-ordinate their responses to apartheid and formulate a coherent policy towards the militant apartheid regime of Pretoria and also to give support to the various liberation movements across the Southern Africa region”.\textsuperscript{16} This duty was effectively delivered as the Frontline States turned out to be a powerful force in the struggle to reverse the long entrenched iniquity in the region.\textsuperscript{17} Thus far, it is important to note from the foregoing analysis is to put on record that Nigeria alongside other countries played a significant role in the beginning and final push that dismantled apartheid in southern Africa. It was Nigeria’s dogged assistance that earned her the membership of this organization that was clearly defined by the geography of the region.

7. Good neighborliness

Nigeria making Africa the centerpiece of her foreign policy announced the imperative of good neighborliness as a policy. The policy was not without reasons; namely, strategic considerations that include demographic and economic reasons even as many others insist on security concerns especially within the context of what happens or does not happen around her contiguous states. Still, others try to provide explanations using the prestige and national interest as well as the economic diplomacy/hegemonic arguments. In this latter school of thought, proponents argue that Africa-centeredness as a policy has been “pursued without any specific regard to the country’s domestic interests and economic woes”. Many have also reasoned especially “that Nigeria; by virtue of her huge socio-economic and military resources, has the responsibility to intervene in conflicts within its immediate sub-region (West Africa) and in Africa”. This policy accepts that Nigeria owe a measure of responsibility to her neighbours. This was expressed in no uncertain terms by Nigeria’s former foreign affairs minister, Professor Bolaji Akinyemi to the effect that ‘we have responsibilities to Africa’ (Akinterinwa, 2001). By this, sufficient justification exists to support a consideration for good neighborliness. Nigeria’s good neighborliness and Afro-centric diplomacy were justified by the assertion of the First Nigerian Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa on 7 October 1960, when he said:

So far, I have concentrated on the problems of Africa. Please do not think that we are not interested in the problems of the rest of the world; we are intensely interested in them and hope to be allowed to assist in finding solutions to them through this organization, but being human we are naturally concerned first with what affects our immediate neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{18}

This, without doubt, placed a sufficient premium on promoting the welfare of Nigeria’s neighbors within the context of unity and development.\textsuperscript{19} All of this was in tandem and in consonance with Nigeria’s first president’s idea of “manifest destiny” wherein he affirmed that Nigeria is in good stead to be not just a “big brother” but the “messiah” and should play a role commensurate with her name and status.\textsuperscript{20} The twin concept of good neighborliness and Afro-centrism was given a more credible and emphatic boost when Aja Wachukwu, the Nigeria first Minister of Foreign Affairs openly emphasized that “Charity begins at home and therefore any Nigerian foreign policy that does not take into consideration the peculiar position of Africa is unrealistic”.\textsuperscript{21} As a regional hegemon, Nigeria remained consistent as a brother’s keeper and over time succeeded in
promotion of peace, prosperity, stability and development in Africa; promotion of political goodwill and understanding among Africa countries despite the cultural, linguistic and economic barriers caused by colonial expeditions; frowning at international intervention and presence in Africa; self-determination for all countries on the continent and the elimination of apartheid in South Africa and the eradication of all forms of racial discrimination in Africa; the promotion of rapid social-economic development of Africa through regional economic integration; the strengthening of sub-regional economic institutions such as ECOWAS and the reduction of economic dependence on extra-continental powers; and lastly, the development of cultural cooperation as a means of strengthening diplomatic ties with all African countries.22

It is true that foreign policy formulation go beyond the mouthing of inanities but it is generally taken that centripetal and centrifugal notions underscore this exercise especially given that there are domestic and external issues involved in any country's foreign policy formulation. This more than anything genuinely promotes the policy of good neighborliness probably due to the four concentric circles of Nigeria’s national interest firstly involving her contiguous neighbors, notably Niger, Tchad, Cameroon and Benin and next, her relations with West African neighbors and the third emphasizing the broad engagement with Africa and finally a commitment to ties with organizations, institutions and state actors outside the continent of Africa. Nigeria’s brightest minds in diplomacy and interstate relations such as Bolaji Akinyemi, Joy Ugwu, Aluko, Jide Osuntokun and many others variously defend good neighborliness policy citing sundry considerations of our colonial heritage, leadership orientation, machinery of foreign policy, economic variables, post-civil war experiences, political considerations, military interests as major yardstick or barometer of measurement. But all of this does not provide an answer as to the appropriateness or otherwise of the good neighborliness policy in the present era given clear and unambiguous signs of abuse by our so-called neighbors.

