

Issues of Reciprocity in Nigeria's relations with her African Neighbours, 1960-2020

Dr. Franklin Ezeonwuka

if.ezeonwuka@unizik.edu.ng

James Onyebuchi

Jsonybuchi@gmail.com

Department of History and International Studies
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Abstract

Reciprocity which is the practice of returning favours and privileges received from a particular person or party back to him, hence meeting the expectations of such person or party is one of the major guiding principles of international relations both as a practice or field of study. Nigeria has related with various African states and extended kind gestures to them, but, it may be observed that these her benevolence were not reciprocated especially in the ways and manner such gestures were extended. Against the foregoing backdrop, this paper intends to look at issues of reciprocity in Nigeria's relations with her African neighbours with the aim of discovering if indeed these relations have yielded any form of gain to Nigeria and Nigerians. Deploying the Social Exchange Theory, this paper in venturing an analysis of Nigeria's relations with her African neighbours over the years, and utilized primary, secondary as well tertiary sources. This paper discovered that in as much as most of Nigeria's benevolence to her African neighbours appears to be unreciprocated, a closer look at these relations reveals that indeed, there are several ways Nigeria also benefits from her benevolence. Owing to the foregoing therefore, this paper recommends that rather than stopping her kind gestures towards her African neighbours, Nigeria should deploy strategies that could better position her to even gain more in her relations with her African neighbours.

Keywords: Benevolence, Relations, Neighbours, Reciprocity, Strategy

Introduction

At the occasion of Nigeria's admission into the United Nations Organization on October 7th 1960, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa clearly declared Africa as the center piece of Nigeria's foreign policy. The implication of this declaration in the years that followed was that Nigeria continuously pursued an Afrocentric foreign policy that saw her assume the role of the so called 'Big Brother Africa'.¹ Nigeria championed emancipation struggles in various parts of Africa and actively supported various peace efforts on the continent. For example, barely three years after her independence, Nigeria was actively involved in the peace efforts in the Congo where she did not only send a peace keeping mission, but, was also actively involved in the peacemaking efforts. Nigeria also supported the various struggles for emancipation across Africa, notably in the southern fringes of the continent where her financial and diplomatic supports proved instrumental to the eventual attainment of independence by various Southern African states.² Nonetheless the obvious roles Nigeria has played in Africa in her quest to make true her declaration of the continent as the center piece of her foreign policy, most, if not all of these states in Africa has not reciprocated these 'big brotherly' gestures especially in the way and manner such gestures were extended to them in the first place and this has erroneously led to the conclusion that Nigeria does not benefit anything from her relations with her African neighbours.

This paper therefore, examines the issues of reciprocity in Nigeria's relations with her African neighbours. The concept of reciprocity, to borrow from ancient Igbo practice, means 'eme emegwara' which literally means 'do me, I do you' in the local parlance. To be more formal, the concept of reciprocity is to the effect that all privileges and rights extended to a state be reciprocated by that state too. To further buttress the very spirit of this concept, a state which has received privileges in whatever form in her relations with another state, should as a matter of practice avail that other state similar if not same privileges. As already pointed out in the foregoing paragraphs, Nigeria has related with various African States since her attainment of political independence. However, when looked at from the outside, these relations seem to appear lopsided to the disadvantage of the Nigerian States, However, when subjected to the binocular of reciprocity as a concept in International Relations, these relations manifest some kind of benefits to the Nigerian state too. This paper aims to examine this lopsidedness, while also arguing that Nigeria has benefited and continues to benefit from her Afrocentric foreign policy, and rather than stop or discontinue it, should fine tune and adopt global strategies that would better position her to gain even more in her relations with her African neighbours.

