



ABSTRACT

Nigeria and The Gambia have had friendly relations overtime. However, their relations can be described as asymmetrical. This is because there is a clear and relatively stable disparity between the capabilities of the two countries. Thus, Nigeria's foreign policy behaviour towards the Gambia, influenced by her Afro-centric policy, has been one of largesse. Nigeria is the stronger state and it has taken partial responsibility to assist the weaker state, The Gambia. This has generated controversies with certain scholars arguing that Nigeria cannot afford such

A SYMMETRY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: NIGERIA AND THE GAMBIA

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Introduction

International politics concerns relationships among world governments. But these relationships cannot be understood in isolation. They are closely connected with other international actors (international organizations, multinational corporations and individuals), social structures and with geographical and historical influences. (Goldstein 2009, p.3)

States, the primary actors in the international system, engage in inevitable interactions among themselves at bilateral and multilateral levels. Bilateral relations refer to the political, economic or cultural relations between two sovereign states while multilateral relations involve political, economic or cultural interactions among three or more sovereign states. These interactions at various levels are important because no state is self-sufficient. States are usually mutually dependent on each other's political cooperation in order to realize economic and security gains.

The mutual dependence of two or more states does not mean their degree of dependence is equal or symmetrical. Often, one is more dependent than the other. A symmetrical relationship is a mutual relationship based on equal distribution of power capacities. An asymmetrical relationship on the other hand describes unequal relationship between those who exchange communication. It is a relationship between the big and the small, between the strong and the weak. (Pfetsch and Landau, 2000 p.25)

In international relations, attention has been devoted primarily to economic factors and the subsequent analysis of the center-periphery or North-South divide. Limited attention devoted to asymmetry in international relations can be partly explained by the fact that international law is based on the premise that independent states are all sovereign and equal in their status and rights, thereby



chivalrous foreign policy because of inherent domestic economic problems. Others posit the importance of bilateral and multilateral relations in an increasingly interdependent world. The former have called for a reversal in the level of Nigeria's participation in international affairs and the devotion of resources used in foreign aid to improve the welfare of Nigerians. The methodology adopted in this research was the qualitative approach. The data used in writing this study was obtained from primary and secondary sources. The primary sources were collected from oral interviews, newspapers and archival materials. The secondary sources included published books and journals. These were complemented with internet materials. The theoretical framework used to guide the study was the Asymmetry Option Model. Using that model, the authors discovered that Nigeria and The Gambia maintain an open attitude in their relationship, with the aim of diminishing the asymmetry between them. Thus, Nigeria commits sufficient resources to the aid of The Gambia. This policy has proven to be beneficial to both countries. On the part of The Gambia, the sectors that Nigeria is actively involved in have witnessed tremendous growth. In spite of her altruistic bent, Nigeria also reaps strategic, political as well as economic benefits. Also, issues like lack of implementation of some crucial existing agreements, cost of the Technical Aid Scheme and hostility of the Gambians to Nigerians, among other things pose challenges to their relations. The growth in certain sectors in the Gambia did not necessarily close the gap between Nigeria and The Gambia. The factor of global economic recession can make both countries to focus on domestic issues in the immediate future. Global economic recession, notwithstanding, Nigeria continues to participate in African affairs and still seeks to improve her relations with The Gambia it is hoped that in future, through the maintenance of excellent and 'open' bilateral relations, the asymmetry between Nigeria and The Gambia will diminish. In order to assuage the controversies that arise from the asymmetric bilateral relationship it is important to publicize and demonstrate the concrete gains of the relationship within Nigeria to ensure public support.

Keywords: Asymmetry, Foreign Policy, Afrocentrism, Altruism and Welfare

suppressing notions of any underlying asymmetry. Representatives of nation states are usually keen to highlight their independence and are very sensitive to any inferences regarding realistic inequality between states. (Kozak, 2010, p.244)

Stronger states are uncomfortable with the notion of asymmetry in international relations, as it might imply greater share of responsibility for outcomes. Weaker states are uneasy as well, as emphasis on asymmetry highlights their lesser significance and limited options. Despite frequent rhetorical assurances to the contrary, asymmetry between states is very real and often has decisive consequences for bilateral as well as multilateral relations. (Kozak, 2010, p. 215)

Asymmetry is integral to the understanding of international politics. It provides a different paradigm for viewing the reality of international relationships. It calls attention to the material disparities in relationships and their implications for perception and behaviour. In international political and economic relations, strong and weak countries are measured in terms of economic



resources and military capabilities. In economics, indicators such as the Gross National Product (GNP), per capita income, contributions to international organizations, material resources, human capital (skilled labour), infrastructure etc. are important parameters of a country's external posture. Relative military strength is measured in terms of military expeditions, military personnel, armaments and the will to use these capabilities. Political and social indicators include the type of government and its efficiency, class relations, income distribution and social welfare. Psychological factors refer to the mentality of nations, the motivation, will and energy to become engaged. (Pfetsch and Landau, 2000, p.28) When countries are compared on the basis of these factors, then one can determine the disparity between them and classify them as either strong or weak.

A bilateral relationship is said to be asymmetric when there is a clear and relatively stable disparity between the capabilities of the states involved and yet the disparity is not overwhelming. The larger side is not able to dictate unilaterally the terms of the relationship. Also, the smaller side proportionally has more to gain than the larger side in every dimension. Possibly the relationship will be a major one if not the most important for the smaller side but the larger side is likely to have more important relations with other states and is less at risk. (Womack, 2006, p.30)

Most relations between states would fit into that category. Obvious examples would be Nigeria and The Gambia, United States and Cuba, Mexico and Guatemala, South Africa and Mozambique, China and Vietnam and so forth. Although the relationships between these countries may be friendly, hostile or normal, it is not one between equals, even when both are sovereign states. (Womack, 2006, p.30)

Nigeria and The Gambia although have had friendly relations for several decades, their relations can be described as asymmetrical. The bilateral relationship that exists between both countries is congruous with the description of an asymmetric bilateral relationship. Nigeria has always been a much more important presence for The Gambia than The Gambia has been for Nigeria. In the first place, there are clear disparities in the capabilities of both countries and these disparities have implications for perception and foreign policy behaviour. In economic terms for instance, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Nigeria is about US\$521.8 billion, while that of The Gambia is about US\$903.5 million. (World Bank, 2016)

Also, The Gambia has more to gain and has indeed gained more from the bilateral relationship. This is because economic progress in the Gambia depends on sustained bilateral and multilateral aid, responsible government economic management and on continued technical assistance from bilateral and multilateral donors. This makes the relationship between The Gambia and Nigeria a major one to The Gambia than to Nigeria. Nigeria on the other hand, has more important relations with other states and in any case is less at risk.

Table 1: The Capacities of Nigeria and Gambia in Comparison.