8. Conflicting ideologies: insight into colonialism and Pan-Africanism

Nigeria’s Afro-centric leaning is derived in large dose from her belief in the ideology of Pan-Africanism. Pan-Africanism manifests as a movement and ideology situating its relevance to the encouragement of Africans to buy into the pursuit of unity and solidarity of black people on a global scale. The origin of the movement is linked to the 1893 Africanist movement; that galvanized educated people of African descent in the Diaspora against the established order of European colonialism, racism and slavery. A number of scholars see the concept of Pan-Africanism as necessarily vital with verifiable nexus connection to economic, social and political advancement of black people while also asserting and insisting on the sameness of fate and destiny of African peoples within and outside the continent.23 Conversely, it is most apt to understand colonialism to represent the conquest in whatever form of a people and the imposition of alien rule over them with the context of a specific geographical space or territory. The Europeans overcame militarily African opposition in the nineteenth century and forcefully appropriated the commanding heights of the African economy and politics. European powers like scavengers preyed on the continent and before long, had them subjugated and in the process not only seized the raw material markets but fleeced the people in too many ways than one by the instrumentality of armed force. It is ‘a system of rule which assumes the right to impose their will upon another’24 in the process of establishing colonies in a foreign country by people from another territory.25 Seen by many Eurocentric scholars as an effort at transplanting and spreading civilization26 several others see the concept as the “age-long European belief that colonialism was primarily about civilization” and ‘a natural overflow of nationality; its test is the power of colonists to transplant the civilization they represent to the new natural and social environment in which they find themselves.27 All these definitions and explanations are indeed mild but its raw and probably harsh form, colonialism:

is not only the exploitation of new nations by the old, of dark skins by light, or the subjugation of the poor by rich … we know what colonialism means; the exploitation and subjugation of the weak by the powerful, of many by the few, of the governed who have given no consent to be governed.28
9. Nigeria’s Afro-centric engagements beyond South Africa

Nigeria began her global diplomatic engagements with her role in instigating the Commonwealth Organization to expel South Africa. The country continued along this track until 1994 when black majority rule was introduced in South Africa. But beyond South Africa, other engagements across Africa require equal mention with South Africa and this is the focus of this section. Some scholars hold the view that Nigeria’s good neighborliness did not receive enough steam until after the end of the civil war in 1970 (Awosusi, 2020: 18–30). But this may not be the truth for Nigeria effectively participated in the multilateral United Nations’ peacekeeping mission that restored normalcy to Congo during the civil war in 1960 and in 1961 Nigeria unilaterally broke diplomatic ties with France for testing Atomic Bombs in the Sahara; an act considered a continental assault/blow. Nigeria’s response was considered a severe deterrence to other powers with similar sinister intentions. So in reality, the effective foundation for Nigeria’s firebrand diplomacy in the 70s was laid in the first Republic especially given her role in 1963 in the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the 1964 establishment of the Lake Chad Commission. “Africa is the Cornerstone of Nigeria’s foreign policy”, a refrain made popular in 1972 by Yakubu Gowon, Nigeria’s erstwhile military Head of State—an affirmation of the commitment to African centeredness. Beyond South Africa, Nigeria waged ceaseless “wars” and thus contributed in greater measure to the fight against colonialism and eventual independence of Angola, Namibia, Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe). Nigeria financed the liberation movements and recognized the MPLA as the authentic Angolan government and spent financially and materially to all the countries under the colonial yoke. Nigeria donated 500,000 USD to Namibia’s South West African Peoples’ Organization (SWAPO). SWAPO and later granted the organization permission to open office in Lagos, Nigeria.