Theoretical Base

This paper is built around the analytical framework of the foundations and provisions of the Social Exchange Theory, a sociological theory which views social life as a patterned exchange between individuals and between groups. Social exchange theory can be traced back to 1958, when American sociologist George Homans published an article entitled "Social Behavior as Exchange." Homans came up with a framework built on a combination of behaviorism and basic economics. In the immediate years that followed, other studies expanded the parameters of Homans' fundamental concepts.³ As a theory of human behaviour, Social Psychology Exchange Theory has some fundamental assumptions and these assumptions include; that humans tend to seek out rewards and avoid punishments. Another tenet is the assumption that a person begins an interaction to gain maximum profit with minimal cost, that is to say, the individual is driven by "what's in it for me?" A third assumption is that individuals tend to calculate the profit and cost before engaging. Finally, the theory assumes that people know that this "payoff" will vary from person to person, as well as with the same person over time.⁴

Social Exchange Theory is concept based on the notion that a relationship between two people is created through a process of cost-benefit analysis. In other words, it's a metric designed to determine the effort poured in by an individual in a person-to-person relationship. The measurement of the pluses and minuses of a relationship may produce data that can determine if someone is putting too much effort into a relationship. What makes the theory quite unique is the fact that it does not necessarily measure relationships on emotional metrics. But, has systematic processes that depend on mathematics and logic to ascertain mutuality within a relationship. While the theory can be used to measure romantic relationships, it can also be applied to determine the balance within a friendship and by extension inter-state relations.

Conceptual Analysis

There are mainly two major concepts that require clarification on this paper and these are reciprocity and neighbours. Like every social science or historiographic concept, the concept of reciprocity often deployed in the analysis of international relations does not enjoy a straight-jacket definition. This is essentially because of the non-dogmatic nature of these fields of

studies that allows multiplicity of views and opinions on subject matters. Arising from the above therefore is an inevitability of the availability of varying perspectives as it concerns the conceptualization of reciprocity as an international relations principle.

‘[A] man be willing, when others are too, as far forth for peace and defense of himself ... be contented with so much liberty against other men as he would allow other men against himself.’⁵

The foregoing, which is the second law of nature according to Thomas Hobbes in his *Leviathan*, clearly captures the very definition of the concept of reciprocity in inter-state relations. Put differently, what this second Hobbesian Law of nature presupposes is that man and by extension states should be willing and ready to reciprocate as much favours as other men and states are willing to extend to them. The concept of reciprocity assumes peculiar importance in a world where there is no external authority to enforce agreements. That is, in a world that exists in Hobbesian state of nature Historically, norms of reciprocity have been vital in escaping lives that would otherwise be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.

In their work, ‘The role of Reciprocity in International Law’, Francesco Parisi and Nita Ghei defined reciprocity as returning like behaviours. In their words, “Reciprocity generally involves returning like behaviours”.⁶ What is essentially deducible from the above Scholarly definition is the fact that reciprocity simply involves doing unto others as they do unto you. In other words, if state A extends a favor to state B, state B, is expected to return similar favour to state A. Robert Axelrod is another international relations scholar that has also defined the concept of reciprocity in international relations. According to him “Reciprocity is tit-for-tat strategy that permits cooperation in a state of nature, when no authority for enforcement of agreements exists”,⁷ in this sense, International law exists in a state of nature, because there is no overarching legal authority that can compel compulsory jurisdiction to enforce agreements.

Along this pedestal, Mark J.C. Crescenzi and others equally put forward a definition of the concept of reciprocity in international relations. According to them, Reciprocity refers to the character of the actions and reactions between two or more actors, and hence this character is commonly one of ‘responding in kind to the actions of another’.⁸ What one may take away from the foregoing scholarly definition is that reciprocity from the point of view of these scholars is basically a character of actions and reactions amongst states which commonly entails returning in kind the actions of states. Another scholar that has also offered his opinion on the definition of the concept of reciprocity in international relations is Odock. In his contribution to the Osita Eze edited book titled *Reciprocity in International Relations*, Odock asserted that the long and short about reciprocity as a principle of interaction between sovereign states is that favours, benefits or penalties that are granted by one state to the citizens or legal entities of another, should be returned in kind.⁹ Ibrahim M.K. has attempted the definition of the subject matter of reciprocity in international relations. According to him, ‘reciprocity is the practice of making appropriate return for a benefit or harm received from another state’.¹⁰ From this definition, reciprocity is not just perceived as an instrument of peaceful cooperation, but, of retaliation as well.

