



# Nigeria's assistance to African states: What are the benefits?

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## Abstract

Since Nigeria made Africa the centerpiece of its foreign policy it has played the role of a regional leader. There is a general feeling that the Nigerian treasury is an inexhaustible source of funds for the development of Africa. A central question on Nigeria's foreign policy has been the level of assistance it should offer its neighbours. On the premise that charity begins at home, there have been widespread demands to resolve internal problems within Nigeria before helping neighbours, since there is nothing substantial to show for the numerous assistance to the neighbours. Nigeria should review its foreign policy trusts to garner socioeconomic benefits for the nation since foreign policies are meant to drive the economy of a nation and not strain it.

**Keywords:** Foreign Policy, Development, Economic Assistance

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## **1. Introduction**

To explore the role which Nigeria has played in Africa demands that we take a cursory look at Nigeria's concept of African diplomacy, and the conception of its place in the region. Such an undertaking would immensely help our elucidation of the innumerable assistance which Nigeria has consistently rendered to African states. This is not unconnected with the country's position vis-à-vis other African states. The ideals which determine Nigeria's assistance to African states are based on these functional differences between Nigeria and other states African. In this wise, Nigeria's population is bigger than all West African neighbours combined. The economic and financial position of Nigeria is more preponderant than those of its neighbours. Its military superiority obviously places it at a superior level vis-à-vis any of her neighbouring armies in terms of military hardware, number of soldiers in uniform.

While the population of Nigeria is about 154 million, Niger is 15 million, Chad is 11 million, Republic of Benin 9 million, Cameroon 19 million, and Senegal is 12.5 million, making a total of 93.5 million for the 7 countries (World Fact Book, 2010). Nigeria is more naturally resource endowed than any African states. Nigeria has a more formidable military strength in terms of number of men and military hardware than any African states army. Nigeria's market for goods and services is bigger than all the markets of the remaining 15 West African states put together. With this huge population, its oil and military powers Nigeria is in theory as strong as the other 15 West African states put together. This means that Nigeria is seriously envy in the continent.

In recognition of Nigeria's uniqueness, within a month of its independence, a Nigerian, Hon. Jaja Wachukwu, was made to chair the United Nations Congo Conciliation Commission. This was, according to Cowan (1962), an indication that Nigeria was 'expected to play a decisive role in African politics—a role which the world seems to have taken for granted because of Nigeria's size and population.'

Scholars assert that Nigeria contains more historic cultures and empires than any other nation in Africa (Bach, 1980). In terms of linguistic diversity, Nigeria has more languages than any other African country. Ethnologies estimate that Nigeria has approximately 470 languages. In the constitution, Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba were established as 'national languages'. Significantly, English was cited as an official language, but not as a national language. With a population of over 154 million, Nigeria is a country with many disparities. With that, there is no shortage of potential flashpoints, given the many clearages, economic disparities, and dynamic alliances for controlling resources rendering the country one of the most complex and difficult countries in the world to govern.

They also posit that the Nigerian society has all the potentials of greatness, namely enormous natural and human resources, a virile and enterprising population, and a reservoir of skilled and trained manpower. They opine that by virtue of population size, ethnic diversity, resource endowment, the 'can do' spirit of its people, the relatively sizeable intellectual capital and the proven positive role that it has played and is playing in critical pan-African initiatives such as conflict resolution and peace building, Nigeria has the potential to occupy a leading position on the continent and in the world.

The economic benefits that are derivable from the status of Nigeria vis-à-vis its neighbours, have made a few of them defer to it on a number of issues. For instance, despite its defence pact with France, the Beninois government under Presidents Kerekou, Soglo and BoniYayi over the years have de-emphasised the import of the defence pact, mainly in deference to sensitivities in Nigeria. The late President of Niger, AhmaduDiori and the late President of Burkina Faso, President SangouleLamizama, consistently condemned all of the Francophone meetings of Conseil de L'Entent, the support given by France and the President of Cote d'Ivoire, the late President HoughonetBiogny, to the *Biafran* during the Nigerian Civil War (Metz, 1991). Justifying his position AhmaduDiori said, that given how extensive Niger depends on Nigeria for her economic survival, he could not support Biafra, because according to him, '*quand le Nigeria etermue, le Niger fact plus qu'attraper la grippe, il se trouvedeja a l'hopital*'. That is, when Nigeria sneezes, Niger not only catches cold, it is already on admission in the hospital.

