

RETHINKING NIGERIA'S AFROCENTRIC FOREIGN POLICY AND THE POLITICS OF THE TECHNICAL AID CORPS PROGRAMME

Jonah Onuoha & Ifeanyi Onuoha

Department Of Political Science, University Of Nigeria, Nsukka

Correspondence: ifeanyi.onuoha@unn.edu.ng

Abstract

Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy posture has given the country worldwide visibility and recognition as a putative regional hegemon with the right to speak and be listened to on African issues. To further drive the vision, Nigeria in 1987 established the Technical Aid Corps Scheme as a platform to provide technical support to the least developed countries in Africa, Caribbean and pacific (ACP) based on request. The scheme is designed around four main objectives namely: to share Nigeria's Know-how and expertise with other African, Caribbean and pacific countries; to give assistance on the basis of assessed and perceived needs of the recipient countries; to promote cooperation and understanding between Nigeria and recipient countries; and to facilitate meaningful contacts between the youths of Nigeria and those of the recipient countries. Even though the program has been implemented for about 35 years, very few scholars have shown interest in finding out the level of implementation of the program and its impact on the achievement of Nigeria's national interest. This study has been designed to bridge this gap in the literature. The central question we intend to interrogate in this study is: has the implementation of the Technical Aid Corps scheme enhanced the achievement of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives in Africa? In other words, what are the gains and pains of the Technical Aid scheme? The study was anchored on the manifest destiny theory of foreign policy and data was generated from secondary sources. The findings revealed that Nigeria has creditably used the Afrocentric foreign platform to fulfill her manifest destiny to lead and speak for Africa. We therefore argued that the call to scrap the policy is illogical, ill-conceived and myopic. In conclusion, for Nigeria to remain the "Giant of Africa", the continuity of the Afrocentric foreign policy is a desideratum.

Keywords: Technical Aid Corps; Foreign Policy; Afrocentric Foreign Policy; Manifest Destiny Theory; Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy is perhaps the first stanza in Nigeria's foreign policy objectives. This foreign policy has given the country worldwide visibility and recognition as a putative regional hegemon. Nigeria has implemented this foreign policy thrust through a variety of programs such as anti-colonial struggle, anti-apartheid policy, promotion of peace and security, promotion of African unity and cooperation and the implementation of the Technical Aid Corps (TAC) among others. While scholars and practitioners have seriously interrogated the other programs, the TAC scheme has received little or no adequate academic attention despite the huge investment by the Nigerian state. Apart from few scholars who merely nibbled on the issue when

it was established in 1987, not much is known about the level of implementation, the experience of the participants, the amount of resources invested and how the Nigerian state has leveraged on the program to implement her foreign policy in Africa. There is therefore an urgent need to do cost-benefit analysis, especially now that the country is almost ungovernable due to poverty and insecurity.

The central aim of this paper is to initiate discussion and debate on the program, ascertain the level of implementation, identify the challenges, ascertain the gains and pains of the program and chart the way forward. To achieve the aim of this study, the paper has been deliberately portioned into six sections with this brief introduction as section 1. Section 2 Conceptualizing Foreign Policy, section 3 interrogates the relationship between the Manifest destiny Theory of foreign policy and the implementation of the Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy. Section 4 evaluates the gains and pains of the Technical Aid Corps program as an integral part of Afrocentricism, section 5 discusses the gains and pains of the TAC scheme, while section 6 charts the way forward.

CONCEPTUALIZING FOREIGN POLICY

Before we proceed, it is important to understand the concept of foreign policy. In fact, the concept of foreign policy is perhaps one of the most misunderstood in the field of international relations. For instance, Frazier (2019) noted that a state's foreign policy consists of strategies it uses to protect its international and domestic interests and determine the way it interacts with other state and non-state actors. Thus to Frazier, foreign policy is a strategy. Garba (2020) offered a different definition. According to him, Foreign policy is an instrument a country uses to guide the conduct of her relationship with others in such a way as to achieve her desired objectives. To worsen the situation, Frankel (1978) defined foreign policy as "a range of actions, as well as principles influencing these actions, taken with reference to external situations and factor." From the analysis so far, there is no agreement among scholars on the actual meaning of foreign policy. This is because the concept is like a big elephant. People can only describe it based on the side of the monster they find themselves.