In his work, “How does Reciprocity Work?”, James D. Morrow defines reciprocity simply as ‘the idea that states should respond to one another in kind’.¹¹ Robert Keohane has also

attempted a definition of reciprocity in his 1989 work titled *Reciprocity in International Relations*. According to him, reciprocity is "...exchanges of roughly equivalent values in which the actions of each party are contingent on the prior action of the others in such a way that good is returned for good and bad for bad".¹² He distinguishes between two key features of reciprocity: equivalence and contingency. Equivalence requires that state B's response to state A be roughly similar to the action by A. Contingence implies state B's behaviour toward A is conditional on what A last did to B. As has been demonstrated by these various definitions, it is not possible to have a single and an encompassing definition of the concept of reciprocity in international relations, this is essentially because, there are several scholars in international relations and each scholar has at one point or the other attempted a definition of the concept. At the best therefore, we can just adopt a working definition of the concept based on our convictions as international relations scholars.

With the definitions adduced above, an understanding of the meaning of reciprocity seems to have been established. However, the need to conceptualize reciprocity still remains and this is what this part of the paper will focus on. Many scholars have argued and suggested several and differing opinions on how the principle of reciprocity as an important guiding principle of inter-state relations should be thought about and in fact applied. For instance, Osita Eze believes that states in their relations and at all times should be able to demand a reciprocation of their kind gestures without which extension of kind gestures should be questioned if not stopped outrightly. Odock also argues in this same line stating that where a state extending kind gestures to another does not adequately receive a pay back, such a state needs to resort to a discontinuation of the extension of such kind gestures. He particularly makes a case for Nigeria in her relations with her African neighbours.¹³

Enuka also contends that reciprocity is basically a "do me I do you" (returning kind gestures) principle and where this is not the case, a state in its rational mind should act in her best interests. Enuka likened Nigeria's continued benevolence to her African neighbours even in the face of their malevolence towards her as "mumuism" (gross poor judgement) which needs to be stopped forthrightly.¹⁴ In as much as the scholarly opinions and arguments sampled above are the stark reality of Nigeria's relations with her African neighbours since 1960 up to 2020, it is also important to state that reciprocity is basically a principle and not necessarily a hard rule or law. States are not bound by any statute to reciprocate kind gestures extended to them or to act in a particular way owing to the actions of a state they relate with. On the basis for reciprocity in inter-state relations, Victor Ukaogo, maintains that reciprocity as an international relations guiding principle is not necessarily based on morality as there is no morality in international relations, and may not be construed as a codified law with laid down consequences for its violation. At best, it is just a practice in inter-state relations and like several other principles and practices, states may often not deploy its application in their quest to realize their national interests.¹⁵ What can be taken away from this submission is therefore that the basis for reciprocity in international relations is basically the perception and interests of states and not morality, hence this study is apt to attempt.

Nigeria is located in the West Coast of Africa along the Atlantic Ocean. It lies in latitude 10 degrees North of the Equator and longitude 8 degrees East of the Greenwich Meridian. The Nigerian state shares land borders with the Republic of Benin (measuring 109 kilometre long), Cameroon (measuring 1,608 kilometre long). It shares littoral boundaries with the Republic of

Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Togo and Sao Tome and Principe. Apart from her relative economic strength, Nigeria is overwhelmingly the most populous state among her immediate neighbours. This is in addition to the possession of disproportionately big chunk of other elements of state power all of which makes Nigeria the regional power in West Africa and the rest of Africa. On the whole, Nigeria is surrounded by relatively weak neighbours. It is important to also note that with the exception of Equatorial Guinea which was a Spanish colony, all the other immediate neighbours of Nigeria were colonized by France and still enjoy relative linguistic, cultural, political, economic, and even military affinities and cooperation with France. Thus, being the only English speaking state in the midst of countries that are still under French influence, Nigeria have had to tread warily in her dealings and transactions with these states. The fact that Nigeria is surrounded by French speaking immediate neighbours, coupled with the fact that the delineation of the artificial boundaries between her and the other states were done without taking cognizance of their ethnic and historical realities have continued to plague Nigeria's relations with her immediate neighbours.