Indicators	Nigeria	The Gambia
Economics		
Gross Domestic Product (GDP)	US\$1.053 trillion	US\$3.093 billion
GDP per capita	US\$6,100	US\$1,600
GDP Real Growth Rate	6.3%	-0.2%
Gross National Saving (GNS)	16% of GDP	11.4% of GDP



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Exports	US\$82.59 billion	US\$123.5 million
Imports	US\$61.59 billion	US\$335 million
Revenues	US\$23.48 billion	US\$184 million
Expenditure	US\$27.83 billion	US\$266 million
External debt	US\$20.93 billion	US\$546.6 million
Reserves	US\$28.76	US\$82.5 million
People and Society		
Population	181,562,056 (2015 est.)*	1,967,709 (2015 est.)
Population Growth Rate	2.45% (2015 est.)	2.16% (2015 est.)
Total Dependency Ratio	87.7%	94.2%
Urban Population	47.8%	59.6%
Rate of Urbanisation	4.66%	4.33%
Life Expectancy	53.02 years	64.6 years
Literacy (age 15 who can read and write)	59.6%	55.5%
Natural Resources	Natural gas, petroleum, tin, iron ore, limestone, nobium, lead, zinc, arable land	Fish, clay, silica sand, titanium, tin, zircon
Military		
Military expenditure	0.89% of GDP (2012 est.)	No Data
Military Personnel		
Male	1,767,428	315,176
Female	1,687,719 (2010 est.)	347,017

***Total population according to the 2006 Census of National Population Commission Nigeria is 140,431,790**

Values given are 2014 estimates unless otherwise stated

Source: Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook: Nigeria and The Gambia" <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ga.html>

Nigeria's asymmetric relations with The Gambia is not unexpected. It was informed by Nigeria's foreign policy objectives. Factors of size and population conferred on Nigeria, even before the attainment of independence, a leadership role in Africa. Therefore, after independence in 1960, Nigeria consciously adopted the doctrine of African centre-piece policy. By this, the country hoped and still hopes to put African interests in the forefront of her foreign pursuits. Being the single largest concentration of Africans in the world, Nigeria arrogates to herself the responsibility of catering for the well being of Africans wherever they may be. (Saliu, 2006, 102) In her concern for Africa, Nigeria has had to make hard decisions sometimes with negative impact to her. In doing this, she has been condemned, commended and, in some cases, unsung. All the same, successive governments since the attainment of independence have remained faithful to the African centre-piece policy. (Saliu, 2006, 204)



The manifestation of this Afro-centric policy is evident in Nigeria's unequal relations with The Gambia. Based on her relative material endowment, Nigeria has entered into economic ventures with The Gambia without necessarily pinning her eyes on any returns. More so, through the instrumentality of the Technical Aids Corps, Nigerians of varied academic backgrounds are sent to The Gambia to assist in filling the gap of the paucity of manpower. Nigerian doctors, lawyers, engineers, football coaches have been deployed at not so much cost to the recipient nation. Through other schemes, Nigeria has provided Chief Justices, Chiefs of Army Staff and Police Officers to The Gambia. Nigeria on the other hand has not received such from The Gambia. She is always on the giving side.

Subsequent sections will discuss the context of Nigeria's relations with The Gambia; assess the relations using the asymmetric option model; highlight the merits of such asymmetric relations and the problems associated with it; and eventually emphasize the importance of sustaining relations with The Gambia despite constraints.

Context of Nigeria and the Gambia Relations

Nigeria's Diplomatic Relations with The Gambia

Formal diplomatic relations between the Nigerian government and The Gambia were established with the opening of the Nigerian High Commission in The Gambia in 1965 and the first Nigerian Head of Mission dispatched to Banjul forthwith. The Gambia also has a High Commission in Abuja, which opened in 1965. Since 1965, Nigeria has sent High Commissioners to The Gambia. Also, the Gambia has sent High Commissioners to Nigeria.

Nigeria-The Gambia Joint Commission

In order to further strengthen the bonds of friendship between Nigeria and The Gambia and to consolidate the economic and cultural ties between both countries, Nigeria proposed the establishment of a Nigeria-Gambia Joint Commission in 1979 to The Gambia. The initiative resulted in the signing of an "Agreement on Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation" between the two countries in Lagos on 15th June 1983 and The Nigeria-Gambia Joint Commission was inaugurated on February 15, 1985 at a ceremony in Banjul, The Gambia. (Nigerian High Commission, 2010)

After 1985, the Joint Commission was dormant but in 2002, during bilateral talks between President Olusegun Obasanjo and President Yahya Jammeh, they both agreed to revitalize the dormant Joint Commission as a way of fostering stronger cooperation between the two countries. Thus a meeting was scheduled to hold at Abuja in 2003. A follow-up meeting held in Banjul in 2010 where the Nigerian Minister of Foreign Affairs urged that important areas of Bilateral Fishing, Air Services, Trade and Technical Assistance be given topmost consideration. (Nigerian High Commission, 2010)

In 2013, President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and President Yahya Jammeh signed a Joint Communiqué where they agreed to reenergize the Joint Commission between the two countries, with a view to diversifying and strengthening cooperation in all sectors. To this end, they decided to maintain frequent contacts and consultations so as to implement the agreements concluded during the previous sessions of the Joint Commissions. (Senghore, 2013) Although Nigeria and The



Gambia implemented some of these agreements, there is no record of both parties' implementation of these agreements under the auspices of the Joint Commission.

Economic Relations

Cross-border trade between Nigeria and The Gambia must be understood in the larger context of the overwhelming role of the informal sector. Although formal trade exists between Nigeria and The Gambia, a substantial proportion of the cross-border trade between the two countries flows through informal channels. Formal trade covers public sector employment and wage employment in other sectors. While the informal is usually associated with small-scale economic activities that are unregulated and characterized by negative aspects such as tax evasion. Some scholars describe the informal sector as one that gives undervalued receipts, uses unchartered routes and smuggles goods including illicit and illegal commodities. (Njenga, 2015)

However, from a realistic perspective, the informal sector could be described as that part of the economy run by those who endeavour to make ends meet through their own initiative and enterprise. The informal economy also often lacks government sanction and private sector support. Nonetheless, the informal sector makes a considerable contribution to the reduction of household poverty. In other words, the informal economy also acts as a safety net for unemployed people in the West African sub region. (Hoffman, 2015)

The scale of unrecorded trade taking place between Nigeria and The Gambia is a reflection of the scale of informal domestic businesses both in Nigeria and in The Gambia. One estimate shows that unrecorded or informal activity could account for as much as 64 per cent of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).¹⁶ On the other hand, the informal sector in The Gambia is a major employer and according to Gambian Labour Force Survey (GLFS) Statistics, 62.8 per cent of the Labour force are employed in the informal sector. (The Republic of Gambia, 2015)

Cross-border trade between Nigeria and The Gambia is closely connected to domestic wholesale-retail trade, which is dominated by the informal sector. (Benjamin 2015) Nigerians residing in The Gambia, driven by entrepreneurial spirit or individual survival, find the informal domestic trading market of The Gambia a haven to establish their businesses. About 20,000 Nigerians establish such businesses as restaurants; cyber cafés; sale of electronic or motor spare parts, sale of furniture, cosmetics, jewellery, plastic wares, lace materials, medicaments, laboratory equipment, stationary, and other forms of buying and selling. There are those in the essential service industry such as construction, pest control, hairstyling and woodworks among others. Most of these businessmen source their goods from Nigeria. (Nigerian High Commission, 2010)

It is important to mention that that so-called informal sector in which many Nigerian businessmen in The Gambia are engaged in can be said to be a "semi-informal" one. This is because The Gambian government heavily taxes the Nigerian businessmen. The businessmen have to register their businesses annually with The Gambian Revenue Authority; renew their business licenses annually with the Kanifing Municipal Council (KMC); and also renew their resident permits annually. These licenses have to be paid for. There is also an Education Levy that businessmen have to pay for the growth of education in The Gambia. The taxes levied on these businesses to an extent rules out the informality of these businesses, hence, "a semi-informal sector".



