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CITIZEN DIPLOMACY AND DEVELOPMENT: RE-EVALUATING NIGERIA'S AFROCENTRIC FOREIGN POLICIES FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE IN WEST AFRICA

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Abstract

Recent events on the African continent show that the Nigerian government has played significant hegemonic roles in the African region without really paying adequate attention to her internal domestic contradictions. To many observers, this kind of big brother gesture by the Nigerian government has fetched the Nigerian state almost nothing. The nation is therefore challenged by increasing poverty, unemployment, corruption and general economic problems. Of particular importance to this study is the poor international image some of these problems have created for the country and its people outside the shores of Africa generally. This study has therefore sought to unravel some of these challenges through deeper investigations to be able to frontally tackle the issues. This study is an exploratory research, and has essentially employed content analysis as sources of data collection and method of investigation. The paper discovered that the Nigerian problems rests squarely on her inability to vigorously confront her domestic economic and political maladies, which in turn impinges on the attempt at resolving her reputation and international image abroad. To this end, there are copious suggestions in the study, which forms credible aspects of the attempt to move the nation and her people forward, and restore her pride of place within the confines of the national polity and regain her international reputation overseas.

Introduction

For most of the scholarly writings that have been in the public domain, the arguments have been that a well-articulated international relations between Nigeria and the rest of the world is a function of how well the Nigerian state has been able to organize its citizens at home and elsewhere (Ujara & Ibietan, 2014). From the classic works of Odoh and David (2014) and corroborating the views of Ujara and Ibietan (2014), they maintain that states, and indeed the Nigerian nation-state is by the provision of extant laws of the land, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), supposed to share in an inseparable mutual relationships.

This kind of interface brings to the fore the indispensability of a common bond between a citizen or electorates and their rulers (in this sense, political power elites). It therefore implies that the Nigerian citizens deserve to enjoy specific constitutional rights, duties, privileges as well as obligations, either as individual members of society living within or outside the shores of their father land. From Odoh and David's (2014) assertion, citizens, and indeed Nigerian citizens, constitute the critical essence of why government exists, and it is the core responsibility of the state structure to cater for its citizens and ensure that their general wellbeing is adequately met. Furthermore, the protection of citizens by the state can be perceived as essential national interest which when logically pursued, leads to effective foreign policy intercourse at the global space.

The above therefore raises the following fundamental questions: Why has there been so much emphasis on citizen diplomacy with particular interest of peace initiatives that are hardly translated into development in the Nigerian state internally? Again, why would the government continue to dwell on resolving Africa-wide problems when there are myriads of socio-political and economic challenges confronting the nation? What ways, other than the old order, can the Nigerian government adopt to be able to resolve her internal challenges and ensure peace and development?

These questions become increasingly important in this work as they could

serve as useful tool towards the reconstruction of not only the nation's bid for effective citizen diplomacy, but essentially to help in filling existing literature gap and hence, contribute to knowledge within the confines of the broader research area in diplomacy.

In his studies on challenges of citizen diplomacy in Nigeria, Michael (2017) has argued that winning the war at the international global stage by Nigeria requires looking inward by the nation's leadership. Michael insists that the promotion of the general welfare of Nigerian citizens and the drive by the government to guarantee security, liberty and positive corporate image at whatever level is sacrosanct, and hence constitutes part of the objectives that oils and facilitates nation-building and the project of democratic sustenance.

This study seeks to investigate some of the achievements recorded by the Nigerian government in recent past. The study also appreciates some of the potential setbacks that have mitigated these ambitious steps towards the road to a sustained international, regional cum global relations and cooperation with other nations of the world. The paper is divided into sections comprising introduction, conceptual issues on citizen diplomacy and development as well as conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual Issues

Understanding Citizen Diplomacy: The concept of citizen, to Michael et al; (2017) entails the legitimate constitutional status and qualifications bequeathed on individual citizen of a nation who is deemed to have fulfilled all acceptable conditions to be so called. In other words, the concept describes all persons or groups of persons certified as *bonafide* indigenous members of a given state or society.

While this definition might be acceptable, it should however be noted that some persons might not legitimately be members of any given state and decide to do so by merely opting to be part of the society through other procedures such as naturalization, registration or otherwise. Conversely, we can again say that the relationship between one nation and another is literally summed up in the

way and manner her citizens are mobilized and organized, and this ultimately reflects on the state's international image globally (Chandler, 2011).