According to Solomon Ogbu and Osunyikanmi Pius in their work, "Nigeria and Her Immediate Neighbours in the Post-Colonial Era: A Critical Analysis", Nigeria's relations with her immediate neighbours is conditioned by two major fundamental issues which are; the fact that Nigeria is surrounded by Francophone states which are still disposed to France's values and orientation; and the fact that the artificial boundaries that were imposed on these states without taking cognizance of ethnic and historical affinities are still generating conflicts and animosity among neighbouring states in West Africa as in the rest of Africa.¹⁶ Nonetheless the foregoing, successive governments of Nigeria have always tried to conduct the country's relations with her immediate and distant neighbours within the framework of the declared principles of the country's foreign policy, viz-a-viz good neighbourliness. We shall now proceed to look at these immediate neighbours of Nigeria and how Nigeria has related with them.

Nigeria and Her Neighbours: Overview

NIGERIA-CAMEROUN: Diplomatic relations between Nigeria and Cameroun has been largely checkered, swinging from one end to the other like a pendulum. This, needless to say, was until recently as a result of the age-long dispute over the ownership of the Bakassi Peninsular on which the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in October 2002 delivered A judgement to settle. Nigeria-Cameroun border according to Vogt the longest of all Nigeria's international boundaries and is the most complicated topographically.¹⁷ Akinterinwa holds that the complicated nature of the boundary gave rise to constant violent border disputes with far-reaching consequences for bilateral relations between the two states. The lingering disagreement between the two states snowballed into military exchanges and maneuvers between troops of the two states in 1993.¹⁸ Before then, there had been the killing in 1981 of some Nigerian Navy officers on patrol of the border in Ikang Cross River State Nigeria. In October 2002, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), ceded Bakassi Peninsular to Cameroun but there still remains an uneasy calm in the area owing to the constant harassment of Nigerian fishermen still living and fishing in the area. Thus, there is still tension and distrust between Nigeria and Cameroun as far as the Bakassi Peninsular is concerned nonetheless the Green Tree Agreement between the two states on the matter. Although, the Bakassi Peninsular crisis adversely affected diplomatic relations between Nigeria and Cameroun, it is also important to

state that the two states had enjoyed some cordial relations especially during the Nigerian Civil War. Cameroun had a friendly disposition to Nigeria and took an uncompromising stance against Biafra and its supporters (France, Red Cross Society and other humanitarian organizations) during the Nigeria-Biafra war (1967 –1970) and this by no means helped tilt the outcome of the war in Nigeria's favour.

NIGERIA-CHAD: The Republic of Chad is strategically located between Libya in the North, Sudan in the East, and the Central African Republic and Cameroon in the South. The Western part of Chad however lies between Nigeria, Niger Republic, and some parts of Cameroon. The most recurrent threat to Nigeria's national security is the frequent border clashes with Chad and the continual internal religious and consequent ethnic military conflicts among various warring factions in Chad. Most importantly, the threats constituted by the internationalization of the Chadian conflict was major source of sleepless nights and continued vigilance for the Nigerian military.¹⁹

James opines that the armed conflict between Nigeria and Chad could also be traced to the threat posed by the interest of Chad in the Lake Chad basin and other mineral rich villages and Islands bordering Nigeria and Chad. To be sure, the threats to Nigeria's national interests and security posed by the boundary disputes between Nigeria and Chad as articulated by James include; the problem of fishing rights on the Lake Chad basin and the incessant harassment of Nigerian fishermen by Chadian soldiers and fishermen; the perennial problem of boundary demarcation on the Lake Chad basin area; Nigeria's diminishing interest in the Lake Chad basin in favour of the Chad basin development authority and which was demonstrated by the huge financial commitment by Nigeria of an estimated four hundred and ninety-eight million naira (N 498,000.000.00) and the expulsion of about 700,000 Chadians affected by the Nigerian deportation order of January 17, 1983.