For us, it will be a futile attempt to define foreign policy without proper understanding of the concept of 'policy'. The central question is, what is policy? Is there any fundamental relationship between 'decision' and 'policy'? Some scholars have used the terms 'policy' and 'decision' interchangeably. This is wrong because there can never be policy without decision. Decision making is an integral part of most people's everyday life. Decision making starts with identification of problem, making a choice among the different options to solve the problem. It is only when that particular option is consistently and persistently applied over a period of time that it can be said to be a policy. For instance, if one has the need to travel to Lagos from Enugu, the problem will be how do I get there? There are several options open to the person to travel, including by air, Peace Mass Transit mini-buses, Ifesinachi Luxurious buses, trekking and using bicycle, among others. Once one is faced with the issue of choice, he is still within the sphere of decision making. Assuming the traveler finally decides to travel by air, and after that journey, it becomes his principle to consistently and persistently travel by air, then travelling by air becomes his policy.

For us, Policy is a consistent and persistent behavioral pattern. This is why we must rethink Thomas Dye's (1972) definition of public policy as "what government chooses to do or not to do". Thomas Dye was probably trying to define decision, rather than policy. Government decisions on an issue must have been consistently and persistently implemented for at least, three to five years before scholars can study it. This elaborate explanation is important because it will help us to distinguish policy statement from public policy. The true position is that action must have taken place over a reasonable period of time before scholars can use it to predict the behavior of the government in power. It is also not correct to define foreign policy as an instrument or strategy as alluded by scholars earlier reviewed. Every government in power is usually known by their effort to improve the quality of life of its citizens through a well laid plan in the areas of food production, housing, security, and education among others.

When the country goes beyond its borders in search of these goods and services, it is said to be involved in international relations. Just as individuals are known by their principles, countries are known in the international arena by their consistent and persistent behavioral pattern as encapsulated in their foreign policy. Students of international relations are aware that if any country attacks Israel today, Israel must retaliate within 24 hours. It is also well known in Foreign policy circle that the United States does not negotiate with terrorists. America can spend one billion dollars to rescue a citizen rather than pay one dollar as ransom. More importantly, Africa has remained the Centre piece of Nigeria's foreign policy despite the constant changes of governments since 1960. From the examples given so far, it is clear that other actors in the international arena must be able to predict the behavior of an actor in the system. For us, foreign policy are those specific actions that the state has consistently and persistently implemented to promote the security and welfare of its citizens at the global stage. The rest of this study will be devoted to show that Africa has remained the Centre piece of Nigeria's foreign policy in the past 62years.

MANIFEST DESTINY THEORY AND THE POLITICS OF NIGERIA'S AFROCENTRIC FOREIGN POLICY

The concept of manifest Destiny was coined by John Sullivan in 1845 to describe the belief that the United States has been destined by God to expand its dominion and spread Democracy and Capitalism across the entire North American continent. The term emphasized the right of the United States of America to overspread and possess the whole of the continent which providence had given to it for the development and liberty of all. The concept which first appeared in the August 1845 edition of the Democratic Review promoted the idea of the United States territorial expansion over the first half of the 19th century. This ideology of territorial expansionism included the belief in the inherent superiority of the white Americans as well as the conviction that they were destined by God to conquer the territory of North America from sea to shining sea.

This philosophy drove the 19th century United States territorial expansion and was used to justify the forced removal of Native Americans and other groups from their homes. In 1823, President James Monroe invoked Manifest Destiny when he spoke before the Congress to warn European nations not to interfere with the American west ward expansion, threatening that any attempt by

Europeans to colonize the American sphere of influence would be seen as an act of war. This policy of American sphere of influence and non-intervention in European affairs became known as the 'Monroe Doctrine.' Essentially, the term manifest Destiny literally connotes the divine right of a state to either expand its frontiers or lead other states based on its natural endowment. Intrinsicly, the doctrine was not aggressive in nature, but passive. It was believed that based on its natural endowment and exemplary way of live, other nations would naturally want to be like the United States.

Like the United States, the philosophy that has silently guided the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy since 1960 is the Manifest Destiny theory. Like the Americans, Nigerian leaders subscribe to the theory due to the advantages Nigeria has such as large population, rich cultural and historical diversity, abundant natural resources, oil wealth and strong military. The leaders presumed that it was the Manifest Destiny for Nigeria to take the lead and assume the credible voice of the continent. As Bach (2007) noted, ever since the sixties, the messianic reference to a Nigerian leadership in conducting the affairs of the African continent have been engrained in the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy and external relations. According to him, with this philosophy, successive administrations have built a diplomatic case for Nigeria to fulfill its own Manifest destiny and become the champion of Africa. There is an assumption that God has bequeathed on Nigeria the right to lead Africa. This explains the reason why Africa became the Centre piece of Nigeria's foreign policy. Among the five principles of Nigeria's foreign policy enunciated by Abubakar Tafawa Belawa, none has attracted academic and diplomatic attention like the Afrocentric Nigeria's foreign policy. As Ajebili (2011) noted, scholars have generally agreed that the basic principles of Nigeria's foreign policy arising from the speeches of Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Belawa are as follows;