In most scholarly writings, citizen diplomacy which is the brainchild of the American system basically portends the protection of the overall interest and well-being of citizens of a nation. This means that the wellbeing of citizens is sacrosanct and finds expression on a nation's domestic policy in relation to her external relations. For us nation-statestate, it does appear that all domestic governments that have featured over time have, in one way or the other, charted a foreign policy course defined by its domestic peculiarities. According to Maduekwe (2009) and Akinteriwa (2010), citizen diplomacy conveys special distinctive domestic policy style of a nation and informs how well a nation's international image is perceived by the outside world.

According to Maduekwe (2009), citizen diplomacy is synonymous with the desperate desire for rebranding and change of domestic *raison d'être* or inter-state behaviors in all national domestic policy conducts. It takes care of charitable acts on citizens and treats citizens as real custodians of sovereignty, initiate policies that are essentially citizen-centric in outlook and device ways to achieve equitable outcomes.

Diplomacy Explained

The concept of diplomacy is multifaceted, and depends largely on the intellectual bias of the scholar. In other words, there is no unanimous definition for the concept. However, most experts of international politics have attempted to conceptualize it differently. Satow (1966) cited in Dickson (2010) argue that diplomacy refers to all aspects of inter-state official conducts and relations between governments of independent states that find expression in the application of tact and intelligence to be able to achieve set goals between and amongst interested parties. The problem with Satow's (1966) definition is that the question of tact and credibility in diplomacy are tricky. The essence of diplomacy in international relations presupposes that there should be reasonable considerations in dealing with other parties in conflict or relationship without taking offence. Again, diplomatic credibility takes special caveat on the way

and manner certain prevailing situations are subtly or skillfully handled. In either of the two extremes, it is not clear how nation states and particularly, super powers have resorted to all kinds of threats, violation of peace accord and eventual declaration and execution of war on other neighboring entities with reckless abandon. The justification for outright war as is currently witnessed between, for example, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Ukraine is critical in this analysis (Scott, 2022).

To most realist scholars such as Hans Morgenthau, diplomacy is seen from the angle of resolution of conflicts. To this end, Morgenthau (1978) buttressing what Satow (1966) had earlier noted about adopting diplomatic tact and credibility to resolve skirmishes between factions averred that diplomacy is a process that accommodates conflict of divergent interests. Similarly, diplomacy is an international engagement practice that not only promotes national interest, but also enhances peaceful resolution of conflicts. The contention in Morgenthau's analysis is multi-pronged, and hence tied around other important variants.

Firstly, diplomacy must determine the extent to which power is expressed, pursued and realized in terms of objectives. Again, diplomatic relations must cross-examine the objective of power in actual sense, between one nation and its opponent and the available potentials required to achieve goals. There is also the dire need to assess the degree of compatibility or otherwise of the dispensation of power as well as the mobilization of the means that best apply in the pursuit of diplomatic relations.

In all of these definitions, quite a number of conceptual gaps have been pointed out by critics who contended that Scott, Morgenthau, Geoffery (1973) and a host of others appear simplistic in their analysis. Most of the definitions, it has been argued, do not cover the aspects of politics and peculiarities of the international environment. It is in this light that Plischke (1977) has given a more inclusive and comprehensive definition of diplomacy. According to Plischke, what constitutes diplomacy entails:

> …all political processes that are established and nurtured by nation-states in their official interactions,

be it direct or indirect, in the pursuit of their respective goals, interests and other substantive national policies, couched around deliberate procedures and engagement practices in relation to other nation-states in the international environment (emphasis added) (1977, p.41).

The excerpts has become very apt, and hence, explains the diplomatic roles Nigeria has played over time in her quest to positively impact on either her regional environment or wield influence at the international political arena. Ogunbambi (1986) alluded that the diplomatic interest of the Nigerian state has been how to ensure its security and stability politically, engender equitable export promotion, protection of Nigerian citizens in the diaspora, guaranteeing effective cultural and moral expressions as well as mobilizing for a vigorous representation of the nation's point of views on regional as well as global issues at all levels.