According, Ahmed Kana, a Chadian that was interviewed during this research, the origin of the military hostilities between Nigeria and Chad could be traced within the context of improperly defined boundaries between the two nations by the European colonialists. This statement is also corroborated by another Chadian historian at the University of Maiduguri by name Mallam Abubakar who was also interviewed during this research. According to Mallam Abubakar, the improperly defined boundaries was instrumental to marring relations between Nigeria and the Republic of Chad.²⁰ However, according Ilyasu Aminu, a trader and resident of Gamboru Ngala, a bother town in Borno state, the Chadian civil war between 1978 and 1983 compounded the frosty relations between the two states. The war had a spillover effect on Nigeria as thousands of Chadian refugees who fled the theatre of war migrated to Nigeria, thereby overstretching economic and social amenities.²¹

Nigeria's former Military Head of State clearly captured this when he posited in 1979 that, "The inordinate personal ambitions of some of the Chadians were exploited by some foreign agencies to ensure that a purely African initiative by Chad's neighbours without the paternalistic participation of an extra-African power does not succeed. As a consequence, the most monstrous of atrocities continued to be committed in N'Djamena (the capital of Chad) and elsewhere in Chad

with the material and logistical support of these foreign agencies. In the face of massive repressions, murders, abductions and seizure of properties thousands of Chadian refugees have fled into neighbouring countries, especially Nigeria.”²² The various sophisticated weapons supplied to Chad by France and the USA according to Kolodziej and Harkavy invariably increased the military capability profile of Chad vis-à-vis Nigeria, thereby making Nigeria vulnerable to Chad at their common borders and this tended to dim the image and status of Nigeria as the giant of Africa. In 1983, for example, Chadian bandits made an incursion into Nigerian border and attacked and killed Nigerian fishermen around the lake Chad region.²³ Nigerian soldiers at the border engaged the Chadian bandits in a shootout and this prompted the Chadian regular forces to join the fight. On the positive however, it is important to state that Nigeria and Chad have also cooperated especially in the fight against terrorism and this is manifested in the form of the Joint Task Force (JTF) which is made up of troops from both states.

According to Captain Attah, a Nigerian military officer interviewed during this research, the nature of the porosity of the Nigerian borders with her neighbours coupled with the lack of decisive defense policies are major factors enhancing external encroachments on Nigeria’s territorial integrity.²⁴ Jide corroborates this when he asserts that “the Nigerian border appears to be the most vulnerable spot and the nation’s “Achilles heel” to Nigeria’s security because of the traditional Nigeria’s self-complacent attitude toward her security, based on the false premise that Nigeria is bordered by smaller and relatively weaker but friendly states which do not constitute any real threat to Nigeria’s national security.”²⁵ In recent times, Nigerians have speculated that Chad might be one of the masquerades behind the Boko Haram terrorist group in Northeast Nigeria. All of these clearly point to the need for the Nigerian government to as a matter of necessity and urgent importance ensure that the country’s borders with the Republic of Chad are clearly delimited and demarcated to forestall any further military hostilities between the two states, and this will in turn go a long way in helping to promote bilateral relations between the two states.

NIGERIA-BENIN REPUBLIC: According to Olakunle Timothy, a former Nigerian Defense Attaché in the Republic of Benin who was interviewed during this research, relations between Nigeria and the Republic of Benin has been highly unstable and hovers between frosty and cordial.²⁶ Between 1969 and the much of the 1970s, political relations between the two states almost reached a nadir and this was the period the Beninese became a major source of security threat to the Nigerian state. The Beninese gendarmes forcefully collected taxes from Nigerians who resided along the Nigeria-Benin border villages, and sometimes go to the extent of removing the Nigerian flag at the border as a way of laying claim to the ownership of the area. Ate and Akinterinwa clearly pinpoint this situation when they asserted that, “the security relations between Nigeria and Benin have always centred on two issue areas – boundary and military relations. The two overlap. Boundary relations are important in the first place because of the imprecision which marked the delimitation exercise...This setting is further compounded by the activities of smugglers and the actions of overzealous functionaries who attempt to enforce legislation beyond their areas of jurisdiction. Besides boundary relations, political instability especially in Benin Republic has been important for their security relations”.²⁷ In trying to enhance her combat readiness in the eventuality of a Nigerian invasion, Benin often acquires sophisticated weapons to deter Nigeria. It is also on record that the Republic of Benin did not show sympathy to the Federal Government of Nigeria during the