It is this kind of rhetoric that made Nigeria to regard Africa as her traditional sphere of influence where it attracts keen interests. For instance, Nigeria feels that in a sub-region of 16 countries where one out of every two persons is a Nigerian, it should relentlessly strive towards the prevention or avoidance of the deterioration of any situation which might jeopardise or compromise the stability, prosperity and security of the sub-region. Nigeria's position in Africa entails certain specific historic roles and responsibilities. And that it is Nigeria's duty to forestall any evidence or indication of Africa in disarray and in despair, purposeless and without direction.

## 2. Africa as the centrepiece of Nigeria's foreign policy

Foreign policy is the range of actions of government of a state in its relation with other bodies similarly acting on the stage supposedly in order to advance the nation's interest. Evaluating this definition, it could be deduced that the foreign policy of a state involves not only interactions with other states but also relations with international non-state bodies, both government organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Rosenau (1974) sees foreign policy as 'the authoritative actions which governments take or are committed to take, in order to preserve the desirable aspects of the international environment or alter its undesirable aspects.' Kolawole (1997) also lends his voice when he insists that 'a nation's foreign policy orientation is informed by what is considered to be its national interest.

Generally, the most potent instrument of gauging a nation's foreign policy is its stated foreign policy objectives. Section 19 of the 1979 Nigerian constitution, saliently articulates its objectives as the defence of the country's sovereignty; independence and territorial integrity; restoration of human dignity to Blackman all over the world; the creation of relevant political and economic conditions in Africa, promotion and improvement of the economic well-being of all Nigerian citizens; and promotion of world peace (Kolawole, 1997). Of principal concern to Nigeria, from these objectives, are well-being of Nigerians; the imperative of justice for all, and a peaceful and secured world in which conflicts are resolved amicably. These aspiration values are prioritised by policy makers into three concentric circles. The narrowness of the circles denotes the nation's security priorities, attitude and responses to foreign policy issues within Africa and the rest of

the world. The inner-most circle has Nigeria, Nigeria's neighbours and the West African sub-region occupy the second, while third layers belongs to other states in Africa (Buhari, 1984). This prioritisation implies that defence and security planners must be sensitive to the behaviour, capabilities and plans of countries that fall within these concentric securities boundaries.

It was in consolidation of the place of Nigeria on the African continent that Africa is made the centrepiece of its foreign policy. Thus, for the fifty-five years of Nigerian independence this specific imperative has governed the conceptualisation and conduct of Nigerian foreign policy. Centrepiece is understood as the hub from which radiate the spokes of Nigeria's foreign relations. It confirms the centrality of Nigeria's interaction with the world outside the African continent to be informed and determined by the yearnings and aspirations of the people of the African continent. In fact, there is a constitutional provision that makes 'promotion of African integration and support for African Unity' a cardinal foreign policy objective. And in consonance with that provision, the Ministry of Cooperation and Integration in Africa was created in 1999 with the specific responsibilities for coordinating the integrative efforts and cooperation at the continental level.

The origin of Africa as the centrepiece of Nigeria's foreign policy is traced to the early period of Nigeria's independence in 1960. Nigeria's first and only Prime Minister and first head of government, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (1964), October 1960 to January 1966 had at his acceptance speech on the occasion of membership of the United Nations in New York on October 8, 1960 said:

*"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 organisation, but being human we are naturally concerned with what affects our immediate neighbourhood."*

This connotes that Nigeria evolved to the point of acceptance of the fact and reality that the conduct of its international relations and foreign policy, particularly in Africa, may at times involve certain contractual obligations beyond its borders. This is so, on issues and areas that can stabilise the political, economic, security and social facets of its national life, and enhance peace and stability in Africa and the world.