1. The principle of Non Alignment
2. Legal equality of states
3. Non-interference in the Domestic Affairs of other states
4. The principle of Multilateralism
5. Africa as the cornerstone of Nigeria's foreign policy

Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy was largely derived from her belief in the ideology of Pan-Africanism. It is an ideology that encouraged Africans to buy into the pursuit of unity and solidarity of black people on a global scale. According to Garba (2022), the key assumption of the Afrocentric policy thrust is that Africa and issues affecting the continent at large shall occupy the very central position of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives, rather than its domestic interest being the priority. The origin of Africa as the Centerpiece of Nigeria's foreign policy could be traced to the early period of Nigeria's independence in 1960. In fact, the philosophy could be credited to the first and only prime minister and Head of Government from october1960 to January, 1966.

In his acceptance speech on the occasion of membership of Nigeria in the United Nations in New York on October 8, 1960, he noted as follows:

So far, I have concentrated on the problems of Africa. Please do not think 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 with what affects our immediate neighborhood.

The historical trajectory of Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy is rooted in the philosophies of brotherhood ideology and African socialism. As Ola, (2019) noted, it is an appreciation of the enormous challenge which destiny inadvertently placed on the shoulders of Nigeria at independence. According to him, making Africa the Centerpiece of Nigeria's foreign 'policy connotes that the country would perform acts of benevolence, kindness and sacrifices geared towards the good of Africa. The first indication that God naturally ordained Nigeria to lead Africa emerged on October 7th 1960 when Sir Balewa addressed the United Nations General Assembly as follows:

We in Nigeria appreciate the advantages which the size of our country and its population give us, but we have absolutely no aggressive intentions. We shall never impose ourselves on any other country and shall treat every African territory, big or small, as our equal because we honestly believe that it is on basis of equality that peace can be maintained in the continent (Idang, 1973).

Balewa's address clearly indicates Nigeria's desire to pursue territorial or expansionist ambitions in Africa with no aggressive intention. Even though he assured the world that Nigeria would treat every African territory, big or small as equal, he did not hide his intention to lead the continent by telling them the advantage Nigeria has over other countries in Africa. The real motive to dominate Africa was unveiled when Jaja Wachukwu, the then minister of external affairs noted at the 16th Session of the 1031 plenary Session of the United Nations General Assembly in October, 1961 as follows;

'Nigeria is an African nation, it is part and parcel of that continent of Africa and therefore, It is so completely involved in anything that pertains to that continent that it cannot be neutral..... We are independent in everything, but neutral in nothing that affects the destiny of Africa' (Ogele and okutalukwe, 2020).

Wachukwu reminded the world about Nigeria's Manifest Destiny to lead Africa when he noted that "Our country is the largest single unit in Africa. We are not going to abdicate the position in which the God Almighty has placed us." Nigeria believes in brotherhood ideology. As a big brother, the country has committed enormous resources to implement her Afrocentric foreign policy. Nigeria's pro-African diplomacy designed diplomatic mechanisms to accommodate the needs and challenges of African states and has been religiously implemented by all Nigerian successive regimes and leaders with little or no alterations. We shall use three programs to show

the commitment of the Nigerian state to her Afrocentric foreign policy, namely anti-colonial struggle, formation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the ECOMOG intervention in conflicts in Africa.

Anti-Colonial Struggles

Going beyond rhetoric, there have been practical demonstrations of Nigeria's commitments to the course of Africa. Buoyed by its clearly conceived and unambiguous agenda to speak and be heard in Africa, Nigeria saw colonialism and institutionalized racism ravaging the continent as Ready-made Avenue to justify her ambitions of continental leadership. Nigeria's support of anti-clonal struggle was linked to wider pan-Africanist struggles for independence and the fight against colonialism and racism. As Ukaogo (2022) noted, with an unclear agenda at the United Nations, commonwealth and other international organizations, Nigeria's admission into the United Nations added a prominent and forceful voice to the existing murmurs against colonialism. This was eminently captured by Sir Abubakar Tafawa. Belawa, Nigeria's first prime minister stated 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).

Nigeria played a proactive role in the fight against domination by supporting several countries that had not yet attained self-determination, and contributed logistics to the liberation movements that led to the independence of some African countries such as Zimbabwe, Namibia, Mozambique and South Africa, among others. It was on the basis of Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy that former president, Alhaji Shehu Shagari stated that Nigeria's independence was incomplete without the total liberation of Africa.