Nigerian civil war between 1967 And 1970. As a matter of fact, during this period, there were indications that the Republic of Benin under President Emile Zinsou allowed her territory to be used as a staging post by the International Red Cross Committee and other Relief Organizations and even French Mercenaries for airlifting relief materials and weapons to Biafra. The activities of these organizations tended to undermine the food blockade imposed on Biafra by the federal government of Nigeria. In the light of the above therefore, Ogbu submits that series of hostilities and border clashes were triggered between the two states. The signing of a Military Cooperation Agreement between the two states in April 1979, however, put much of the lingering threats and distrust to rest, and this created the needed opportunity for rapprochement and normal diplomatic relations between the two states. Nonetheless the audible strides that have been achieved in restoring cordial relations between Nigeria and the Benin Republic, it is important to also note that certain trans-border activities between the two states remain a source of threat to the national security of Nigeria. These include uncontrolled smuggling of petroleum products and other essential commodities such as sugar, beverages, textiles and detergents by Beninese citizen who also engage in piracy along the creeks and swamps that lie between Nigeria and Benin.²⁸ Besides, the Nigeria-Benin porous borders serve as an escape route for Nigerian fugitives, fleeing Nigerian criminals like car snatchers notorious armed robbers, and Nigerian politicians who have looted government treasures and are running away to escape justice. In addition, the problem of illegal aliens in both states who at different points in time have been repatriated by the government of each state has often times reduced diplomatic relations between the two states to a low ebb. However, the endemic problem in the relationship between Nigeria and the Republic of Benin is the French factor. There is a military pact between France and the Republic of Benin and on the strength of this, France has continued to supply sophisticated weapons to Benin at subsidized prices. This and the fact that France will be ready to render military assistance to Benin in the event of a war with Nigeria remain a potential danger to Nigeria's national security. Genuine efforts have however, been made in recent years by the governments of both States to improve and strengthen bilateral relations between themselves. The effect of that is obvious in the renewed relations between the two states evidenced in the astronomical increase in trade and commerce between the two countries. There has been a phenomenal increase in the number of joint ventures between the two countries; there is now a joint immigration and customs patrol and services at the borders; there is an express road that facilitates free movement of persons, goods and services between the two states; and most importantly, there is now military cooperation between both states, facilitated by the April 1979 military cooperation Agreement between both of countries.

NIGERIA-NIGER

Nigeria Niger relations refer to the current and historical relationship between both states. These relations are based on a long shared border, common cultural and historical interactions, which are related to that of Nigeria and Chad. Culturally, the centre and west of the borders cut across the northern section of Hausa land which is the home of the Hausa people. Long before European incursions and colonial rule the Trans-Saharan Trade Routes between Kano and Agadez in Niger has bound the two states together. According to Imobighe, Nigeria Niger relations appear to have been the most cordial of the relationship with immediate neighbours, with little or no restrictions in migration Nigeriens into Nigeria.

The side effect of this is the fact that the overwhelming trust and conviviality have been the very reason for the swarming of dissidents and anti Nigeria elements using the same routes under the pretexts of being Nigeriens or Nigerians living in Niger and elsewhere. Zartmen has also noted that the only issue that has been a cause of concern to the Nigerian government is the influx of Nigerien destitutes into Nigeria through the porous borders and the social and security implications associated with it.²⁹ The massive migration of Nigerien and Chadian refugees to Nigeria through the Northern highways has turned the highway into a zone of death as deadly weapons such as submachine guns, barretta rifles, bows and arrows are used freely in the zone to kill unsuspecting migrants. The Boko Haram and ISWAP terrorist groups have also capitalized on the porous nature of these borders for their operations.