The main principles which inform Nigeria's African policy are: Firstly, the strengthening of African solidarity through continental and regional organisations and institutions like the AU and ECOWAS. Second, the promotion of peace and stability on the African continent, and security in the sub-region, by re-emphasising its commitment to the principles of respect for the provision of the OAU Charter especially those relating to the inviolability of inherited frontiers, sovereign equality and territorial integrity of all countries, and peaceful accommodation and settlement of all disputes, without foreign interference. Third, support for all efforts to destroy the obnoxious Apartheid in South Africa and all forms of racial bigotry and prejudice. The challenge of Nigeria's foreign policy since independence is to remain consistent in projecting these principles, espousing African causes, and defending African interests in its foreign relations. It could therefore be admitted that Nigeria's concept of African policy was only a reflection of socio-economic realities in Africa.

Since independence in 1960, Africa has continued to be at the hub of Nigeria's foreign policy and international relations. This is reflected in Nigeria's membership of and participation in various regional and continental organisations, including the Monrovia Group of African States, ECOWAS, AU, ECA, AfDB and more recently NEPAD and the African Union such as the Lagos Plan of Action, the Final Act of Lagos (1980) and the Abuja Treaty (1991) which were all consummated in Nigeria.

Nigeria established a Directorate of Technical Cooperation in Africa (DTCA) in 2001 under the Ministry of Cooperation and Integration in Africa (MCIA) in the Presidency. Its emphasis is on promoting an exchange programme of high-level technical experts in several areas, including Science and Technology, Humanities and Arts, Law, Agriculture, Mining, Medicine, Manufacturing, Industries, Nuclear Science, Energy, Mineral Resources development, Transportation, Information and Communication Technology. It also collaborates with several other African institutions and organisations. Nigeria has made huge investments of financial, human, material and military resources to promote Africa's development, and peace and security on the continent. Nigeria was at the forefront of the continental struggle against apartheid in South Africa. Nigeria continued to play important roles in the Africa Union and the United Nations in different mediatory capacities.

Nigeria has excelled in promoting the peaceful settlement of dispute regionally and continentally. As early as 1960 when it attained independence, Nigeria sent peacekeeping forces to the Congo. Nigeria was instrumental in containing conflicts through peaceful mediation and conciliation measures in Angola, Chad, Congo, Cote D'Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. Nigeria participated in the activities of the UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon (UNFIL) in 1978. By 2009 Nigeria has sent about 3000 troops to Darfur as part of the AU peacekeeping force. President Obasanjo was engaged in the Mediation of the Peace Process in Darfur in his capacity as Chairperson of the AU and as President of Nigeria. Nigeria hosted the peace talks between the leaders of the two warring rebel factions in Darfur. As of 2010, 5000 Nigerian soldiers were on peacekeeping operation outside the country. These peacekeeping activities have entailed enormous costs for the country's treasury; nevertheless it is a burden that Nigeria proudly shoulders on behalf of the rest of Africa. Thus, Nigeria has manifested strong concern for and willingness to make sacrifices and outstanding commitment to continental peace and security.

Nigeria has negotiated and sold oil at concessionary prices to South Africa, Namibia, Ghana, Niger and other Africa countries. Ghana and Togo particularly owed Nigeria over thirty million dollars from a ninety day concessionary sales of crude oil. Nigeria built the expressway from Lagos to the outskirts of Cotonou. In West Africa, Nigeria spearheaded the integration project of a regional gas pipeline whose benefit to the sub-region's economic development was likely to be monumental. Also worthy of mention is the country's Technical Aid Programme to African countries as well as the Trust Fund created at AfDB where it placed \$100 million as a soft lending window to Least Developing African Countries.

Nigeria was one of the five founding member countries of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), with President Olusegun Obasanjo serving as the first Chairman of the NEPAD Heads of States and Governments Implementation Committee (HSGIC), the body that has steered the affairs of NEPAD from its earliest phase of establishment. Nigeria's capital, Abuja, has played host to the inauguration of many NEPAD

initiatives, including the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, which put into motion the African Peer Review Mechanisms (APRM). Nigeria has been fulfilling its financial obligations and made significant contributions to the continental APRM Trust Fund.