Another important linkage between Nigeria and The Gambia is the expanding cross-border activity of Nigerian-based banks. There are six subsidiaries of Nigerian-based banks in The Gambia. They include: FBN Bank Gambia (First Bank Nigeria), Skye Bank, Access Bank, Zenith Bank, Guaranty Trust Bank (GTBank) and Keystone Bank. The assets of the Nigerian banks in The Gambia constitute around 40 percent of the banking system assets in The Gambia. (Banking Industry, The Gambian government in 2014 nationalized the assets of Keystone Bank because the bank's capital fell below the required minimum capitalization threshold of 200 million Gambian Dalasi. These Nigerian banks have contributed to enhancing the competitiveness of the banking system and improving access to financial services.

Nigeria and The Gambia as members of ECOWAS are signatories to several Protocols and Conventions emanating from the Community such as Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS), the Common External Tariff (CET) and Establishment of Free Trade Areas as well as Free Migration of Citizens. These provisions facilitate the movement of goods and services across the border of both countries.

The Nigerian businessmen in The Gambia attested to the favorable business environment in The Gambia. For example, the Head of Corporate Affairs at Guaranty Trust Bank (GTBank) in the Gambia, Mr. Doudou Bojang spoke of the advantages the bank enjoys in The Gambia. He mentioned the Repatriation Law in The Gambia, which allows the Bank to take all its funds back to her home country without having to compulsorily invest in The Gambia. Also, the Expatriate Quota Tax (EQT) levied on registered foreign businessmen is beneficial to Nigerians. While Nigerians pay EQT of 10,000 Dalasi, other nationals pay 40,000 Dalasi. Added to this is the relatively easy Gambian Port Authority System that enables businessmen to clear goods without delay. (Bojang, 2016)

In another vein, Mr. Kolawole Emmanuel an employee of GTBank spoke of some of the challenges of doing business in The Gambia. For him, the cost of operating business in The Gambia is high. This, he attributed primarily to the heavy taxation. (Kolawole, 2016) Mr. Okey Peter Akwada, a Nigerian involved in the spare parts business said he had to pay 5,000 Dalasi for the KMC tax, 14,500 Dalasi for the annual business registration and 1,600 Dalasi for the residence permit. A total equivalent of N211,000. Customs duties are also high. Clearing a 40-foot container of goods can cost about 90,000-95,000 Dalasi, an equivalent of N950,000. These taxes are mandatory and defaulters are duly penalized. Once when Mr. Akwada defaulted on the payment of his taxes, he was taken to court and had to pay a fine of D16, 500 (N165,000). According to Mr. Akwada, more of the profit of the business goes to expenses and at the end of the year, he is able to save about N30,000-N40,000. (Akwada, 2016)

Mr. Chris Uzo, the President of the Nigerian Community in The Gambia, pointed to the depreciation of the Naira as one of the challenges that Nigerian businessmen encounter in The Gambia. The rate of Dollar appreciation in Nigeria is not the same as The Gambia. For three years, the rate of Dollar to Dalasi has been around \$1- D43/44. While in Nigeria, the Dollar rate has risen from \$1-N165 to \$1-N365. Since majority of the Nigerian businessmen import 60% of their goods from Nigeria, the high exchange rate of Dollar-Naira makes it difficult to make profit on the goods brought to The Gambia. (Uzo, 2016)

The population of The Gambia compared to Nigeria is low. Therefore, there is a smaller consumer population in The Gambia than in Nigeria. For this reason manufacturing companies in The Gambia



do not make so much profit except they have foreign markets in the neighbouring countries. Mr. Oliver, Mr. Akwada and other respondents to the interview conducted agree on the point that profit making in The Gambia is a gradual process, as the money in circulation in The Gambia cannot be compared to Nigeria.

Since most of the trading activities of the Nigerian businessmen in The Gambia go unrecorded, quantifying the significance of Nigerian presence in the Gambian informal sector is challenging given data limitations. Trade statistics fail to capture what are often large volumes of unrecorded informal trade; data on capital flows and stocks are often of very poor quality; and information on labor flows and remittances typically understate the scale of activity involved by sizable margins. For this reason, in February 2003, the Nigerian Minister of Commerce, Chief Precious Ngelale in a meeting with a high-powered delegation from The Gambia led by the country's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Abubakar Blaise Ismaila Jagne, demanded that the informal business and trade going on between Nigeria and The Gambia be formalized. (Ugwuodo, 2003) This formalization took place in 2015 when the Nigerian government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with The Gambia to promote Trade and Investment.

Jurisprudential Assistance to The Gambia

The judicial arm of the Gambian government is manned by foreign nationals including Nigerian, Ghanaian and Pakistani who are seconded for a renewable three-year term. Since the 1960s, Nigeria has offered judicial assistance to The Gambia through the secondment of top level Nigerian Judicial Officers to The Gambian Judiciary. In May 1960 Mr. Samuel Abayomi George was appointed the Registrar of the Supreme Court in The Gambia. (Annual Report, 1960) In 1973 His Lordship Mr. E.O. Ayoola was seconded to The Gambian judiciary as Chief Justice of the Gambia. (Nigerian High Commission, 2010)

A "Bilateral Agreement on the Secondment of Legal Officers to The Gambia" that was signed in 1980 formalized the secondment. These legal officers are expected to train The Gambian lawyers in legal drafting and also assist in the setting up of law reform commission. Under the subsisting agreement four legal officers were seconded from the Federal Ministry of Justice to The Gambia in 2000. This crop of officers served The Gambia for eight years. At the end of their tour of duty three of the legal officers were retained by The Gambia to serve in different capacities. Chief Emmanuel Akomaye Agim as the Chief Justice of the Gambia, Mr. Emmanuel Fagbenle as a High Court Judge and Mrs. Grace Mowo as a member of The Gambia Law Reform Commission. (Nigerian High Commission, 2010)

In November 2008, the Nigerian Federal Government deployed another set of legal officers to The Gambia. The Federal Ministry of Justice recruited The Gambian Director of Public Prosecution at that time. Also in 2008 eleven Nigerian legal officers served in the Attorney General's Chambers in The Gambia with remunerations fully paid by the Nigerian government. (Nigerian High Commission, 2010)

Defense Relations

After the collapse of the Senegambia Confederation in 1989, the Jawara administration in The Gambia looked to Nigeria to fill the vacuum created by the Senegalese military withdrawal. The



appointment of several Nigerian officers at the head of the National army was considered as a way to ensure the regime's security. (Touray, 2000, p. 174) Sixty-nine Nigerian soldiers were deployed to The Gambia to serve in various capacities in the Gambian army providing technical assistance and training exercises. Some of the Nigerian army officers appointed at the head of The Gambian army include: Col. Abubakar Dauda and Col. Lawan Gwadabe. (The Guardian, 1991) In 1991, Nigeria trained the Gambian Land Forces and in 1993, Nigeria contributed training teams known as Nigerian Army Training Assistance Group (NATAG) to The Gambia. After a while the NATAG contingent left the Gambia.