Citizen Diplomacy and Nigeria's International Image: The Great Debate

One of the prevailing scholarly debates raging among foreign relations experts and intelligentsia is the way and manner citizen diplomacy has been handled and how that affects the broader international image of the nation in her interaction with the rest of the world. The first shot at the contradictions of citizen diplomacy in relation to Nigeria's external image is the one posited by Egwemi (2010). Egwemi informed that Nigeria's external image has consistently oscillated between extreme positivism to extreme negativity. What this means is that from the outset of her political independence in 1960 and up to the era of military autocracy that followed afterwards in the late 1970s and late 1990s, the nation had witnessed increased positive vibes in her relations with the outside world. However, the problem started, with the growing diplomatic rifts between 1993 up to 2014, a period characterized by an admixture of military dictatorship and civil rule, respectively.

In his view, Uchem (2009) cited in Ujara and Ibietan (2014) argued about Nigeria's citizen diplomacy against the backdrop of decadence among Nigerian young

adolescents, and particularly the youths, that Nigeria's international image has been battered as it has also been progressively blighted by the pervasive activities of a wide array of unemployed youths. To him, what has stifled the nation's image outside the shores of Nigeria is the dramatic rise in scam activities, yahoo – yahoo internet fraud, drug peddling, unlawful behaviors in foreign countries as well as the tendency to ship-jump universally acceptable protocols. All of these uncanny attitudes and many others including, but not limited to drug peddling, trafficking in persons, hostage taking and the likes, have all congealed to smear the good international image of the Nigerian state and its people.

In another dimension, Akinteriwa (2007), and Ogunsanwo (2009) have noted that not only is Nigeria's citizen diplomacy undemocratic, the process is essentially characterized by exclusiveness and seclusion of a vast majority of citizens who are supposed to be at the centre of diplomatic ties. This notion of exclusivity as posited by Akinteriwa and Ogunsanwo informs the earlier position held by Abati (2009). According to Abati, Nigerian citizens are hardly placed at the centre of national policies or programmes. This is a major misgiving of government and the political leadership that has been in operation since inception of democracy in 1999. From the point of view of Abati's (2009), it has been pointed out that:

> Leadership quality is a critical determinant of vast majority of followership. The placement of Nigerian citizens at the centre of national programme could effectively reinforce the original purpose of the government when the political class provides leadership. The leadership will without much efforts secure the trust of the general populace and hence, create centers of national solidarity and more agents for national progress (emphasis added) (2008, p.6).

The excerpts above capture the lackluster dispositions of the nation's power elites and how their undoing has literally eroded the nation's corporate image abroad. What Abati (2009) seem to be saying is that the Nigerian state is far

from realizing the obvious, and that the objective realities of citizen diplomacy is carried out in the breach than being observed. For most critics, it does appear that the Nigerian national government places little emphasis on the lives of her citizens. This is why Dickson (2010) has reiterated:

> In Nigeria, we don't seem to get this. Our governments do not value our lives. One Nigerian was killed in Spain, another one was brutalized in Asia, routinely, and our people are beheaded in Saudi Arabia. At home and in diaspora, Nigerians are left to their own survival tactics, while many have learned not to expect anything from their government (emphasis added) (2010, p.6).

What Dickson (2010) seem to be claiming in the above argument is that the challenges of citizen diplomacy as it relates to Nigeria is two-fold. First, is the dynamics of internal domestic contradictions orchestrated by poor leadership styles within the nation's borders, and second, those of other happenings outside the shores of the nation's geo-politics.

There is however an agreement in the writings of Akinteriwa (2007) and Ogunsanwo (2009) cited in Odoh and Nwogbaga (2014) with those of Akinteriwa (2012) cited in Ujara and Ibietan (2014). Akinteriwa (2012) confirms that what has come to be known as the Nigerian image is couched with both domestic and global undertone, which is a reinforcement of his earlier notion on the internal and external contradictions inherent in the nation's diplomatic concerns. To him, what is worrisome is the general perception and graphic portrayal of the nation as a political entity where corruption towers over and above every other consideration, just as insecurity, poverty, and poor leadership, among others things, have increasingly become a defining characteristic.