As an African state, in fact, Africa's and black race's most populous nation, Nigeria carries the burden of history (Fawole, 2000). Because Nigeria is Africa's most populous state it had to fulfil a 'manifest destiny' and 'historic mission' that providence had assigned to it. There is no doubt that Africa has occupied a central place in Nigeria's foreign policy. Nigeria feels that its destiny is closely bound to those of other countries in Africa.

This explains Nigeria's assistance to African states. In a sub-region of 16 countries where one out of every two person is a Nigerian, it is imperative that Nigeria relentlessly strive towards the prevention or avoidance of the deterioration of any crisis which threatens to jeopardise or compromise the stability, prosperity and security of the sub-region. Nigeria has seen its assistance to African states as national imperative and inevitability. So its roles in Africa are a product of psychological belief of Nigeria in its divine programme of leadership in Africa.

As such, there is no doubt that the intimate involvement of Nigeria in the evolution of the OAU/AU as a continental organisation, its generally well-received mediation efforts in inter-African disputes, its strong reaction to French nuclear tests in the Sahara in which it virtually broke diplomatic relations with Paris in 1961, among others, presented a commendable demonstration of the country's concern for the continent.

### **3. Nigeria's unswerving assistance to African states**

Nigeria's unswerving assistance to African countries is premised on the notion that a credible foreign policy abroad must of necessity start with security and stability at home. And that the best insurance to guarantee this, is the skilful cultivation of African states in a manner that will ensure their friendship. For there is no alternative diplomacy available to an aspiring regional power than a sustained and constructive engagement of its neighbours (Adesola, 2008). Because it is often said that countries choose their friends but never their neighbours. Making friends out of these neighbours has being a major preoccupation of Nigeria's foreign policy. And, the task facing Nigeria in developing friendly relations with her neighbours has always been extremely difficult because of the disproportionate size of Nigeria in terms of population and economic resources when compared with all her African neighbours. Because of the political and economic diversity of Africa therefore, Nigeria has to be extremely careful to minimise the tensions. Thus, Nigeria's headache has been doing everything it could for these neighbours to reassure them of its determination to ensure their progress, peace and stability. This is determined by permanent interests as well as some mythical brotherhood relations. The permanent interest is that Africa is Nigeria's 'pinnacle of survival' (Omole, 1996), in which ultimate attention should be concentrated.

In pursuit of this, in 1972, Nigeria signed a pact with Niger republic for Nigeria to supply 30,000 kilowatts of electricity to Niger from Nigeria's own hydroelectricity kanji Dam (Rusk, 1972). This is despite the fact that Nigeria was not been able to satisfy its own local needs of electricity supply. Again in 1974, Nigeria donated

to Niger relief materials worth millions of Naira when Niger was ravaged by serious drought (Onwuka, 1982). In March and April 1979, Nigeria worked hard through Kano I-II Peace Talks to prevent the externalisation of the conflicts in Chad, as France and Libya participated on both sides of the war. Nigeria afterwards sent a peacekeeping contingent to Chad through the auspices of the Organisation of African Unity (now African Union). In recognition of Nigeria's place in Africa; France in the late 1970s formally 'requested Nigeria's assistance in the search for peace, stability and reconciliation in Chad' (Federal Ministry of Information, 1979; Thompson and Adloff, 1981), its former colony. Consequently, Nigeria hosted negotiations and singularly conducted peace-keeping led by Colonel Muhammadu Magoro at the instance of the Chadian factions contending for power and control of the country.

Nigeria entered into a security cooperation agreement with Equatorial Guinea which in 2007 ensured that the President of Equatorial Guinea was restored back into office within a few days he was ousted by a coup *d'état* by dissident forces in Malabo, by the threat of military intervention from the Obasanjo's regime (Ola, 2011). The coup in Sao Tome and Principe in 2003 was also reversed this way (Ola, 2011).