Nigeria and Formation of ECOWAS

It was Biafra's secessionist attempt (1967-1966) that initially motivated Nigeria to launch regional initiatives designed to counter French and Ivorian support of the Biafrans, circumvent international sanctions on arms deliveries and counter the effects of international mobilization in favor of Biafra independence. Consequently, as soon as the war was over, Nigeria launched diplomatic initiatives that led to the establishment of the 15 member ECOWAS.

Nigeria and ECOMOG

Many are of the view 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 Africa. As a regional hegemon, Nigeria owes a measure of responsibility to her neighbors.

The ECOMOG intervention in conflicts in West-Africa provided a testing ground for Nigeria's leadership. The initial decision of ECOMOG to intervene in Liberia (1990-1997) occurred in a post-cold war world where the United States unwillingness to intervene and restore order in Monrovia created what Nigeria and other west African leaders saw as a window of opportunity for experimenting Pax Africana on ad hoc basis. At the instigation of the then Nigerian president, General Ibrahim Babangida, (1985-1993), ECOWAS Head of states resolved in May 1990 to form

a Standing Mediation Committee (SMC). Babangida's influence played a key role in August 1990 as the SMC agreed to form an ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) for the purpose of ordering a cease-fire in Liberia, establishing an interim government and holding general election within a year. As Bach (2007) noted, Nigeria provided almost all the force commanders of the ECOMOG, provided the bulk of the troops (75% of the 11000 ECOMOG troops by 1993), and funded an estimated 90% of the cost of the operations.

Apart from anti-colonial struggles against apartheid policy, promotion of African unity, and promotion of Economic Cooperation and Development, Nigeria also championed the provision of technical experts and high level manpower to Less Developed African states. The next section of this study will analyze how Nigeria's Technical Aid Corps program was implemented.

NIGERIA'S AFROCENTRIC FOREIGN POLICY AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TECHNICAL AID CORPS PROGRAMME

Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy posture has given the country worldwide visibility and recognition as a putative regional hegemon with the right to speak and be listened to on African issues. To further drive the vision, Nigeria in 1987 established the Technical Aid Corps Scheme as a platform to provide technical support to the least developed countries in Africa, Caribbean and pacific (ACP) based on request. The scheme is designed around four main objectives, namely to share Nigeria's Know – how and expertise with other African, Caribbean and pacific countries, to give assistance on the basis of assessed and perceived needs of the recipient countries, to promote cooperation and understanding between Nigeria and recipient countries, and to facilitate meaningful contacts between the youths of Nigeria and those of the recipient countries. Even though the program has been implemented for about 35 years, very few scholars have shown interest in finding out the level of implementation of the program and its impact on the achievement of Nigeria's national interest. This study has been designed to bridge this gap in the literature. The central question we intend to interrogate in this study is, has the implementation of the Technical Aid scheme enhanced the achievement of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives in Africa? In other words, what are the gains and pains of the Technical Aid scheme?

Let us start the inquiry by interrogating the historical trajectory and *raison d'être* of the scheme. Given her vast human and natural resources, particularly in the context of Africa, Nigeria has always been called upon to offer assistance to less endowed countries in Africa and beyond. Since 1960, these constant requests for assistance from Nigeria were mainly in financial terms. However, this was to change when Prof Bolaji Akinyemi was appointed minister of foreign affairs during President Ibrahim Babangida's regime.

The TAC is a replica of the United States peace corps initiative which was established under president John F Kennedy to achieve three specific objectives namely: 1. to help people of interested countries and areas in meeting their needs for trained workers, 2. to promote a better understanding of Americans among the people served; and 3. to promote better understanding of

other peoples among Americans (Coleman, 1980; Wale, 2011) Explaining the reason for establishing the scheme, prof Akinyemi noted as follows:

I admired the peace corps, what entailed the vision of it and how it turned the ‘ugly American’ in to the friendly American... so I thought that just as the peace corps helped in putting human face on the United states, the Technical Aid Volunteer program may also help to counteract the image of Nigeria abroad.... (Akinyemi, interview, Lagos, 27th July, 2006, cited by Wale, 2011)