On corruption, the reports of the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) (n.d.) and those of Transparency International (TI) (2021) have observed that the global corruption index survey has indicted Nigeria. The survey reveals that out of 180 countries caught in the web of corruption, Nigeria ranks 154. The parameters adopted for the ranking attributed several predisposing

factors to corruption including, but not limited to poor compliance mechanisms and internal control in major Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs); corruption in the nation's security sector, illicit financial flows, the dearth of political will to tackle debilitating corruption cases and the Kangaroo nature of anti-graft agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in its drive against corruption in Nigeria. The multiplier effects of this are that major development projects have been badly affected and in most cases, stalled. In the same vein, competitiveness has been largely hampered. Table 1.1 shows the aforementioned.

Table 1.1 showing Nigeria's business indicators for year 2019-2022

S/N	Index	Updated	Actual	Previous
1	Business confidence	Dec/2020	– 15.2 in pt.	– 1.5
2	Ease of doing business	2019	131 place	146
3	Manufacturing (PMI)	Feb/2022	50.1 in. pt.	51.4
4	Manufacturing production	3Q/ 2021	4.3%	3.5
5	Competitiveness	2019	48.33 in. pt.	47.53

Source: *www.takeprofit.org*

Table 1.1 shows corruption index in Nigeria from 2019 fiscal year to 2022. From the table, 2022 recorded the highest incidence of corruption at about 50.1%, and with the dire consequences on the manufacturing sector. This is followed by 2019 with a total of 48.33 in. Again, in 2022, while the actual indicator peaked at 50.1, the previous was put at 51.4, representing a marginal decline in the following year. In terms of investors' confidence, the table indicates that December, 2020, witnessed an increase of –15.2 in the actual year and –1.5 in the previous. For ease of doing business, 2019 saw an exponential decline up to 131 in actual corruption ranking, which is far less than the previous of 146.

The above ranking in the case of Nigeria, however appears to be higher when compared to what obtains in other African countries. For example, Egypt, during the 2021 ranking peaked at 33 in.pt. and 33 the previous year. Kenya had 30 in.pt. for 2021 and 31 in 2020. Again, Madagascar had 26 in.pt. as at 2021, and 25 the previous year. In the case of Zimbabwe, the corruption index was put at 23 in.pt. for 2021 and 24 for 2020. In the same token, Tanzania got 39 in.pt

as against 38 the previous year.

On insecurity, Bunmi (2022) has observed that the number of people killed in Nigeria has skyrocketed to up to 47% and peaked at about 10,366 in 2021 alone. The SBM intelligence report, corroborating the position of Bunmi (2022) has insisted that of the over 10,000 fatalities recorded in 2021, the Q2 of that same year witnessed the highest, with over 1,000 deaths. This is followed by Q4 (1,771), Q3 (1,588) and Q1 (972) deaths. Again, the report indicated that in 2020, the highest number of deaths in Q2 alone was put at 3,133. This is closely followed by Q1 with a total of 2,861 and Q3 (2,287) and Q4 with not less than 2,085 deaths, respectively.

In the same vein, evidence from Bunmi (2022) has revealed that kidnapping for ransom has become common place in Nigeria. Accordingly, available data from studies conducted by ACLED shows that a total of about 1,200 persons were kidnapped in 2021 compared to about 45 individuals in 2010. Again, in one of the United Nations reports (n.d), nearly 900 students in secondary and tertiary institutions such as Colleges of Agriculture and Forestry, Polytechnics and University have been abducted by terrorists since 2020. In all of these, a ransom of about ₦10 billion (approximately $19.96 million dollars have been demanded, and skill counting (SBM Intelligence, n.d).

On poverty, the Nigerian state has been described 'poverty capital of the world'. This is in spite of the enormous oil wealth and human capital endowed on the country by nature. Recent poverty headcount rates in Nigeria (2019) has indicated that virtually all states of the federation have been enmeshed in widespread poverty, a situation where Nigerian citizens live below the World Rank threshold of one American dollar per day.