Nigeria's vehement opposition amongst other saw South Africa out of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers conference in March 1961. Nigeria under Ironsi barred Portuguese ships and aircrafts going and coming from apartheid South Africa from using Nigeria's port facilities and airspace. Nigeria orchestrated a systematic isolation of apartheid South Africa from the early 1970s especially from global sporting events. Nigeria led the African boycott campaigns against South African participation in the 1972 Munich Olympic Games, and the massive boycott of the 1976 Montreal Olympics, the 1975 Davis cup tennis competition, the 1976 World Amateur Squash championships and massive boycott of the 1986 Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh (Polhemus, 1977). This is because apartheid in South Africa was seen as a continuation of European colonialism in Africa. Nigeria hosted the UN sponsored World Conference for Action Against apartheid in August 1977. Nigeria chaired the UN Committee Against Apartheid until apartheid demise in 1994. Following the widespread riots of 1976, which resulted in the Soweto massacre, Nigeria imported hundreds of the "Soweto Kids" and scores of other South African Black youths and placed them in the country's educational institutions on scholarships (Garba, 1991). Nigeria established a South Africa Relief Fund (SARF) into which donations from Nigerians poured which by 1978 has about \$20 million (Garba, 1991). Once the racist regime of President Fredrick de Klerk realised that apartheid could not be continued Nigeria was there to offer assistance and nudge de Klerk on the part of dismantling the apartheid system. This led to the release of Nelson Mandela, Walter Sizulu and others from prison and multi-racial democratic elections in 1994.

After receiving intelligence reports to the effects that apartheid South Africa troops were already deeply inside Angola fighting on the side of Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) (Klinghoffer, 1980), Nigeria, dramatically recognised the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) contrary to its initial strict adherence to the OAU consensus that only a government of national unity to be formed by the three factions should be supported (Stockwell, 1978; Ebinger, 1976; Garba, 1991). This move was to prevent apartheid from extending its tentacle in Africa. To Nigeria therefore, Angola represented a bulwark against the expansion of apartheid, and the first actual testing ground for the rolling back of the system. Nigeria therefore embarked on a diplomatic offensive across Africa that swung majority opinion, in the OAU, on the side of MPLA (Garba, 1991). Nigeria backed its support for the MPLA Angolan government with a \$20 million

financial grant in addition to the supply of military hardware, MiG fighters and other essential needs (Africa Research Bulletin, 1979; West Africa, 1979). Nigeria also threatened reprisals against the American Gulf Oil company's operation in Nigeria if it did not pay the royalties it had earlier withheld to the MPLA government in Lauda for its oil exploration activities in the country. The threat achieved its purpose and the Angolan government was no longer denied its entitlements.

On Zimbabwe's political logjam, Nigeria threatened a diplomatic showdown with Britain that if by December 1965 it had not reversed the illegal Ian Smith Unilateral Declaration of Independence. In January 1966 due to Nigeria's commitment to an end to supremacist rule in Rhodesia hosted the first Commonwealth summit ever held outside London to discuss the resolution of the Rhodesian problem. Following the unsuccessful attempts and persuasions of Britain on the unacceptability of Ian Smith's internal settlement backed up by Britain's complicity, Nigeria nationalised the assets of British Petroleum Company in Nigeria (Garba, 1991) on July 31, 1979, on the eve of the Commonwealth Summit scheduled for Lusaka, Zambia. At the time, the BP was Britain's largest investment in Nigeria and the whole of sub-Saharan Africa. Before then, Nigeria had nationalised the British-owned Barclays Bank and Standard Bank. These Nigerian actions made the British government of Margaret Thatcher withdraw its recognition of the internal arrangement that excluded the main guerrilla factions in the liberation war. Britain did not only change her stance on Zimbabwe at the Lusaka Commonwealth Summit but also organised and hosted the Lancaster House negotiations and constitutional talks that eventually resulted in genuine independence for Zimbabwe in 1980.

In June 1976, Nigeria presented a cheque of \$250,000 to the liberation forces of Rhodesia through Mozambiquan Foreign Minister, Joaquim Chissano in Mauritius during the OAU summit (Garba, 1991). Nigeria later invited Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo, the joint leaders of the New Patriotic Front to Nigeria and made them pledge their commitment to the agreement reached between the parties at the Geneva Conference of late 1976 (Garba, 1991).