It was in the light of the foregoing that the Nigerian government devised a security policy of border patrol for the securing and protection of the porous borders of Nigeria with Niger Republic. On the whole, one can say without any fear of contradiction that compared to Nigeria's other immediate neighbours, diplomatic relations between Nigeria and the Republic of Niger has over the years been excellent and stable, however, this is not farfetched from the fact that Nigeria has been a major benefactor of the Nigeriens even to her own detriment sometimes. A clear example of this is the ongoing controversy between the Nigerian Senate and the Minister of Transportation on the question of the Minister's proposal to construct a more quality railway from Kano to Niger Republic, while neglecting roads in the Southeast and South southern part of the country. It is also important to state that Niger Republic has also supported Nigeria in the fight against terrorism and this she has done by contributing troops and equipment in the Joint Military operations against the Boko Haram and ISWAP terrorist groups.

NIGERIA-EQUATORIAL GUINEA According to Oshuntokun, Equatorial Guinea, which is formerly known as Fernandopo, has a population of 777,358 by the last Count and is 100 kilometers South-East of Nigerian Coasts. She is nearer to the Coast of Cameroun, and also very close to the Bights of Benin and Biafra. Bilateral relations Between Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea was for a long time, especially in the 1960s and early 1970s, low key. For example, there were clear indications that Equatorial Guinea gave diplomatic, material and logistical support to Biafra during the Nigerian Civil war between 1967 and 1970.³⁰ The then Nigerian federal government had evidences to support her claim that Equatorial Guinea allowed the Red Cross to ferry food, arms and other materials to the Biafra land in addition to also allowing the French government to use the Island as a staging post for supplying military aid, weapons and ammunition to Biafra in spite of Nigerian government protests. However, on becoming independent on 10 October, 1968, the government of Equatorial Guinea ordered both the Red Cross and the French to leave the country despite their plea to continue their operations. At about the same time, a lot of Nigerians residing in that country were subjected to all manner of inhuman treatments, particularly between 1970 and 1974. The incessant ill treatments of the Nigerians in that state came to a point where the Nigerian government was compelled to evacuate them with the support of merchant navy, gunboats and air force planes for any eventuality. To the chagrin of Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea in the 1980s allowed foreigners from outside Africa, such as China and France to enter and settle in that state, a situation considered to be detrimental to Nigeria's national security. In spite of all the hostilities to Nigeria and Nigerians, Nigeria did not confront the state on grounds of her commitment to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, big or small.

However, it is doubtful whether Nigeria can continue to maintain this lukewarm stance in her relations with Equatorial Guinea especially when bearing in mind the contemporary political realities of the Nigerian state. The geo-strategic location of Equatorial Guinea makes her crucial to the national security of the Nigerian state and Nigeria has to take proactive measures to ensure the state is not used by any foreign power to thwart the national security trajectories of Nigeria. In this case, the policy of good neighbourliness is enough, Nigeria must as matter of necessity expel some of these obsolete policies and admit the principle of reciprocity as guide in her relations with the Island state.

To wind up this overview of Nigeria and her African neighbours, it is important to note that in as much as a prima-facie look at these relations tend to show lack of reciprocal actions on the part of these African neighbours of Nigeria, a closer look at the relations will reveal that indeed Nigeria has benefited and continues to benefit from them. For example, these neighbours of Nigeria have continued to help Nigeria host her nationals owing her ever increasing population that have made extant infrastructures and opportunities inadequate. These neighbours of Nigeria have also reciprocated Nigeria's kind gestures by not availing themselves as willing tools to subverting the territorial integrity of Nigeria as a state. In more practical instances, some of these neighbours of Nigeria such as Chad and Cameroon have also cooperated with Nigeria in fighting the Boko Haram terrorist group.