In the mid-1980s and beyond, despite Nigeria’s economic crisis, demand for assistance from Nigeria kept coming from Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. Akinyemi advised the military government that, rather than provide these countries with cash, which encouraged the assisted countries to employ professionals and experts from Europe or Asia, it was better to use the money to pay Nigerian technical personnel to travel to those countries to work. The Babangida’s regime bought the idea and the Technical Aid Corps Scheme was established in 1987. At its conception, the scheme identified the use of Nigeria’s abundant pool of well-trained human resources as a foreign policy instrument and recognized its enormous potentials in enhancing cooperation, understanding and development among countries and peoples with common background and shared aspirations. Confirming the vision of the scheme, the former Director-General of the Technical Aid Corps, Ambassador Maman M. Daura observed as follows:

Prior to 1987 when TAC was established, technical assistance to most countries that Nigeria now assists through TAC was cash-based. Nigeria thought that all that these countries needed was money to attend to their needs. The era of cash assistance is no more. Nigeria realized that the modern approach to assistance is people oriented programs that will impact on the people of the recipient countries. So this informed the decision in 1987 to start the TAC (Daura, interview; Abuja, 27th April 2005)

As the TAC document explains, the scheme was seen as a more durable and visible form of aid as opposed to outright cash-donation which was not only wasteful, but left no remarkable landmark beyond the easily forgettable impact of the moment. In fact, Nigeria gave huge grants to many ACP countries which were eventually pocketed by the leaders. As an international voluntary service through which experienced Nigerian professionals volunteer to serve in developing countries for a renewable two-year period, the assistance offered is covered by a TAC country agreement between Nigeria and each of the recipient country. It is clearly stated in the agreement that the Federal Government of Nigeria is responsible for paying the tax-free on-shore and off-shore allowances, while the host countries grant the volunteers exemption from local income tax. The host country is also expected to provide accommodation and other facilities, including free medical services and transportation.

Level of Implementation the TAC Scheme

Despite the implementation of the Technical Aid corps scheme for about 33years (1987- 2022), not much is known about the level of implementation of the scheme. In fact, the process has been shrouded in secrecy, particularly the amount of money so far spent, the number volunteers, number of participating states and the pains and gains of the program.

As earlier explained, the Technical Aid Corps was established to accomplish four main objectives namely: 1. sharing Nigeria's know-how and expertise with other African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, 2. Giving assistance on the basis of assessed and perceived needs of the recipient countries, 3. Promoting cooperation and understanding between Nigeria and beneficiary countries and 4 facilitating meaningful contacts between the youths of Nigeria and those of the recipient countries (TAC, 2018). From the initial 12 countries at the inception of the program in 1987-1988, the number of countries receiving volunteers from Nigeria has increased tremendously. In fact, Koutonin, (2015) observed that over 35 African and non-African countries have demanded for the services of the TAC worldwide. Many African countries such as Namibia, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Gambia, among others, have benefited from the scheme.

The TAC has helped to provide technical know-how to developing countries lacking critical and very important skills such as medicine, engineering, and law among others. As noted earlier, these professionals serve for two years and their salaries are paid directly by the Nigerian state which lessens the burden on the recipient nation. As an international volunteer service, through which experienced Nigerian professionals volunteer to serve in developing countries for a renewable period of two year period, the assistance offered is covered by a TAC country agreement between Nigeria and each of the recipient country. This is outlined in the obligations and responsibilities of each party. The Nigerian government pays the volunteer a \$700 monthly allowance and 10,000 Naira "off-shore" (paid into their local account during the two year postings), while the host country grants volunteers exemption from local income tax. The host country also provides accommodation and other facilities, including free medical services and transportation. According to Dalapo (2020), over 8000 TAC volunteers have been dispatched outside Nigeria between 1987 and 2020. The Federal government also allocated a whopping sum of 26 billion Naira from 2009 to 2018 (Ogbonna etal, (2018).

The TAC was designed to promote Nigeria's image and status as a major contributor to the developing countries and especially African development. Gambia appears to be one of the most beneficiary of the scheme. Gambia is one of the poorest countries in Africa. The country turned to Nigeria for skilled and experienced hands, given the country's incredible shortage of manpower and resources. Nigeria has for instance helped Gambia to staff its national university which was opened in 1999; started a national youth service program similar to Nigeria's NYSC; and provided judges to serve as Gambia's Chief Justices.