While SWAPO was setting up office in Lagos, Nigeria’s Federal Ministry of Information inaugurated a Committee for information dissemination and by 1978, the revolutionary regime of Murtala-Obasanjo shocked the whole world by instilling fear and deterrence to big powers by partially nationalizing the British-owned Barclays Bank and in furtherance to the pressure game, they struck and nationalized the British Petroleum (BP) and renamed it African Petroleum (AP). These actions were taken to dissuade the British from recognizing the puppet regime in Rhodesia. In a critical effort to cushion the pains of endangered states in the continent, General Obasanjo, in December, 1976, launched the Southern African Relief Fund and the money realized was sent to Angola, Namibia and South Africa. The Lagos government reasoned the importance of regional integration given the success of OAU formed in 1963. This reasoning gave birth to the formation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on 28 May 1975 with the signing of the Treaty of Lagos. Nigeria pledged to make available huge financial commitments to the new organization and demonstrated this by regularly providing one-third of its total annual budget. Complementary occasional donations to meet pressing needs were also made by Nigeria. It is possible to attempt a more detailed compilation of Nigeria’s Afrocentric interventions over time in support of her avowed policy of African brotherliness.

It must be noted that all these interventions came with a manifest cost to Nigeria and in some cases elicited resistance from the citizens themselves who felt shortchanged by a government that was magnanimous abroad but emasculates her citizens at home. Over time, indeed decades after the commencement of the liberation struggle, the fortunes of Nigeria had fallen probably for a number of reasons. Many scholars have tried to analyze the situation that progressively provoked what appeared a collective hatred for Nigeria by states that hitherto benefitted from her large heart. The emergence in 1994 of South Africa as an independent state created two sub-regional powers in Africa that probably saw themselves as rivals and competitors. It was within the context of this setting that the “African giant” began to experience reduced recognition and lack of continental acceptance. And thus, from the status of an “African giant” to a “sleeping giant”, beneficiaries of Nigeria’s kindness in the region grew past the giant and gleefully watched the fading regional power ebb into insignificance.
Table 1. Select Nigeria’s conservative Afro-centric interventions across Africa

| S/N | Donor | Recipient(s) | Intervention details received | Period/date |
|-----|-------|--------------|-------------------------------|-------------|
| 1.  | Nigeria | Chad | Settled intra disputes between Goukouni Weddeye and Hissen Habre | 1986–1987   |
| 2.  | Nigeria | Chad | Convened the Kano I–II Peace Talks, Nigeria that thwarted the internationalization of the Chadian conflict with the involvement of France and Libya. | April 1979  |
| 3.  | Nigeria | Chad | Nigeria afterwards sent peacekeeping forces to Chad under the auspices of the OAU now AU | 1977–1982   |
| 4.  | Nigeria | Sierra Leone | Reinstated the legitimate regime of Kabbah to power | 1999        |
| 5.  | Nigeria | Sierra Leone | Nigeria donated the sum of 100,000 USD to set up the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as part of Nigeria’s efforts to stabilize Sierra Leone after the war. | 1999        |
| 6.  | Nigeria | African States | Nigeria advanced the proposal for setting peace, Security and African solidarity in the new millennium | 2000        |
| 7.  | Nigeria | African States | Nigeria advanced the proposal for the convening of a Ministerial Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA) | 2000        |
| 8.  | Nigeria | West Africa | Championed the setting up of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) | 1990        |
| 9.  | Nigeria | Sierra Leone & Liberia | Utilized ECOMOG and vast resources to end civil wars in both countries. | 1990        |
| 10  | Nigeria | Sao Tome and Principe | Restored Mr. Fradique Menezes to power after a military takeover | July, 2003  |
| 11  | Nigeria | Sao Tome and Principe | Donated the sum of 50,000 USD to encourage stability of government | August, 2003|
| 12  | Nigeria | Niger | Nigeria signed an agreement with Niger Republic for Nigeria to supply 30,000 kilowatts of electricity to Niger from Nigeria’s own hydroelectricity kanji Dam | 1972        |
| 13  | Nigeria | Niger | Nigeria donated to Niger relief materials worth millions of Naira when Niger was ravaged by a life claiming drought | 1974        |
| 14  | Nigeria | African states | Nigeria established Technical Aid Corps Scheme (TACS) to address manpower deficit across Africa | 1987        |
| 15  | Nigeria | African states | Nigeria advanced a proposal at the Algiers Summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1999, for peace, Security and African solidarity in the new millennium. | 2000        |
| 16  | Nigeria | African states | Nigeria made a proposal for the convening of a Ministerial Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA) and it was also unanimously adopted | 2000        |