From available data, the worst hit among the states in the nation's geo-political zones are Sokoto with a poverty landmark of 87.73%; Taraba (87.72%); Jigawa (87.02%); Ebonyi (79.76%); Adamawa (75.41%); Zamfara (73.98%); Yobe (72.34%); Niger (66.11%); Gombe (62.31%); Bauchi (61.53%); Enugu (58.13%); and Nasarawa state (57.3%). Others are Katsina (56.42%); Kano (55.1%); Plateau (55.1%); Kebbi (50.2%); Kaduna (43.5%); Federal Capital Territory (FCT)

(38.7%); Cross River (36.3%); Benue (32.9%); Abia (30.7%); Imo (28.9%); Kogi (28.5%); Ekiti (28%); Akwa Ibom (26.8%). In the same fashion many other states in the nation's South-South, South-East and South West geo-political zone tend to share the same fate in terms of poverty incidences. From the report, River state has about (23.9%) poverty rate; Bayelsa (22.6%); Kwara (20.4%); Anambra (14.8%); Ondo (12.5%); Edo (12%), Oyo (9.8%); Ogun (9.3%); Osun (8.5%); Delta (6%) and Lagos (4.5%) (Doris, 2022).

Citizen Diplomacy: How Far Nigeria Has Fared

Nigeria's quest for diplomatic relation with the rest of the world began with the notion that Africa is the centre piece of her foreign policy thrust (Mbara & Gopal, 2021). This pronouncement followed the period marking Nigeria's independence era, precisely in 1960. Adeniji (2005), Akinterinwa (2004), Salisu (2006), Jega (2010), Folarin,(2013) and Danfulani (2014), contended that this policy option of the Nigerian government towards the outside world has since remained a constant epicenter in the nation's diplomatic interface spanning several decades.

As a brain child of the then Prime Minister of Nigeria, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, on October 1, 1960 conceived the notion as a political construct whereby the interest and welfare of African region was considered as sacrosanct to its overall interest and concern as a political entity (King, 1996) cited in Folarin (2013). To be sure, the initial hallmark of the policy was more or less seen as an existential mechanism that upholds the nation's magnanimity towards the immediate economic, political and cultural needs of African nations. As a corollary to this view, Mazrui (2006) has concurred that Nigeria's Africa-centered foreign policy thrust could be seen as synonymous with its Pan-Africanist world view that has continued to underscore its foreign policy right from its independence period.

Going by the nation's standpoint, it became clear that all critical issues affecting Africa, and indeed the Caribbean enclaves, became Nigeria's 'headache', where the country was in turn expected to take full responsibility at whatever level of commitment – economic, political, cultural, social, among others. To most

observers, this gesture led to the birth and formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in the first instance around the 1960s, with its focus towards the resolution of the war in Congo. Again, Nigeria's mission to salvage the precarious economic and political predicaments of other African countries saw her expending well over $60 billion dollars as aid to several African nations (Fawole, 2002).

As part of its agenda to ensure stability in the region, the government at the time became effectively committed and involved in peace initiative as well as redefining roadmaps to security in conjunction with the global umpire, the United Nations Organizations (UNO). The multiplier effect of this 'fatherly' role gave rise to the dispatch of Nigerian troops to quell uprisings in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Somalia, Cote d'Ivoire and many others (Mbera & Gopal, 2021).

Quite a number of research studies such as those of Warner (2017), Danfulani (2014), Folarin (2014) and Mbaru (2019) have argued that in spite of the manifest leadership roles exercised by the Nigerian government to chart a new and modest pathway for Africa, there is hardly any respite for Nigeria and her citizens in terms of benefits. The contention here is that rather than resolve its own internal contradictions, the Nigerian state has continued to expend unnecessary energies in solving African problems, while its citizens languish in penury. Evidence has further proved that successive administrations, whether military dictatorship or civilian systems, have continued to tow the same 'Big Brother' path with scarcely insignificant domestic achievements to reckon with in terms of development of its people.

In view of the seemingly obvious consequences of the nation's hegemonic roles in the affairs of Africa, the succeeding democratic structure manned by the first civilian administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo and the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua opted for imminent rationalization of the process. The new government of Yar'Adua left no stone unturned towards repositioning the existing status quo, and that snowballed into "citizen-centered diplomacy" popularized by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chief Ojo Maduekwe in 2007.

To all intent and purposes, Chief Ojo Maduekwe, had the general well-being and interest of Nigerians at home and in the Diaspora as the centre of the nation's national interest. What this portends is that the nation's emerging international behavior, actions and inactions would largely be modeled in tandem with its peculiarities. Thus, one central focus was how best the Nigerian state can refocus its attention and work towards protecting and providing for her citizens.