Although there are no Nigerian soldiers in the Gambian army as at 2015, the Nigerian government gives an opportunity for The Gambian officers to undergo advanced military training at the Armed Forces Command and Staff College in Jaji, Kaduna State. Also, in 2015, twenty-two staff and participants of the Nigerian National Defence College (NDC) visited The Gambian Armed Forces, Defence Headquarters to enhance further training assistance to The Gambian Armed Forces. Furthermore, both countries have attempted to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Defence and Security. This was fixed for 12th March 2015 but the meeting could not hold. Therefore the signing of the document is still pending and awaiting response from the Gambian headquarters to indicate the venue and new date for the meeting. (Nigerian High Commission, 2015)

Added to this, Nigeria, over the years has provided a Police Adviser and has also trained and retrained The Gambian Police Personnel in specialised areas of law enforcement such as finger printing, handwriting and photography. On Gambia's internal security, Nigeria agreed and extended its training facilities to the nascent Gambian Intelligence Officers; Immigration Officers and Prison Personnel who attended courses under the agencies of the Nigerian Security Organisation and have since returned to The Gambia. In the same way, Nigeria has provided Immigration Advisers to The Gambian government. (Nigerian High Commission, 2010)

Technical Aid Corps Scheme

The Nigerian government in 1987 established the Technical Aid Corps (TAC) scheme to serve as a 'practical demonstration of South-South Cooperation'. TAC is a voluntary international service scheme whereby highly skilled Nigerians, particularly young people, volunteer to serve in developing countries for a two-year period. It is designed, among other things, to share Nigeria's brimming human resources with other African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, to promote understanding between Nigeria and the recipient countries, and to facilitate through service, meaningful contact between Nigerian young people and the youth of recipient countries. (Adebanwi, 2011)

Although the scheme was created in 1987, the statute establishing it was only signed into law in January 1993, exactly six years later. This statute created a directorate called the Directorate of Technical Aid Corps as a parastatal (a semi-independent government department) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is charged with overall management and general administration of the scheme, recruitment and orientation exercises for volunteers, deployment of volunteers to recipient countries and debriefing of volunteers on their final return home.

The TAC Directorate recruits are made up of journalists, medical doctors, nurses and other paramedics, as well as lawyers, teachers and engineers, lecturers and university administrators,



and they work in the recipient countries in the health, education, legal and public sectors. The Nigerian government pays them a \$700 monthly allowance and N10, 000 (less than \$100) 'off-shore' (paid into their local account) during their two-year postings. (Adebanwi, 2011)

In the past 29 years, thousands of young Nigerian professionals have participated in the programme, with Nigeria spending billions of dollars to finance the scheme. The Federal Government of Nigeria is responsible for paying the tax-free onshore and offshore allowances, 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. These services may vary, depending on the TAC-host country agreement signed at the commencement of the programme, which stipulates the roles and responsibilities of both parties in the operation of the scheme.

The technical aid agreement between Nigeria and The Gambia began when 12 Nigerian volunteers were deployed to The Gambia in January 1988 but it was based on a Memorandum of Understanding. In 2009, a formal bilateral agreement on technical cooperation was signed. This gave a legal backing to the scheme and allowed for a full exploration of the scheme. (Okungbowa, 2009) The Gambia receives the highest number of volunteers biennially, indeed, more volunteers than any other recipient country since the scheme started. Between 1987 and 2004, it hosted 363 volunteers, twice as many in the same period as Zambia (181 volunteers), the second highest recipient country. Health workers comprise the biggest block of volunteers to The Gambia. In the first 18 years, the country hosted 73 doctors and other medical personnel and 87 nurses, a total of 160 health workers. (Adebanwi, 2011) There were 81 volunteers in the 2004–2006 round, and they arrived in The Gambia in October and November 2004. There were 83 volunteers in the 2006-2008 biennium and in the 2010-2012 round, 74 volunteers comprising 33 medical practitioners and 36 teachers were deployed to the Gambia.

Nigerians that have been posted to The Gambia under the auspices of the Technical Aids Corps have served in various capacities such as medicine, education, agriculture and judiciary among others. Some notable Nigerians that have served in the Gambia over the years include the late Akinola Aguda, who at a time was the Chief Justice of the Gambia, while Mr. Laloko Kashimawo, has served as the football coach of the Gambian national team and the current Chief Justice of the country, Justice Emmanuel Fagbenle is a Nigerian. He is among the five Nigerian professionals to have served in the country recently that were recalled by the Gambian government. (Okungbowa, 2009)

The TAC is very crucial to the national needs of the Gambia because the country has an incredible shortage of manpower. For instance, Nigeria has been assisting the health sector in the Gambia with the provision of technical assistance in form of medical personnel (doctors and nurses as well as lecturers for the medical school at the University of The Gambia). Although the Gambian government is responsible for the basic recurrent expenses of the health personnel, the services provided have been very useful. The presence of Nigerian medical personnel among other medical personnel has significantly strengthened service delivery at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of care. During the last 28 years, over 200 health workers from Nigeria have assisted in building up the Gambian health sector. (WHO,n.d.)



According to the report of the interviews carried out by Wale Adebani in 2006, past Gambian volunteers testified to the significance of the TAC to The Gambia. “If there is not TAC, I don’t know how The Gambia will cope with her manpower challenges,” said Mercy, a volunteer who worked in the Directorate of Science, Information, Communication and Technology in the Gambian Department of State for Education. “Majority of the teachers here are foreigners. Majority of the TAC teachers take on most of the responsibilities. There are places in The Gambia where there are no Gambians teaching. Gambian teachers do not like to go to the interior places to work, particularly science teachers. Most of the science teachers in the interior places are TAC volunteers.” (Adebani, 2011)

According to Isatou Ndow, the Head of the Education Department in the Gambian College of Education, “there are many Nigerian teachers in the High School especially in the Senior Secondary School. There was a time we were saying that if the Nigerians left, then the Senior Secondary School would crumble.” (Ndow, 2016)

In all, the scheme, according to the volunteers and Gambians interviewed and officials at the Nigerian high commission in The Gambia, has played a critical role in the development of The Gambia. When you look at what has happened in The Gambia, you will come to the conclusion that TAC is very important for the country. It has positively affected the Gambians.