THE GAINS AND PAINS OF THE TAC SCHEME

Has Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy, including the Technical Aid corps scheme achieved the stated aims and objectives? The question is being raised by the Nigerian government, the Ministry

of foreign Affairs, intellectuals and foreign policy experts. There is no agreement among these group of stakeholders on whether the foreign policy objective has fulfilled its mission and whether it should be scrapped, continued or re-focused. On the positive side through the Technical Aid Corps, Nigeria's image has greatly improved. The TAC is fundamental because even though some countries may fear, misunderstand and oppose Nigeria, but they still admire certain Nigerian leadership qualities such as Brotherhood Ideology, humanitarian service and export of well-trained professionals and experts to needy countries on request. As Ogbonna and Ogunnubi (2018) noted, Nigerian government can tap into the TAC scheme to increase its likeability and appeal around Africa, Caribbean and Pacific countries. According to them, Nigeria can use TAC to persuade other countries to do its bidding without coercion. Bello (2000) is of the view that it is expected that recipient countries to a very large extent respect Nigeria's stated interests in the international arena. According to him, Nigeria stands to accrue a lot of diplomatic goodwill from the concerted implementation of the TAC scheme in Africa and beyond. Dolapo Aina in his recent study of the TAC titled "TAC: Nigeria's Soft Diplomacy since 1987" summarized the implementation of the TAC and Its Impact as follows:

The implementation of the scheme has endeared Nigeria to many countries as a facilitator of effective cooperation in socio-economic development among ACP countries. The Federal Government of Nigeria recognizes the program as a foreign policy tool for the consolidation of Nigeria's role in the independence struggle of some African countries. .. No nation has helped African countries more than Nigeria, the only country that has for the past thirty years sent thousands of volunteers called TAC to almost all countries to aid their development. (Dalapo, 2020).

Assessing themselves, the Directorate of the Technical Aid Corps noted as follows:

The directorate believes the scheme "demonstrated its utility value in consolidating Nigeria's relations with beneficiary states and created same with countries where she has no resident diplomatic presence... The scheme has unquestionably brought a palpable focus to the conduct of our foreign policy, which has consequently gained the country considerable prestige and good image as a promoter of peace and development in the African, Caribbean and pacific states and beyond (Technical Aid Corps, 2004).

Also, Florence Mohammed, former Head of TAC Directorate of information Department noted that "the scheme accords responsibility to Nigeria. According to her, it is an enviable program and assures cordiality and recognition to the country (Adebanwi, 2006). Sam Nujoma, ex-president of Namibia share the same view about the Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy. According to him, "Nigeria is a pillar of Africa's freedom... and dependable friend. Nigeria has continued to grant development assistance and personnel to support my government's socio-economic program, including the TAC agreement under which Nigerian experts work in Namibia (Adebawi, 2006).

Despite the encomiums from notable African leaders, there is a school of thought that believes that the pursuance of the Afrocentric foreign policy framework has not brought any significant

economic benefits for Nigeria (Agwu, 2013, Ubi and Akinkuolu, 2014; Eneku and Ojukwu, 2016) According to Eneku and Ojukwu, Nigeria for many years pursued, without gains the good and well-being of other African nations at the expense of its own citizens. These scholars have argued that based on current reality, continuing with the Afrocentric foreign policy is no longer realistic. This is because Nigeria can no longer pretend to be comfortable in shouldering the burden of Africa, when the domestic, African and international conditions which necessitated the adoption of the policy at independence have changed. Other scholars have argued that Afrocentrism has become anachronistic, moribund and mundane. Some scholars like Sinclair (1983) accused some African countries of ingratitude and lack of reciprocity, particularly during the Nigerian civil war when countries like Tanzania, Zambia, Gabon and Ivory Coast supported the rebel group (Biafra) instead of the Federal government of Nigeria. Even South Africa that Nigeria rescued from the pangs of apartheid policy and minority rule did not invite Nigeria at the occasion of her independence. Today, Nigerians are the worst victims of xenophobic violence in that country.

In a recent paper titled “Rethinking the Role of Nigeria’s Technical Aid Corps as a soft power”, Ogbonna et al investigated the linkage between Nigeria’s huge expenditure on Technical Aid Corps scheme (TAC) in Africa and election of Nigerian candidates in African Union positions. The result showed that there are no serious linkage between the soft-power potentials of Nigeria’s TAC and the country’s quest for elective positions in the African Union. Specifically, the study revealed that neither Nigeria nor its supported candidates won any elective position in African Union elections held in 2017. After due reflection, they concluded that “Nigeria has spent over 26 billion Naira between 2009-2018, yet no evidence demonstrates that these huge investment has yielded any specific benefits in the advancement of Nigeria’s position or interest in Africa. In fact evidence abound of gang-ups against Nigeria by African countries in regional organizations in Africa despite Nigeria’s benevolence. Allegation is rife that the program has not in any way succeeded in enhancing Nigeria’s strategic interest or position in Africa. This explains why Koutonin (2015) noted that Nigeria’s embarrassing failure during the election demonstrates the fact that the scheme is a sheer waste of Nigeria’s resources, because apart from mere commendations, it has not helped the country to advance its interests in world politics. On the basis of the above, some stakeholders have suggested that the TAC scheme should be scrapped because it is a drainpipe with little or no foreign policy dividend to reap from.