(Continued)
| S/N | Donor | Recipient(s) | Intervention details received | Period/date |
|-----|-------|--------------|-------------------------------|-------------|
| 17  | Nigeria | Guinea Bissau, Cote D’Ivoire, Ethiopia/ Eritrea, DRC, Burundi, Mano River Area & Western Sahara | Nigeria military contingents also played vital roles in peacekeeping missions in countries | 1960-Date |
| 18  | Nigeria | Liberia | As part of negotiation to settle the Liberian crisis, Nigeria pressured the former president Charles Taylor to step down from power & was granted asylum. | August 2003 |
| 20  | Nigeria | Togo | Nigeria assisted in the constitutional process leading to the installation of democratically elected government in Togo after the death of President Gnassingbe Eyadema. | February, 2005 |
| 21  | Nigeria | Sudan | Nigeria hosted several peace and mediation talks between Sudanese government and Darfurian rebel factions/forces. | |

*Source:* Compiled by the author from various sources.
10. Afrocentrism, good neighborliness and reciprocity

From the foregoing, it is not in the argument that Nigeria made tremendous sacrifices to the liberation and wellbeing of Africa. However, several years down the line after the total liberation of Africa and Nigeria’s continuous show of love afterwards, Nigeria and her citizens have been regularly humiliated and held in complete disdain. In the spate of the 2019 xenophobic attacks in South Africa against foreigners, Nigerians were clearly targeted and murdered. In a clear outburst of lamentation, a concerned scholar wailed that

Unfortunately, our brothers and sisters in South Africa have not been grateful to Nigeria. When Mandela passed away in 2013, Nigeria’s president was not even given the opportunity to speak. At the same time, the representatives of the United States (U S) and the United Kingdom (U K) two countries supporting the apartheid regime were in the spotlight. 36

Several reasons account for periodic xenophobic eruptions in South Africa; the most reason being the influx of immigrants (legal and illegal) as advanced by natives themselves 17 The viciousness and bitterness associated with these attacks merely amplified the reality of government support for this manner of ingratitude. For instance, the pronouncements of leaders in government encourage the citizens to consider little the lives of non-citizens hence their regular xenophobic interruptions across the land. South African President, Jacob Zuma in his reaction over the 2015 attacks attests to the reality of government support. He said that

Our brother countries contribute to this. Why are their citizens not in their countries? It is not useful to criticize South Africa as if we mushroom these foreign nationals and then ill-treat them … Everybody criticizes South Africa as if we have manufactured the problem. Even if people who are xenophobic are a minority, but what prompts these refugees to be in South Africa? It is a matter we cannot shy away from discussing. 38

This statement must probably have instigated or incited South African natives to take up arms against foreigners. It may have also encouraged many that have never taken part before to be willing or express the same willingness in the killing of their African brothers. 39 The shoddy handling of the periodic and regular killings of Nigerians and other Africans in South Africa probably explain its recurrence. On the South African government, it could be said that it has distanced itself from the dictates and requirements of reciprocity principle that clearly “favors, benefits, or penalties that are granted by one state to the citizens or legal entities of another, should be returned in kind”. This never happened and the pains inflicted on brother-states seem ingrained in their psyche for life.

11. Nigeria’s external relations: the imperative for paradigm shift

Nigerian foreign policy has journeyed through phases since 1960 and it has remained the same without any deviation in spite of mounting internal socio-economic challenges. Indeed, not even criticisms and seeming threats and rivalries to her core values have deterred her from “multilateral and bilateral engagements for purposes of continental stability and development”. Of course, it must be stated that foreign policy decisions of states are not charity exercises but a carefully crafted initiative to boost and promote articulated objectives. Outside Africa, Nigeria’s policy was adored and many states wondered aloud what manner of state Nigeria intends to become with utter selflessness. They didn’t have to wait long. In the years of struggle against colonial scavengers in Africa, Nigeria showed her claws and jealously guided and guarded the fragile foundations and structures of African statehood.

But with recent developments across the continent; notably the xenophobic attacks in South Africa and violent attacks and persecutions in Ghana, one is tempted to ask if Nigeria and Nigerians can beat their chest and express happiness to all the pains emanating from our African brothers?
Despite Nigeria's continual leadership roles in terms of economic, human and military commitment to the continent, it is not accorded corresponding appreciation and recognition in the continent. Instead, most Africa states treat Nigeria with contempt and suspicion. ⁴⁰