Educational Relations between Nigeria and The Gambia

Before the establishment of the University of The Gambia, Nigeria and Sierra-Leone were the educational havens of the Gambians. In the 1960s Nigeria gave scholarships to many Gambians to study at the University of Ibadan. Some include: Bakary Bunja Darbo, a French graduate who later became the Vice President of the Gambia in 1982 and Abdoulie Momodou Sallah, also a French graduate who later became the Head of the Civil Service and Minister of Higher Education in 2009. Nigeria continued to give such scholarships till the 1980s. (Tarro, 2016)

The incumbent Registrar of the University of The Gambia, Mr. Momodou Tarro, attended The University of Maiduguri in Nigeria in 1997 on a scholarship that allowed the Gambian students in Nigeria to be excluded from the international students’ fee and allowed them pay the same school fees as the Nigerian students in the University. At the time he was in the University about fifteen Gambians in various fields benefited from this scholarship. Most of the beneficiaries have risen to prominent positions in the Gambian government. For instance, Dr. Ahmadu Samate who studied Medicine has become the Head of the Department of Surgery at the School of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences, Dr. Siedu Sanya who became the Director of Agriculture and the Registrar himself, are examples of such beneficiaries. (Tarro, 2016)

But in the wake of political instability in Sierra Leone and Nigeria, The Gambian government felt an imperative to establish a university. Thus, the University of The Gambia was founded by an Act of National assembly of the Gambia in March 1999. When the University opened, Nigeria helped to train the administrative staff so that the University could achieve the necessary standards. A major contribution of Nigeria at the inception of the University was the provision of the pioneer Vice-Chancellor of the University, Prof. Donald E.U. Ekong. He was the Vice Chancellor of the University from 1999-2005. He was in the University under the sponsorship of the Commonwealth for two years but after that the Nigerian government through the Technical Aids Scheme paid his salary



and allowances. Prof. Ekong laid down the academic and administrative structures of the University in line with the system that obtained in Nigeria. Nigeria also provided a technical aid package that included a Registrar, Mr. Emmanuel Akpan and four Deans to the University. There were also professors and lecturers in various fields like history, health sciences, law, journalism etc. that served in the University of The Gambia at the expense of the Nigerian government. These illustrious Nigerians built the institution from the scratch to a status befitting of a modern university. (Tarro, 2016)

The Head of the Education Department at the Gambian College of Education, Mrs. Isatou Ndow said in an interview that the Nigerians contribute immensely to the education sector in the Gambia. There are twenty-five Nigerian teachers at the College of Education: twenty at the Early Childhood Development (ECD) and five at the Higher Teachers' Certificate (HTC). She commended the diligence of these Nigerian teachers. Although they are contract staff and are not pensionable, they are just as hardworking and dedicated to their work as the pensionable teachers. She gave an instance of the Nigerians, Mr. Uzo Promise and Mr. David Abekwe, working as Chemistry and Physics teachers respectively in the College. Mr. Uzo is the only Chemistry teacher that the College has while Mr. Abekwe is the only Physics teacher. They both work hard even though they are on contract. At least five Nigerian students enroll at the College of Education annually. (Ndow, 2016)

The Nigerian students in the various universities in The Gambia serve as goodwill ambassadors of Nigeria in the Gambia by serving in various capacities to maintain peace and development in the country. In this vein, the Nigerian Students' Association at the University of The Gambia dubbed (UTGNSA), expressed in a press release sent to the Daily Observer in August 2015, their commitment and support to the development of the Gambia. Contained in the press release were plans to embark on a mass tree-planting exercise at the University of The Gambia Faraba Campus. The move was to promote and strengthen the ideas of green revolution as initiated under the leadership of President Yahya Jammeh. (Jawara, 2014)

In all, the Gambia has received a lot of assistance from Nigeria in its educational sector in terms of scholarships that were provided to the Gambians in different departments to study in Nigerian universities at the expense of the Nigerian government. Nigeria and Gambia cooperate on educational issues at all levels of education. This has fostered cooperation between both countries. On the whole, Nigeria and The Gambia enjoy and maintain an excellent relationship. All successive regimes in Nigeria have tried to cement this relationship since both countries established diplomatic relations in 1965. Nigeria has readily given assistance to The Gambia, whenever the latter makes such request. Nigeria's policy is predicated on the principle that African countries which are relatively better off in some areas should assist their sister countries to reduce their dependence on Europe and America. Historical experience has undoubtedly confirmed that economic dependence on the advanced countries has consistently enabled the latter to undermine concerted effort at achieving sustained unity in Africa.

Assessment of the Nigeria and the Gambia Relations

Application of Kozák's Asymmetric Model Option

Nigeria and The Gambia although have had friendly relations overtime, their relations can be described as asymmetrical. There are clear disparities in the capabilities of both countries which



makes Nigeria to give more to The Gambia than she receives thereby increasing the gains of the Gambia from the bilateral relationship. According to Krystof Kozak, in an asymmetric relation between a stronger state (Nigeria) and a weaker state (The Gambia), both have several policy options when approaching the other. The weaker state has basically only two conceptual choices—to open or to close itself with respect to the stronger state. The stronger state on the other hand has four basic options in dealing with asymmetric relations when facing weak states. The first option is to close itself to the weaker state; the second option for the strong state is to pursue “open” policies and actively engage the weaker state; the third option is to ignore the weaker state and focus its attention elsewhere; and the fourth option for the stronger state in an asymmetric relationship to use its position to try to dominate the weaker state. (Kozak, 2010)

It is however recommended that the stronger and weaker states have an open attitude towards each other as that is most beneficial to both parties. The opening option might in fact lead to rising levels of economic and social developments and to diminishing asymmetry with respect to the stronger state. By helping the weaker state with the most critical economic and social issues, the stronger state broadens its surrounding perimeter of security and stability as well as mitigates potentially negative consequences of the underlying asymmetry.

Putting Nigeria and The Gambia relations in this more abstract framework helps to better understand and explain the underlying bilateral issues. In the first few decades after independence in Nigeria and The Gambia, both countries pursued a somewhat closed relationship. As newly independent states that wanted to consolidate their economies, both countries adopted protective trade policy regimes with price controls, import restrictions and licensing, quota and selective quantitative restrictions. (Ministry of Trade, 2011) However after 1986, following the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme in Nigeria and the introduction of the Economic Recovery Programme in the Gambia, both countries adopted liberal trade regimes with restrictions imposed on a few items relating to public health and safety. (Udochukwu, 2013) This underscored the ineffectiveness of “closed” policies in bilateral relationships.

Despite the stringent trade policy regimes, Nigeria’s dispensation towards The Gambia reflect that of a strong state willing to open itself to the weaker state. This Nigeria has done by pursuing “open” policies that actively engage and support The Gambia. Nigeria has provided technical assistance in health care, judiciary, military and academia among others.

The policies of The Gambia also reflect those of a weaker state willing to open itself towards the stronger state—Nigeria. This, The Gambia has done through lowering the economic as well as political barriers surrounding the country. For instance The Gambian and Nigerian tariff structure are consistent with the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) following the adoption of Common External Tariff (CET) by the ECOWAS Authority in 2006. (Ministry of Trade, 2011) This has helped to remove economic barriers between Nigeria and The Gambia and facilitate trade relations. Trade policy in the Gambia is not much oriented by the usual protectionist or infant-industry motive. Instead customs duties and other trade taxes are mainly used as instruments to generate government revenues.