Diplomacy, Development and the Travails of Nigeria's Hegemony in Africa

As earlier pointed out in this study, the government of Nigeria has played enormous roles in the sustenance, development and security of Africa since her political independence in 1960. To Nuamah (2003), Nigeria considers itself as a formidable regional super power with greater economic and political influence that can drive the process of development, especially in West Africa. Thus, the tendency to demonstrate this sterling quality has continued to steer the nation's Pan-African drive from the 1960s to the early military rule in the 1990s.

For successive administration in the country, one clear thing is the motivation to aspire and venture further into the continental leadership roles and hegemony as pivotal characteristics of the Nigerian foreign policy objectives. To a large extent, the Afrocentric posture of her foreign policy goals centered on four critical concentric circles that have taken centre stage. Again, Mbara and Gopal (2021) have pointed out that the concentric circles take into consideration Nigeria's grand strategy from the "inner-most to the outermost". The former deals with all kinds of relationships having to do with Nigeria's immediate neighbours: They include all African countries sharing common territorial affinities and contiguity with the Nigerian state such as Niger Republic, Cameroon, the Republic of Chad, Benin Republic and other territories of interest namely, Sao Tome and Principe as well as Equatorial Guinea.

In one of their studies on Nigeria's increasing economic and political influence on the development of West Africa and elsewhere, Offu and Okechukwu (2015) examined Nigeria's hegemonic powers in the context of age-long historical trajectory. To these scholars, Nigeria's emergence as regional powers in Africa has come at a time where international relations and global politics have

witnessed dramatic shift in world order and global economic politics. This goes to explain what experts have said when they claimed that the eruption of international hegemonic crisis between and amongst world powers could be the beginning of another circle of development, expansion and growth for emerging global entities (Robert, 1987).

Offu and Okechukwu (2015) also revealed that as the world system keeps evolving, quite a number of countries have continued to transform. For instance, the decline of Japan's global reputation has placed China on the pedestal of economic growth and development around South-East Asia region. China, for example is now a global destination and the world "new bride" due to its increasing innovation in high-tech and industrial expansion. Other copious examples have also been given in relation to the ambitious steps most countries in South-West Asia such as India, and the Middle East states such as Iran and Israel have continued to take (Ikenbarry, 2001).

But we cannot lose sight of Nigeria's hegemonic influence in the West African sub region and on the continent of Africa in general. From the benefit of hindsight, several ambitious attempts have been made by successive governments of Nigeria to consolidate on the gains of its Afrocentric gestures. From the formation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975 and the ratification of the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA), one can understand the steps that have been taken to mobilize the right kind of human and material resources for the development and upliftment of the West African sub-region.

Unarguably, however, ECOWAS has remained one of the viable platforms of a sub-regional mechanism for regional integration on the continent, and Nigeria has been demonstrating sufficient commitment to see it grow and fulfill the objectives for which it was established. According to Ipson (n.d) Nigeria is endowed with tremendous economic fortunes, military capabilities, strategic economic positions and population. All these qualities make the country a powerful force to reckon with in terms of the push for African development. Extant literature and the works of the African Development Bank Group (2015) have alluded that Nigeria's commitment to the development of Africa gave rise to the establishment of the Bank as well as the Nigerian Trust Fund (NTF)

around the late 1970s. The fund was established with an initial capital outlay of about US$80 million dollars. This figure however, was later increased to US$88 million dollars in 1981. Evidence from various sources have proved that the fund has successfully financed about 43 development projects in 27 African countries with a whooping cost of around US$240,764,220. The projects, according to many analysts, include rural energy supply projects, irrigation farming, provision of dams for water storage and supply, construction of air and sea ports, roads network, and telecommunications, among others. To further demonstrate its commitment in the mission to rescue Africa, the Nigerian Government has, since 1964, facilitated its shareholding in the Bank, while leveraging on this to step up infrastructural expansion stretching several locations in Africa.

For instance, evidence has revealed that the Bank funded the construction of the Nigerian-Cameroon highways as part of its efforts to realize the objective of the trans-continental link from Nigeria to the rest of other West African countries. Some of the Trans African Highways connect Nigeria Cameroon, Central African Republic, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo as well as Kenya, totaling about 6,300 kilometers. The total cost for the construction, according to the African Development Bank is peaked at around US$4234 million dollars.