Truth be told, Nigeria cannot remain fixated on this lane in pursuit of her foreign policy if national interests such as addressing economic recession, attracting foreign investment and combating domestic security problems are of any relevance. What is probably more feasible especially in this era and time of economic uncertainties is to strike a balance between afro-centrism and autochthonous challenges so evident in today's Nigeria. A consideration of a foreign policy review by Nigeria is largely imperative on account of four interlocking realities. First, the end of the cold war that pitched the West against the East, decolonization of the continent, the end of white minority rule in South Africa and the weak economic realities at home. For instance, manpower challenges in Nigerian universities and the health sector left unattended in favor of providing high caliber lecturers and medical personnel under Technical Aid Corps (TAC) to universities and medical institutions across African countries. The painful irony remains that this Afro-centric benevolence and magnanimity are never appreciated for it is in public domain that recipients of Nigerian assistance assemble in networks to plot and endanger Nigerian core interests and aspirations in many international platforms. Niger is one of the greatest beneficiaries of Nigeria's benevolence but it was the same Niger that not only voted but ganged up with other states against Nigeria's quest for a seat in United Nations Permanent Security Council in 2015. ⁴¹ Nigeria had her hegemonic status dampened and crushed with her conspiratorial exclusion from AU Ad-hoc Mediatory Committee on Libya and other numerous activities through the curious instrumentality of African countries that had drank from her cup filled with milk of kindness. Playing Christmas abroad and transforming to a spendthrift at home is the worst form of demonstrating brotherhood. All of this has challenged Nigeria's philosophy of Africa-centered policy. All indicators and variables that guided the compass of Nigeria's foreign policy are in ruins even as the barometer needed to weigh the options have returned inappropriate weighting figures for the country. Analytically, the factors that distorted the global system and Nigeria's national economy should necessarily impel and instigate a corresponding change in her foreign policy. A clearer and deeper understanding and appreciation of Nigeria's sundry engagements would reveal the essence of a policy review especially mirrored from current realities at home.

12. Conclusion: rethinking Nigeria's foreign policy

Nigeria's Afro-centric foreign policy track is well known since 1960. And without deviation, the country has remained steadfast without recourse to her personal core interests. Truth be told, it will be unsustainable for Nigeria to keep to this lane and this pace in the pursuit of her foreign relations if the country wishes to be a partaker in tackling national and international challenges of governance particularly insecurity and economic recession at home and at the global level. It may not be out of place to liken Nigeria's Africa policy as a "misadventure" as it had no direct positive impact on the lives of the citizens; rather in recent times, it has become a nightmare of gigantic proportions. The lack of reciprocity in terms of response of some African states to Nigeria's sacrifices counts as a disincentive to further sacrifices; and a little diplomatic indiscretion on the part of Nigeria in response to the killings, maiming and general maltreatment of Nigerians in Africa could cause a major conflict in the continent. So on account of the pains and travails associated with this policy of "providing without commensurate benefits", a number of commentators presently consider Afro-centrism a weak policy of disempowerment wherein the resources and capacities of a state are transferred to sundry territories to serve the interests of outsiders to the detriment of the home population. It is a policy that weakens the home front while strengthening the outside. This harsh perception of Afro-centrism is a sharp departure from the ideas and ideals contained and implemented at the beginning of Nigeria's entrance into global diplomacy. Nigeria's pro-African diplomacy designed diplomatic mechanisms to accommodate the needs and challenges of African states and has been so religiously maintained by all successive regimes/leaders with little or no alterations. Sixty years down the line and having considered all indices and parameters of evaluation, it is argued that a policy review is imperative to address areas hitherto abandoned in years of taking care of brotherly notions. This proposal and advocacy are in tandem with the realities of the time as practically all sectors of the Nigerian state lay in ruins and with the receding fortunes in the economy, the truth must be driven home that resources and misadventures inimical and without bearing to the bettering of the lives of the people must
be done away with. The country's energy should be channeled to such areas as security, infrastructure, attracting foreign direct investment (FDI), health, education including science and technology. More energy should be directed towards good governance, fighting corruption and other Afro-centric engagements based on rationalities to promote state power and search for regional hegemony. There is a core need to prioritize Afro-centric engagements in such a way to promote the economic well-being of the country. It is difficult in this era of checkbook diplomacy to conduct bilateral or multilateral negotiations without a necessary nexus to economic conditions that are mutual in benefit and relevance. In the absence of a free launch, beneficiaries of Nigeria's kind-heartedness should while enjoying such goodwill; be made to understand that there are rules that guide free meals including irrefutable pledges of reciprocity.

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