Also, both countries have pursued economic integration by agreeing to form The Nigeria-Gambia Joint Commission in order to consolidate the economic and cultural ties between them. Although not active at the moment, is a step in the right direction. Similarly, Nigeria and the Gambia signed



a formal Trade Agreement in May 2015 and several attempts have been made to implement existing agreements between them.

Added to this, the Gambia has attempted to emulate the institutional structures and policies of Nigeria. For instance, the structure of the University of The Gambia is patterned according to the structure of Nigerian universities; judicial officers in Nigeria have been seconded to The Gambia to train Gambian judicial officers and set up a Law Reform Commission; Nigerian soldiers headed the Gambian army before 1994 and provided technical training to the Gambian soldiers and till date Gambian police personnel train at Nigerian Armed Forces and Command Staff College.

The implication of such “open” policies is that Nigeria admits at least partial responsibility for problems in The Gambia and attempts to eliminate their root causes through cooperation. Consequently, Nigeria commits sufficient resources to such issues. In the short run, these resources and efforts spent to assist The Gambia seem wasted because the benefits are hidden. In the long run however, the open approach can be significantly beneficial for the Nigeria as well at national and individual levels. Since Nigeria insists on avoiding the attachment of sticks and carrots to her aid policy to The Gambia in order to erode the disparities between them, what tangible benefits has she enjoyed from her enormous and unparalleled sacrifices to The Gambia?

Nigeria’s Benefits from Bilateral Relations with the Gambia

The Gambia, a small country with a size of about 10,662 square kilometres and a population of about 1.9 million people, is one of the poorest countries in Africa, with no important mineral or other natural resources. About 75 per cent of the population depends on crops and livestock for its livelihood. The Gambia generates revenue of \$90.5 million annually, with half of that coming from foreign aid. Nigeria on the other hand is Africa's most populous nation, with more than 140 million people and it has the resources—human and material—to make black Africans proud, and hold their head high anywhere in the world. (Nigerian High Commission, 2010) Thus, Nigeria felt the imperative to aid The Gambia in as many ways as possible so that the country can develop thereby reducing the asymmetry between them. This Nigeria has done without setting her eyes on gains. However it does not mean that Nigeria does not benefit from the uneven relations between both countries.

Although a small country, Gambia’s geographical location as the only English speaking country at the Atlantic Ocean, sandwiched by the Francophone countries of Senegal, Guinea Conakry, Mali and Lusophone Guinea Bissau, confers on it a geo-strategic advantage for Nigeria. So in terms of strategic interest, Nigeria’s presence and influence in The Gambia is not only necessary but also crucial in pursuing her economic and foreign policy objectives. The proximity of The Gambia to Senegal, which is one of France’s closest ally and traditionally suspicious of Nigeria’s motives, makes Banjul an attractive location and vital ally in containing Senegal’s and by extension, France’s ambitions in the West African sub-region. (Nigerian High Commission, 2010)

Also, The Gambia has actively participated in ECOWAS alongside Nigeria in pursuit of the latter’s foreign policy objectives and ideals. Gambia supported and participated in Nigeria’s active intervention in Guinea Bissau, Liberia and Sierra-Leone. This is in contrast to the tepid and half-hearted support given by Nigeria’s Francophone neighbours. This no doubt confers additional strategic and economic advantage that Nigeria should invest upon.



Governments in The Gambia, past and present, have depended on Nigeria for support in many areas, and such support is still being given generously, in the true spirit of African solidarity. For this reason Nigeria can always count on the political support of The Gambia wherever there is a decision to be made in Nigeria's favour at international forums.

Nigeria provides security assistance to The Gambia through a range of training programs to the Gambian military and Gambian police personnel so as to assist the country in defending and preserving her national security. It is in Nigeria's interest to provide military assistance to The Gambia against internal disorders so as to prevent outside forces from moving into the country. Such training assistance helps to further the goal of regional stability through effective, mutually beneficial military-to-military relations that culminate in increased understanding and defence cooperation. History reveals that wars have been fought amongst states that have closed all communication channels, with no military-to-military contacts. It is important to develop close ties with the military forces of the region, to build confidence and enhance security. (Sachar, 2003 p.414)

Similarly, military cooperation between Nigeria and The Gambia helps to build strategic security relationship and address common security concerns. Common threats, especially those related to international terrorism and trafficking, can be better handled through joint training and operations. The synergy and enhanced fighting potential so achieved can ensure timely and coordinated response in a crisis situation. By training together in peacetime, confusion and delays are prevented and joint operations made smooth and effective. Confidence levels, professional trust and respect are built up through joint exercises. Moreover, such exercises convey signals to potential adversaries and challengers of authority, about the joint military response their actions could invite.

In another vein, the banking system is the dominant component of the financial system in Nigeria and many emerging market economies, i.e. the banking industry is the key actor in causing and preventing financial and economic crises. Therefore, the activities of banks are very important to the Nigerian economy. One of such activities is the establishment of subsidiary banks abroad including The Gambia.

The expansion of Nigerian banks in the Gambia has attracted additional investors to the banks. Additional investors improve the capital threshold of the banks thereby maximizing shareholder value. Thus, Nigerian investors in the banks have a propensity of increased dividends. Also, the shares of stock in the subsidiary banks are held as assets in the books of the parent banks in Nigeria and this can be used as a collateral for additional debt financing. (Green, 2016)

Through subsidiaries in The Gambia, Nigerian banks have been able to limit their potential losses by using subsidiaries as liability shields. These banks can take risks through subsidiaries, thus limiting the risks to the subsidiaries instead of putting the parent bank in Nigeria on the line. Added to this, Nigerian subsidiary banks in the Gambia have contributed immensely to the development of the country. Since the Nigerian banks retain their corporate entities' identities, the parent bank benefits from any goodwill and recognition attached to the subsidiary's name. (Bianco, 2007)

Moreover, the informal cross border trade (ICBT) that takes place between Nigeria and The Gambia holds some advantages. Such trade has positive impact on the individuals participating in the trade, their families and relatives through contribution to food security, creation of employment,



provision of income and poverty alleviation, complementing the formal commercial network and contribution to the opening of new markets for domestic products.

ICBT enables Nigerian traders in The Gambia to obtain decent shelters for themselves and their relatives using the income generated from the trade and it has a multiplier effect on education and health care, not only for themselves but also for their dependents. It is also a source of employment for the traders and their relatives. Households participating in the trade have been able to support their families using ICBT incomes and poor families are increasingly escaping poverty. (Njoku, 2013, p.422)

Informal cross border trade between Nigeria and The Gambia is not only a source of livelihood; it is also a source of employment, making up for the shortfall as a result of the reduction in formal employment. For example, the combined rate of youth unemployment in Nigeria according to the National Bureau of Statistics was 30.4% in 2015 while the underemployment rate was 54.4%. Nigeria does not have the capacity to provide gainful employment for these people. (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015) More so, between 1.2 and 2.2 million young Nigerians join the labour force every year, but of the 469,070 new jobs created in the first quarter of 2015, more than two-thirds were in the informal sector. (Ogunlesi, 2015) For many, informal cross border trade has become a means of survival, a source of income and employment. By engaging in ICBT, people who otherwise have no jobs become gainfully employed and in turn a chain of other service providers such as transport and commuter operators get jobs where otherwise these operators would be unemployed.