When in 1989 the government of Benin Republic became beleaguered as a result of a generalised workers' strike that paralysed the country due to the failure of the Benin authorities to pay workers' salaries for months, Nigeria bailed it out by paying the workers' salaries, and also donated 12,000 tonnes of petroleum products to the Beninois government as assistance (Garba, 1991). This is aside the numerous assistance that has been rendered to Benin through Nigeria's involvement in many joint projects, like the Onigbolo Cement Works, and the Save Sugar Projects which has continued to benefit the economy of that nation. On April 25, 1976, Nigeria gave the newly independent state of Mozambique under President Samora Machel \$1.6 million as development assistance (Garba, 1991).

In 1973, Egypt sought entire African assistance against Israel at the OAU summit for a mass diplomatic boycott of Israel (Fawole, 2002). Despite the position of the people of Eastern and Western Nigeria which preferred a neutral role if not a support of the Israelis Nigeria followed other members of the OAU to sever diplomatic relations with the state of Israel (Fawole, 2002). It should however be noted that despite Nigeria's subscription to the African solidarity and as the chairman of OAU when it was made Africans and particularly Nigerians were snubbed by Egypt as it unilaterally established diplomatic ties with Israel after the Camp David Accords of 1979 without any consideration for the African states that supported her.



In its deft commitment to the promotion and protection of Africa's interests, Nigeria on January 5, 1961 was the only country that broke diplomatic relations with France over France's testing of atomic bomb in Reggan-Algeria in the Sahara desert (Omole, 2010). Nigeria closed down French Embassy in Lagos and expelled the French Ambassador, Mr Raymond Offroy and 9 other French diplomats. Nigeria also denied French aircrafts and ships landing and berthing rights from all Nigeria's air fields and seaports (Omole, 2010). In fact, France officials had to hurriedly leave Nigeria. These actions were taken even as the African states around the Sahara desert could not act on France's intransigence. However, Nigeria was to pay dearly for its actions when in 1966 during Nigeria's application for admission as an associate Member into the defunct European Economic Community (now European Union), as France who was a strong member of the Community successfully blocked Nigeria's admission (Omole, 2010).

In line with its support for African liberation and independence, Nigeria recognised the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) against the objection of Morocco and its supporters (Fawole, 2002). Morocco has laid claim and forcibly held on to the territory since the exit of the Spanish in the 1970s to the chagrin of the OAU and the international community especially after the World Court declaration that Morocco had no rights to lay claim to the territory. For Nigeria, therefore, the case of Western Sahara was a straightforward case of self-determination. Consequently, Nigeria could not continue to recognise Morocco's illegal claim to the territory in the face of the overwhelming desire of the people for self-determination expressed through their liberation movement, POLISARIO, as well as their declaration in February 1976 of Western Sahara as the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (Fawole, 2002). But it had always been Morocco's greed and arrogance that prevented genuine independence for the people of Western Sahara. It was when Morocco's intransigence almost wrecked the OAU because of the split in its ranks over whether to support Morocco or SADR that Nigeria came to the rescue of the SADR and the OAU from imminent collapse by announcing its recognition of the SADR on November 11, 1984 at the 20<sup>th</sup> OAU summit in Addis Ababa. This Nigerian action permitted SADR to take its seat at the summit. It also saved the OAU from Morocco's perpetual blackmail (Gambari, 1989).

In 1988 Nigeria mediated over a diplomatic row between Sierra Leone and Liberia. Nigeria under General Babangida funded the Ibrahim Babangida School of International Studies with seven Nigerian scholars seconded to the institution. The Liberian section of the Trans-African Highway was constructed by the Nigerian Government and Nigeria also bought over Liberia's debt valued at \$30 million (Adetula, 1991).