NIGERIA’S AFROCENTRIC FOREIGN POLICY: CONTINUITY OR CHANGE?

There is no doubt that Nigeria has fulfilled her manifest destiny to lead Africa through the Afrocentric foreign policy framework. Thus the idea that the policy should be scrapped due to lack of perceived economic gains or reciprocity from the beneficiaries is illogical, ill-conceived and myopic. For avoidance of doubts, when Nigeria initiated the policy in 1960, the aim was not to seek economic gains or to implement the policy on the basis of trade by batter. It was purely selfless service which was motivated by brotherhood ideology. The aim was to seek political relevance as a regional hegemon. The policy was not designed to be exchanged on quid-pro-quo basis. The objective for the benevolence was purely political and we think that the aim has been

achieved. Through this platform, Nigeria today determines who gets what, how and why in Africa, Caribbean and pacific countries in terms of well-trained manpower and experts. In conflict resolution, Nigeria is a highly respected voice and it is inconceivable for the big powers to intervene in African conflicts without consulting Nigeria first. Whether we accept it or not, Nigeria today has acquired the status of “Goliath” in African issues. That image is bigger than any economic gains. Nigeria is not the only hegemon implementing her foreign aid program globally. The United Kingdom has for several decades implemented her foreign aid program through the DFID- Department for International Development. The United States has also been using their own platform –USAID- US Agency for International Development to help developing countries. Nigeria has been receiving economic assistance from the duo without necessarily dancing to their tunes. The hallmark of a hegemon is giving for good reason, bad reason, or no reason at all. For Nigeria to remain the “Giant of Africa,” the continuity of the Afrocentric foreign policy platform is a desideratum.

References

- Adebanwi, W. (2011). *Globally oriented citizenship and international voluntary service interrogating Nigeria’s technical aid corps scheme*. Discussion Paper 71, Nordiska, Afrikainstitute, Uppsala
- Adebanwi, W. (2011). *Globally oriented citizenship and international volunteer service*. Nordiska, Afrikainstitute.
- Adebanwi, W (2005). Government-led service: the example of the Nigerian Technical Aid Corps. *Voluntary Action: the journal of the Institute for Volunteering Research*, 7(2).
- Ajaebili, C. N. and Oyewole, A. N. (2011). The option of economic diplomacy in Nigeria’s foreign policy. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(17).
- Agwu, F. A. (2013). *Themes and perspectives on Africa’s international relations*. Ibadan: University Press.
- Akintola, B. (2007). Nigeria and the world: A review of Nigeria’s foreign policy (1960-2007). *The Nigeria Army Quarterly Journal*, 3(4).
- Akinyemi, A. B. (1982). The emergence of Nigeria as a regional power in international relations. *Studia Diplomatica*, 35(3).
- Alli, W. O. (2012). *Nigeria in regional security policy*. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.
- Alkali, R. A. (1996). *Issues in international relations and Nigeria’s foreign policy*. Zaria: Bob Academic Press Inc.
- Amao and Okeke-Uzodike (2015). Nigeria, Afrocentrism, and conflict resolution: After five decades-How Far, How well? *African Studies Quarterly*, 15(4).