Informal contacts strengthen regional integration networks and relationships, and also contribute immensely to the process of regional integration. Regional integration processes demand participation of all sectors of the economy including the informal sectors.

Furthermore, through the Technical Aid Corps Scheme (TAC), young Nigerians have secured employment in the Gambia and in a way reduced the pool of unemployed Nigerians. The exposure acquired by Nigerians through this policy cannot be quantified and this has led to a better understanding of situations around the continent. TAC has enhanced civic virtues in the volunteers. These civic virtues include leadership qualities, patriotism, selflessness, sacrifice, civility, trust, capacity for human solidarity and understanding, etc. (Adebanwi, 2011)

Sunday Mogaji, a TAC volunteer asserted that volunteering in The Gambia has helped him to learn many leadership values. It has also helped to teach him the virtues of sacrifice, particularly when confronted with the lack of appreciation of his efforts by ordinary Gambians. A volunteer nurse stated that one of the most important virtues she learnt during her period in The Gambia was patience. Bello, a medical doctor, also learned to appreciate Nigeria better. According to him,

The things we take for granted in Nigeria are not available here. We often condemn our country and assume that things are perfect even in smaller African countries. But I have found that it is not so ... Here, I have learned that Nigeria is envied and admired, because of Nigerians' ability to make things happen. (Adebanwi, 2011)

In addition, one of the aims of the TAC was to improve the perception of Nigeria by other countries. That aim can be said to have been achieved to an extent as a volunteer medical doctor stated that "most Gambians have very high esteem for Nigeria... I have heard people say that from primary school to high school they have been taught and trained by Nigerian volunteers. Most ordinary



Gambians hold TAC volunteers in very high esteem.” Another volunteer argued that “our importance is highly felt; Nigeria is held in high esteem... In the medical area, if you have one-on-one dialogues with the Gambians, they show their appreciation. The image of Nigeria is thus improving in the country because of TAC.” A volunteer nurse added that The Gambia has been increasing its requests for TAC volunteers, proof that the scheme has enhanced Nigeria’s image in the country.

The benefits that Nigeria derives from her relationship with The Gambia give grounds for continued relationship with the country. Notwithstanding, there are aspects of the bilateral relationship that require attention and review.

Challenges Associated with Nigeria and The Gambia Relations

The challenges of non-implementation of both bilateral as well as multilateral agreements remain a major constraint in the Nigeria and The Gambia relations. At the bilateral level, agreements like the ‘Fishing Rights Agreement’, ‘Agreement on Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation’ and the ‘Agreed Notes on the Inaugural Session of the Nigeria-Gambia Joint Commission’ are not being fully implemented. At the multilateral level, heavy taxation does not allow a full implementation of The ECOWAS protocols particularly in the areas of free movement of people, goods and services. Trade in the sub-region has been hampered largely, due to the absence of ocean going vessels. There are difficulties in the free movement of persons and goods. (Nigerian High Commission, 2010)

According to Amb. Mariam Mohammed, former Nigerian High Commissioner to The Gambia, among the challenges Nigerians in The Gambia face is that of harassment by the Immigration officers. “The immigration is always arresting the “aliens”. They are always arresting them because they don’t have resident permit. The resident permits are usually expensive for Nigerians.” The price was raised from 1300D to 1600D an equivalent of N13,000 and N16,000 respectively. (Francis, 2005)

For Amb. Esther Audu, another former Nigerian High Commissioner to The Gambia, the challenges faced involve Nigerians trying to go to Europe, carrying narcotics or getting involved in human trafficking, armed robbery and at times assassination. She believes that Nigerians residing in The Gambia are not the criminals.

It is those in transit, who don’t really know much about the country; because The Gambia is so small, unlike Nigeria, you could hardly do something of such and nobody will notice. If you are a new person, residing anywhere, they know. However, those in transit get involved in illegal businesses, confidently thinking they can find their way, and before they know it, they have been caught already. (Ajayi, 2013)

Additionally, discrimination against Nigerian migrants in The Gambia is a reality where indigenes feel threatened by the prosperity of the newly-arrived who usually have one major aim of success in whatever endeavour they engage in, which spurs them on. Amb. Audu testified to the discrimination saying, “because of our outgoing character and attitude to business, we tend to achieve more, so at times, they look at Nigerians as rivals or people who have come to take over their economy.” (Ajayi, 2013)

This is exacerbated by the lack of adequate publicity in The Gambia about the nature of the



Technical Aid Corps Scheme, which has led to misunderstandings with local communities, who sometimes think that the volunteers are job seekers who have come to worsen the local employment crisis. The head of the TAC directorate concedes that there is a “publicity lacuna” that needs to be filled. The local communities are often ignorant of the fact that Nigeria is responsible for the upkeep of the TAC volunteers. (Adebanwi, 2005)

According to a volunteer medical doctor:

Truly speaking, we are serving in a country where people regard us as threats rather than see us as people assisting them. Because we are highly qualified and very professional, the few qualified Gambians on the ground regard us as people coming to compete with them. We always try to explain to them that that is not why we are here... that they should have no fear. (Adebanwi, 2005)

Another challenge is that of brain drain. In some cases, volunteers find regular employment in the recipient country at the completion of their term. They only return to Nigeria temporarily, to complete the formalities of signing the register. An ex-volunteer revealed that out of the eight volunteers in her set—including a consultant psychiatrist, two medical laboratory scientists, four psychiatry nurses and one nurse-tutor—she was the only one who had returned.

Many volunteers in the medical profession emphasised that Gambian authorities treat Cuban medical personnel better than Nigerian volunteers, even though they claimed the Nigerians gave more service and made more sacrifices. One of the volunteers said, ‘At the official level, the Gambian government play some diplomacy by stating their appreciation of TAC. But there is no reciprocity. They recognize that we have improved their health care system. But they give a pride of place to the Cuban doctors at public events and not the Nigerian volunteer doctors.’ (Adebanwi, 2005)

These are some of the negative elements of Nigeria and The Gambia Relations that need reappraisal. In spite of these challenges, Nigeria continues to give aid to The Gambia and help with the most critical economic and social issues so as to broaden her own perimeter of security and stability as well as mitigate potentially negative consequences of the underlying asymmetry between both countries.

Conclusion

Analysis utilizing asymmetry theory has provided an understanding of the options available to states in an asymmetric relationship. As recommended by Kozák, states in an asymmetric relationship are to adopt the open policy so as to eventually diminish the asymmetry between them. Nigeria and The Gambia have adopted the open policy in their relationship with each other and this has created a relatively stable relationship between them despite their disparities.