The establishment of the Technical Aid Corps Scheme (TACS) programme in 1987 which seeks to share Nigeria's expertise with beneficiary countries through the placement of young Nigerian professionals on the basis of needs identified by participating countries (Ola, 2011) represents another means of rendering help to African states. Needless to say that, this programme is a unique and innovative catalyst for peace, progress and development for its beneficiaries. The TAC scheme is the only viable volunteer technical service programme operated by an African country and has played a crucial role in creating an atmosphere of partnership between Nigeria and the ACP countries. The scheme challenges the widely held view that African countries are only recipients of aid and not providers (Ola, 2011). In fact; the TACS has attracted the attention of a number of international agencies. In 2003, the Commonwealth, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Nigerian Government. The MoU calls for the provision of Nigerian expertise to

needy member states under the Commonwealth Assistance Programme (CAP), which is managed by the Directorate of TACS in Nigeria. The United Nations (UN) Volunteer Service and the Japanese Agency for International Cooperation (JAIC) have also expressed interest in the TACS programme (Ola, 2011). This scheme is meant to bolster Nigeria's other forms of aid to needy countries. Under the scheme, Nigeria has continued to send young professionals to needy African states for initial two-year duration renewable upon request from benefiting states. Nigeria is responsible for the monthly pay of the participants while the host states are required to provide them with accommodation and local transportation. Till date, the scheme has continued to enjoy patronage from interested African states (Fawole, 2002).

Again, the ideals behind Nigeria's championing of ECOWAS demonstrated its concern for regional unity. It was a concern for the common interests of the states in that the body would enhance intra-sub-regional economic, technical and political cooperation, reduce incessant and latent political and boundary problems, guarantee the member-states a more respectable place in the international society, encourage a coordinated development and reduce their dependence on foreign powers (West Africa, 1979). Therefore, Nigeria has since the establishment of ECOWAS in 1975 used the regional economic body as an avenue for assisting other member states in West Africa. Its annual dues of almost one-third of the organisation's total budget (Akinola, 2001) are a testimony to this position.

Likewise, Nigeria holds the OAU chair when the treaty establishing the African Economic Community was signed in June 1991, and in fact, in Abuja (West Africa, 1991). Nigeria's diplomacy was responsible for getting the African plenipotentiaries together in Abuja and for agreeing to the formation of the AEC. The ideals behind this was that since many African economies are too small and weak to go it alone, coming together in such a body would ensure that they are not completely left behind in terms of development (West Africa, 1991). The diplomatic contacts made by Nigeria brought about a record attendance of 30 heads of state, 48 foreign ministers and 3 vice presidents at the signing of the AEC treaty (West Africa, 1991) at the Abuja summit in 1991. In fact, it was the culmination of the 1980 Lagos Plan of Action and its accompanying Final Act of Lagos which recommended the establishment of an African Economic Community (West Africa, 1991).

It must be noted at this pivotal juncture that some of the actions taken by Nigeria in its support of African states, in actual fact, risked Nigeria's own national interests, e.g. the threat to sanction Gulf Oil company if it did not pay royalties to the MPLA government in Lauda, the radical anti-apartheid posturing and the consequent tough measures against companies doing business in both Nigeria and South Africa etc. They were economically risky moves for an oil-dependent state like Nigeria. But, all of these the government in Nigeria did with joy because nation conceptualise itself as a bigger brother to the other African states.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Meanwhile, the Nigerian society is devoid of any useful benefit from its assistance to various African states. Instead, pitted against Nigeria's assistance to African states is the marginalisation of the vast majority of Nigerians. There exists the challenge of converting Nigeria's multifarious assets which has been deployed to assist African states into positive national development. This calls for ingenious social engineering and

committed purposeful governance. However, to achieve this aspiration, Nigeria requires visionary and transformative leadership at all levels of its society. A leadership with commitment that is willing to shun personal aggrandisement for collective good. Its might just be time for Nigeria to make the welfare of the generality of its citizens its first and last foreign policy objectives.

Nigeria cannot afford to continue to assist states while Nigerians suffer. The nation would do well providing assistance to Africa if it first of all prioritised and achieved the satisfaction and wellbeing of its citizens, exhibit quality national leadership, and effectively manage its resource endowment. This could be achieved by developing a highly coherent society that ensures that there is justice, fair play and sufficient opportunities and equality of opportunity, ensures that there is less selfishness and more responsibility on the part of the elite, and the protection of society from divisive situations.

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