- Cambridge Dictionary online. *Centrepiece*. Retrieved April 17, 2019, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/centrepiece>.
- Coleman T. D. (1980). *Peace Corps volunteers in the developing world: A quantitative study*. Unpublished Master's thesis, American University, Washington, D.C.
- Garba, D. (2022). Sixty years of Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy: achievements, challenges and way forward. *International Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(2).
- Directorate of Technical Aid Corps (2018). *Nigerian Technical Aid Corps Act*.
- Dye, T. (1972). *Understanding public policy*. United States: Prentice-Hall
- Enuka, C. and Ojukwu, E. C. (2016). Challenges of Nigeria Foreign Policy. *International Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 5(2).
- Ezirim, G. E. (2010). Fifty Years of Nigeria's foreign policy: Critical review. *African Political Science Review*, 10.
- Folarin, S. (2020). *Nigeria was once an indisputable leader in Africa: What happened? The Conversation*. Retrieved December 28, 2020, from <https://theconversation.com/nigeria-was-once-anindisputable-leader-in-africa-what-happened-139154>.
- Fowole, W. A. (2003). *Nigeria external relations and foreign policy under military rule, 1996-1999*. Ile-Ife: OAU Press.
- Frankel, J. (1978). *International Relations* (2nd Ed.). London: Oxford University Press.
- Frankel, J. (1963). *The making of foreign policy: an analysis of decision making*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Frankel, J. (1978). *International Relations* (2nd Ed.). London: Oxford University Press
- Gambari, I. (1980). *Party politics and foreign policy: Nigeria under the First Republic*. Zaria: ABU Press.
- Garba, D. and Shaapera, S. A. (2018). The Challenges of democratic development in Nigeria, 1999- 20148. *FUDMA Journal of Politics and International Affairs*, 1(1).
- Garba, D. (2018). Boko Haram: Transnational insurgency and regional security. *FUDMA Journal of Politics and International Affairs*, 1(1).
- Idang, G. I. (1973). *Internal politics and foreign policy*. Ibadan: OUP.
- Kamil, M. (1996). *Africa has come of age: The ideological legacy of General Murtala Ramat Muhammed*. Manuscripts Noetic Associates.
- Keohane, R. (1986). *Neorealism and its critics*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- Koutonin, M. R (2015). Thousands TAC Nigeria Volunteers Saving Lives in Africa. Retrieved from <https://www.naija.ng/416767-thousands-tac-nigeria-volunteers-saving-lives-africa.html#416767>
- Lawal, E. E. and Aluko, O. I. (2016). Nigeria's foreign policy: A fourth republic diplomatic escapade. *Journal of Siberian Federal University, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(9).
- Mandela, N. (1994). *Long walk to freedom volume 1: 1918-1962*. Little, Brown and Company.
- Meredith, M. (2010). *Mandela; A biography*. New York; Public Affairs.
- Ogele, E. P. and Okutalukwe C. T. (2020). The changing nature of Nigeria's foreign policy: Whose interest? *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Sciences*, 4(7).
- Ola, T. P. (2017). Nigeria's assistance to African States: What are the benefits? *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, 6(2).
- Olusanya, G. O. and Adeleke, R. A. (1986). *Nigeria's external relations: The first twenty five years*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.
- Olusanya, G. O. and Adeleke, R. A. (1990). *The structure and processes of foreign policy making and implementation in Nigeria 1960-1990*. Lagos: Nigerian Institute of International affairs.
- Osaherumwen, I. S. and Motunrayo, A. K. (2007). An analysis of the Nigerian Foreign policy: A Narrative. *Worldwide Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, 3(10).
- Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations (2015). *Maiden General Assembly Statement by Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria at the 15th Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, NY., 7th October 1960*. Retrieved September 5, 2020, from <https://nigeriaunmission.org/maiden-speech-at-the-un/>.
- Pham, P. J. (2007). *Nigeria's foreign policy: An enquiry into sources and prospects*. Working Paper 35, Instituto Portugues De Relacoes Internacionais. Universidade Nova De Lisboa. Retrieved April 17, 2019, from http://www.ipri.pt/images/publicacoes/working_paper/pdf/WP_35_JPP.pdf.
- Rosenau, I. N. (1969). *International politics and foreign policy*. New York: Free Press.
- Sinclair, M. (1983). *An analysis of Nigerian Foreign Policy: The evolution of political paranoia*. Occasional Paper. Jan Smuts House: The South African Institute of International Affairs.
- Smith, D.J. (2010). *Young Mandela*. London; Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- The News (March 1, 2020). *Africa has come of age- Murtala Muhammed*. Retrieved December 28, 2020, from <https://www.thenewsigeria.com.ng/2020/03/01/africa-has-come-of-age-murtalamuhammed/>.

- Technical Aid Corps Directorate (2004). *The Nigerian Technical Aid Scheme, Abuja*. Directorate of TAC
- Thisday (2002). *Namibia: Nigeria, Pillar of Africa's Freedom, Says Nujoma*. Retrieved July 22, 2022, from <https://allafrica.com/stories/200205080859.html>
- Ubi E. N. and Akinkuolu, O. A. (2014). Nigeria's foreign policy and economic diplomacy, 1999-2013. *International Area Studies Review*, 17(4).
- Ukaogo, V. O., Okonkwo, U. U., Orabueze, F. O., Eze, V. O., & Ugwu-Okoye, S. (2020). Afrocentrism as the centerpiece of Nigeria's foreign policy: A historical misnomer in the aftermath of xenophobic attacks in South Africa. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 7(1).
- Waltz, K.A. (1979). *Theory of international politics*. Reading, M.A.: Addison-Wesley.
- Weber, C. (2004). *International relations theory. A critical Introduction*. 2nd Edition. London: Tailor and Francis.