In line with the sustained cravings for economic self-reliance posture of the Nigerian government at the time, conscious efforts were made by the county to encourage bilateral and multilateral joint ventures in the African sub-region. As a consequence, there emerged the Nigeria-Benin-Guinea joint ventures particularly designed to enhance the prospecting and mining of uranium, production of cement and sugar. Again, the economic engagements between Nigeria-Rwanda-Burundi brought about construction of telecommunications and roads network. Similarly, the Nigerian government in September 2010, awarded over US$5 million dollars in support of the Lake Chad project (The Business Day, 2012).

On the other hand, evidence has also indicated that at the humanitarian level, the government of Nigeria had, on many occasions, intervened in troubled regions within Africa ranging from challenges of displacement, ethnic conflicts

and refugee problem. The CARA report reveals that the government of Nigeria, around the early 1980s had earmarked about US$ 3 million dollars as financial assistance to refugees in Africa. Again, during the CARA conference, the Nigerian government, as part of her initiation to promote joint project financing through technical assistance programme with other African states, gave the sum of US$ 53,000 to assist in project development in Malawi.

Besides, the sum of US$ 64 million dollars was also given by the government as part of her refugees support fund (CARA Report, n.d). All of these laudable achievements are outside other initiatives ranging from regional peace-keeping missions, the dismantling of apartheid regime and colonialism in South Africa and many other administrative diplomatic relations around the African sub-region.

Factors Inhibiting Nigeria's Citizen Diplomacy and Hegemony in West Africa

From the aforementioned analysis on citizen diplomacy and the quantum of development efforts that have been achieved by the Nigerian government as it problems in African foreign policy interests, critics and public analysts have maintained that the whole process is deficient in content and character.

According to Amao and Uzodike (2015) the evidence of Nigeria's Afrocentric policy thrust has continued to manifest in economic downturn and the increasing neglect of the nation's domestic needs, aspirations and responsibilities. To Amao and Uzidike (2015), most of the nation's social and economic obligations required of an independent state such as Nigeria are hardly provided. The social contract and bond between the leadership and the governed as recommended by the Constitution in terms of provision of basic human existential has not been achieved. Again, it has been widely reported that due to the enormous financial commitment of Nigeria in meeting with its hegemonic roles elsewhere, and coupled with market uncertainties that have continued to affect her oil revenue, the expectations of the country to deal with emerging economic circumstances have been crippled.

Aside from economic uncertainties, Mailafia (2010) had earlier averred that the nation's magnanimity has never been defined on the basis of her national interest. Mailafia (2010) claimed that whenever Nigeria intervenes to achieve the so-called peace, security as well as defend and protect African democratic institutions, the whole picture shows increasing desperation for regional investments. It is difficult however, to point at all of these gestures, be it the issue of offering of grants, protection of democracy or dishing out of other technical assistance, and to be able to tell which of these have yielded a noteworthy dividends to Nigeria in terms of investment opportunities (Mailafia, 2010, p.5).

The general Afrocentric posture of Nigeria's foreign policy, to scholars such as Gambari (1997) and Garba (1987) has been seen from the prism of realism and based on the socio-economic and political environment at the time. To this end, Garba (1987) and Gambari (1997) have alluded that quite a number of African countries at that point in time were either still under the yoke of colonization, or at best undergoing the agony of military dictatorship. In either of the two extremes, the reality and political imperative of these times calls for support.

Radical scholars, insist that Nigeria's regional interest amounts to diplomatic blunders. Their contention was premised on the fact that as a newly independent nation at the time, most of its power elite had little or no experiences to be able to drive such bogus and ambitious regional policies (Akinboye, 2010; Amao & Uzodike, 2015; Dan-Fulani, 2014; Fayomi, et al., 2015 & Mailafia, 2010).

Taking a cue from the argument submitted by Amao and Uzodike (2015), Marafa (2012) had earlier stated that Nigeria's deep interest in African politics and her incursion into the affairs of other countries has made her to miss out in several opportunities. The nation's decision to shoulder African collective yoke and hoping to achieve a just, equitable and peaceful regional geo-politics has been conceived as unrealistic and merely utopian. This is why Dan-Fulani (2014) critiquing the Nigerian Afrocentric foreign policy informed that the whole issue compares favorably with a nation running an international non-governmental organization. Just like Amao and Uzodike (2015), Dan-Fulani (2014) maintained that the nation's bid to accommodate regional politics is a drain pipe for scarce resources, and a diversion of attention from investment

in technological innovation as well as industrial expansion, development and sustainability as opposed to agrarian economic system.