Conclusion

This paper has looked at the issues of reciprocity in Nigeria's relations with her African neighbours. To achieve this, the paper did an overview of Nigeria's relations with her neighbours and discovered that Nigeria has committed enormous resources in relations with these African neighbours. Nonetheless, the foregoing historical realities, a lot of scholars have argued that Nigeria has often received rather disheartening and deliberate malevolent postures from these neighbours of Nigeria contrary to the concept of reciprocity in international relations.

On the contrary however, this present research has shown that indeed Nigeria has benefited and continues to benefit from her Afrocentric foreign policy posture since independence. Therefore, there is no reason for her to completely stop these kind gestures towards her African neighbours. There are no parameters for judging reciprocity exactly in inter-state relations, just like there is no morality in international relations. Hence, Nigeria should review and reposition her foreign policy postures, but, not discard with her friendly dispositions and commitments in Africa for it is on that basis that she retains and stamps her authority as a continental power.

Recommendations

This paper has been able to show that in as much as Nigeria's benevolence to her African neighbours since independence have not been adequately reciprocated, instances abound where she has also benefited from her relations with these neighbours of hers. However, there is need to state that the benefits Nigeria has accrued since independence in her relations with these neighbours have been below expectations. Against this backdrop therefore, this paper makes the following recommendations that can be deployed as strategies too.

Nigeria should not stop her benevolence towards her African neighbours. Although there is general call among scholars in Nigeria for her to scrap her Afrocentric foreign policy posture,

this thesis recommends a continuation of friendly relations and extension of kind gestures to her African neighbours on the part of Nigeria. This is because, this is the basis for which Nigeria is seen as a continental power. Most of these African neighbours of Nigeria look up to her and she does not fail them in that regard.

Nigeria should as a matter of urgent importance deploy tacit diplomatic maneuvers such as conditioning the basis for her benevolence to her African neighbours. Although, reciprocity as a principle and practice is not hinged upon morality or any legally binding code, Nigeria can borrow the practice of the superpowers in international relations whose benevolence are often accompanied by conditions and terms. There is no free meal in any diplomatic table and Nigeria needs to come to terms with this reality.

This thesis recognizes the fact that a state's ability to demand reciprocity has a lot to do with her internal political realities and therefore recommends that the political situation in Nigeria, especially as it concerns the electoral processes be made more credible so as to attract the admiration and respect of both her African neighbours and the world at large. States in Africa may never take Nigeria seriously until and when she starts to conduct elections that can be adjudged as free, fair and credible. This will no doubt enhance Nigeria's respectability in Africa and the world at large and in turn make Nigeria's kind gestures towards her African neighbours reciprocated more often.

Another recommendation of this thesis is that Nigeria and in particular, Nigerian scholars should try to avoid the over simplistic approach of only looking at Nigeria's benefits in her African relations solely based on how these African states reciprocate the exact kind gestures they receive from Nigeria. This is because, such approach has the potential of misleading them to conclude that Nigeria does not gain anything from relating with these African neighbours of hers. As has been shown in this thesis, Nigeria indeed receives benefits from her kind gestures towards these African neighbours of hers.

ENDNOTES

¹ George Obiozor, *Significant Variables in Nigeria's External Relations*, (Nigerian Forum, Volume 7, Nos.9 and 10, 1997).

² *Ibid*

³ J.C. Frankel, *Contemporary International Theory and the Behaviour of States*. (Oxford: University Press, 1973)

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Edited by J. C. A. Gaskin, (Oxford World's Classics. London, England: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁶ Francesco Parisi and Nit Ghei, *The Role of Reciprocity in International Law*, (Cornell International Law Journal: Vol. 36: Iss. 1, Article 4, 2003).

⁷ *Ibid*

⁸ Mark J.C Crescenzi and others, *Reciprocity in International Studies*, (The International Studies Encyclopedia, 2010)

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¹⁰ James D. Marrow, *How Does Reciprocity Work? Evidence from the Laws of War*, (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2007)

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