Nigeria and The Gambia enjoy and maintain an excellent relationship. All successive regimes in Nigeria have tried to cement this relationship since both countries established diplomatic relations in 1965. At the Gambian Government requests, Nigeria has demonstrated absolute willingness to assist the country beyond mere affectations and palliatives. This is mainly because of Nigeria’s serious commitment to African unity, political stability and economic development.



The open policy adopted by Nigeria and The Gambia has proven to be beneficial to both countries. On the part of The Gambia, the sectors that Nigeria is actively involved in such as the educational sector, the health sector, the judicial sector, defence and security sector and youth empowerment sector among others, have witnessed tremendous growth.

According to a World Health Organisation's report titled "Gambia: WHO Statistical Profile", over 200 health workers from Nigeria have assisted in the building of the Gambian health sector. In places where there were limited facilities for surgery, TAC doctors and nurses built operating theatres and started surgery, thereby reducing the pressure of patients on the General Hospital in Banjul.

Nigeria has also profited from the bilateral relationship in spite of her altruistic bent. She reaps strategic, political as well as economic benefits at national and individual levels and also there is an improved perception of Nigeria by some Gambians.

The growth in certain sectors that the Gambia experienced did not necessarily close the gap between them. Nevertheless, it is an indication that if friendly and 'open' bilateral relations are maintained by Nigeria and The Gambia, The Gambia can grow and raise its level of social and economic development.

The reality of global economic recession will most likely affect Nigeria's altruistic relations with The Gambia in the immediate future. Both countries will likely spend much more time handling domestic issues than foreign policy issues. A possible implication of this in the most foreseeable aspect of the future, Nigeria and the Gambia relations will remain asymmetric. Another possible implication will be a greater propensity of The Gambia to become Pro-West, thereby increasing the influence that Western powers have on the West African sub region. This undermines one of the principles on which Nigeria's aid policy was predicated upon which is to reduce the economic dependence of African states on advanced countries.

Global economic recession, notwithstanding, Nigeria continues to participate in African affairs and still seeks to improve her relations with The Gambia. The most recent of such took place in April 2016 where Nigeria offered to assist the Gambia to review the latter's National Youth Service Scheme (NYSS). Thus, Nigeria can still be seen at the forefront of providing assistance to needy African countries. Guided by this principle, it is hoped that in future, through the maintenance of excellent and 'open' bilateral relations, the asymmetry between Nigeria and The Gambia will diminish.

Recommendations

One of the major challenges in the Nigeria-Gambia relations is the lack of implementation of existing agreements. Thus it is recommended that target beneficiaries should be involved at the formulation stage of the agreements in order for them to have an input in what affects them. This will also give them a sense of belonging and, therefore, a sense of commitment to the agreement. Attention should be paid to both the manpower and financial resources which will be needed to implement the policy. There must also be effective communication between the target beneficiaries and the implementers of policy programmes. The culture of discontinuing a policy once there is a change in government should be discouraged because even though government comes and goes, administration is continuous. There should be continuity in policy except if the



policy is found not to be useful to the people. Provision should be put in place for adequate monitoring of projects, as poorly monitored projects will only yield undesired results.

Nigeria's perception in the Gambia as a big brother, leader and champion in the sub-region as well as Gambia's often professed willingness and determination to cooperate with Nigeria, should make Nigeria increase not only her presence in The Gambia but also explore avenues of removing the residence permit for Nigerian citizens and create a special relationship between Nigeria and the Gambia. This would end the harassment of Nigerian residents by the Gambian immigration officers and could become a model for other countries in the sub region.

Harassment at the border is a major complaint of Nigerian traders at The Gambian border. Border management agencies like the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) and Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) and their Gambian counterparts should prioritize procedural overhauls and staff training to reduce the time spent by citizens of ECOWAS member countries in going through formalities at the borders. Also, the Central Bank of Nigeria and the Central Bank of The Gambia should conclude the revision of cross-border commercial banking regulation to allow banks to operate simple services for small and medium-sized businesses to make trade payments directly from Naira to Dalasi and vice versa.

The existing misconception of the smallness of the Gambian market and the lack of viable transportation link along the West Coast between Nigeria and The Gambia should not hinder the expansion of trade between both countries. This is because there is a flourishing re-export trade that takes place from the Gambia to neighbouring countries of Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry and Mauritania and this has expanded the Gambian market beyond its borders. The lack of transportation either by sea or land is problematic. However, Nigeria can issue that private companies or individuals with shipping lines should be contracted to serve the West Coast.

While informal trade between Nigeria and The Gambia has several short and medium term benefits such as increasing food security, alleviating poverty and providing employment, in the longer run, it is likely to lead to negative economic and developmental effects. Governments should therefore aim to better integrate and link informal trade with formal trade. This can be done by encouraging, in a first instance, informal firms to register and formalise their domestic activities. A full elimination of informal cross-border trade is however unlikely, as there will always be traders for which the costs of trading formally will remain higher than the opportunity costs related to informal trade, despite the introduction of facilitation and simplification measures. Yet, even if some degree of informality persists, greater incentives to formalise will clearly benefit all traders and the economy in general.

Publicity for the Technical Aids Scheme, both within Nigeria and The Gambia is crucial. As many volunteers in The Gambia and those who have returned have stated, ordinary people are ignorant about TAC and unaware that the professionals and technicians sent from Nigeria are volunteers, not job seekers. This, as most volunteers claim, was the source of much hostility by the host communities and co-workers towards many volunteers. In doing this, the TAC directorate and Nigerian missions in The Gambia should work together with host governments to emphasise the voluntary nature of the service and the technical assistance offered by Nigeria. This will not only evoke appreciation from the host communities where volunteers work, but would also provide the most conducive environment for volunteers to give more.



Also, it is important to publicise and demonstrate the concrete gains of the scheme within Nigeria to ensure public support, which could be critical, particularly given the country's susceptibility to having a government in power that would willingly scrap the programme. If there were widespread understanding within Nigeria of the programme's benefits within civil and political society, any government would have greater difficulty in scrapping it. In this context, there is the need to formally document, both qualitatively and quantitatively, the impact of the specific services rendered by volunteers so as to provide the data with which to publicise the scheme and bring it further respectability.

There is also the need to showcase the initiative globally, not only to promote Nigeria's image, but perhaps also to encourage other well-endowed developing nations in the world to establish similar programmes in the global South. The impact of the TAC volunteers in The Gambia is an important illustration of the high-quality human resources available within Nigeria that can be shared with less-developed members of the comity of developing nations of the world.

One of the ways to assuage the clamour by scholars that Nigeria should withdraw from her foreign policy pursuits is to project the positive image of Nigeria. Reputation sometimes is measured by overall image projections. Below are recommended for the state actors who are in the frontline offices where Nigeria's reputations are evaluated.

- The Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs in conjunction with the Federal Ministry of Information and Communications should urgently mount image and reputation management campaigns in the international media and project the good works, achievements and humanitarian efforts of the country;
- The Nigeria Institute of International Affairs should diversify her publications by incorporating image and reputation studies.
- The Nigerian Institute of Public Relations should help in the crusade for behaviours change among Nigerians through public enlightenment campaigns. These campaigns would enlighten people about the gains of foreign policy and the need for Nigeria to engage in foreign pursuits.

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