In spite of all of these challenges, however, it does appear that Nigeria's influence is spiraling. To many political observers, the reasons for this state of affairs are not far-fetched. Nigeria is confronted by leadership failure, rising corruption, weak economic structures and political institutions, insecurity, decay in critical infrastructure, and of late, the challenge of global war (the Russian-Ukraine war) as well as the after-effect of the corona virus pandemic (Covid-19) that ravaged the world in 2020.The socio-economic and political conditions, no doubt, have continued to impact negatively on the nation's quest to sustaining her influence in Africa and beyond.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has examined citizen diplomacy and some of the development trajectories that have come with Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policies, over time. The study is an attempt to reevaluate the dynamics of socio-economic and political developments in the context of inter-play of Nigeria's hegemonic leadership roles, not only in West Africa, but also in other parts of the world.

The study, among other things, analysis scholarly debates and arguments on the sustainability or otherwise of the nation's Afro-centric focus as her policy centerpiece. What is interesting about this study in terms of findings is that there appears to be a myriad of problems confronting the Nigerian state, while the country is busy trying to solve other regional problems. From the investigation, and what experts have argued, there is unanimity in the sequence of debates and counter-argument that point to the same direction. The scholars, some of whom argue from a realist point of view situated their perspectives around numerous internal contradictions that have become pervasive in the country. They include, but not limited to downward spiral of the nation's economic fortunes characterized by more or less monolithic oil economy; questions of excruciating poverty, unemployment, insecurity, infrastructural decay and poor leadership matrix, among others. What is clear in the debate is that, though Nigeria may be right in trying to salvage moribund economic conditions of

African/Diaspora nations, the onus is on her to first and foremost, commence her charity work from the domestic level.

In view of the aforementioned, this study proffers the following recommendations as panacea to resolving the challenges associated with citizen diplomacy and some of the ways the Nigerian state can go about African policies without let or hindrance.

One, there is need for government to now formulate policies and implement strategies that can tackle domestic challenges posed by poor economic reforms and macro-economic policies for several decades. The kind of economic policies in operation for an umpteenth time in the country are merely external in outlook. There is therefore the need for adequate legislation that encourages diversification, export promotion and self-reliance, where the country can reclaim its lost glory compared to what obtained in the early 1970s.

Two, there is also the need to begin citizen diplomacy from home. It goes beyond rhetoric. The kind of diplomacy required to move the nation and citizens forward should reflect a well-planned fiscal regulations that is capable of diffusing the ravaging levels of extreme poverty, skyrocketing inflation and unemployment, especially among the teeming youths. Thus, the government can effectively achieve when there is commitment on the part of the government as well as collaboration with the private sector.

Three, it is very important for the government to regulate its spending and financial commitments in trying to tackle the problems of other nations. While this gesture is laudable, there is need for strategic thinking where greater emphasis is placed on the revival of all moribund industries such as textiles, oil and gas, agriculture and mining. This way, more money will be harnessed for the development of not only the Nigerian economy, but also for assistance to Nigerian neighbors and beyond the shores of the continent of Africa in general.

Four, on the international image crisis, the Nigerian state and its leaderships can embark on self-cross examination and peer-review. What is common today is that the youth seem to be learning from the leadership, especially at the

top political echelon of government. The Nigerian society seemingly glorifies corruption and the inward behaviors. To this end, an average Nigerian therefore thinks and perceives corrupt attitude as a way of life. Again, when corrupt public officials are not reprimanded sufficiently after committing infractions, the tendency is for the younger generation of Nigerians to feel less worried about possible repercussions on corrupt practices. Therefore, the things we see in the country have been carefully hatched, packaged and delivered to the very psyche of the people who constitute the followership. Thus, the 'Nigerianess' in everyone plays out conspicuously and traverses the borders and shores of the nation and continent to the outside world. There is therefore the urgent need to re-introduce moral instruction at all levels of educational system where the younger ones are taught virtues and values on ethics and moral behaviour. This same treatment should also be meted out to the nation's power elites through seminars, symposia and periodic conferences. This is an assured way to reclaiming the nation's lost glory and pride in the 21st century and beyond.

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