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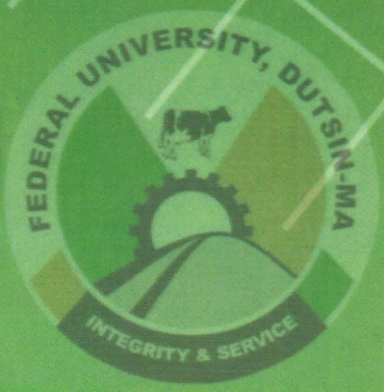


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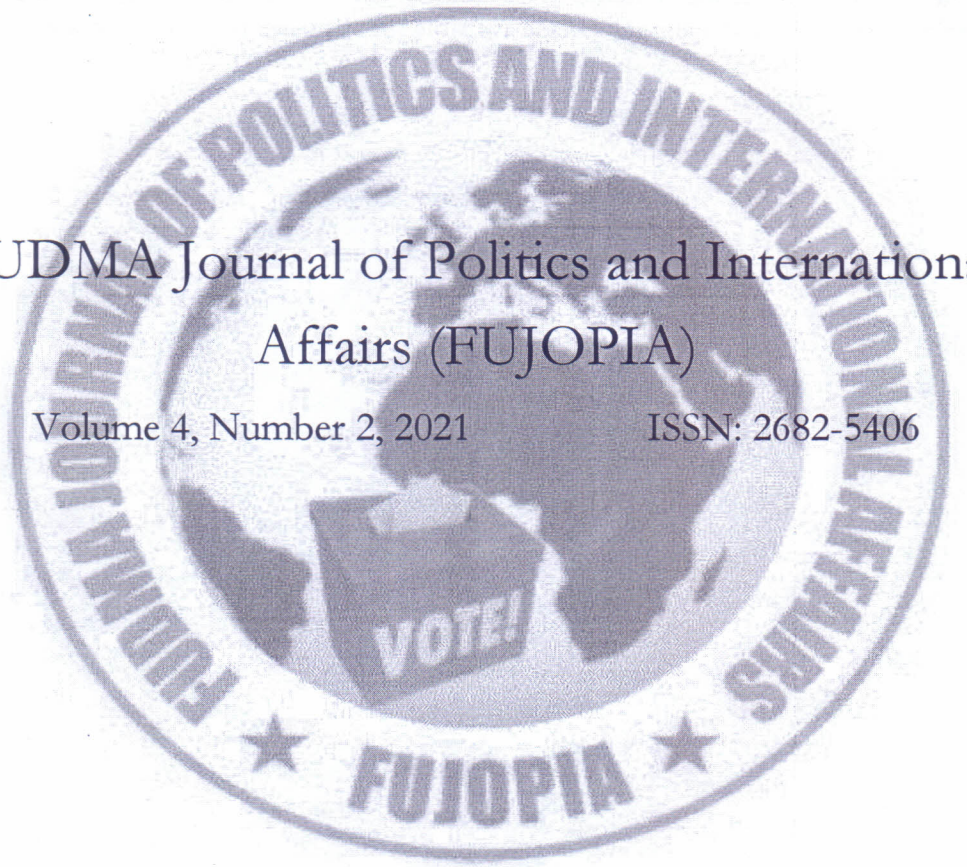


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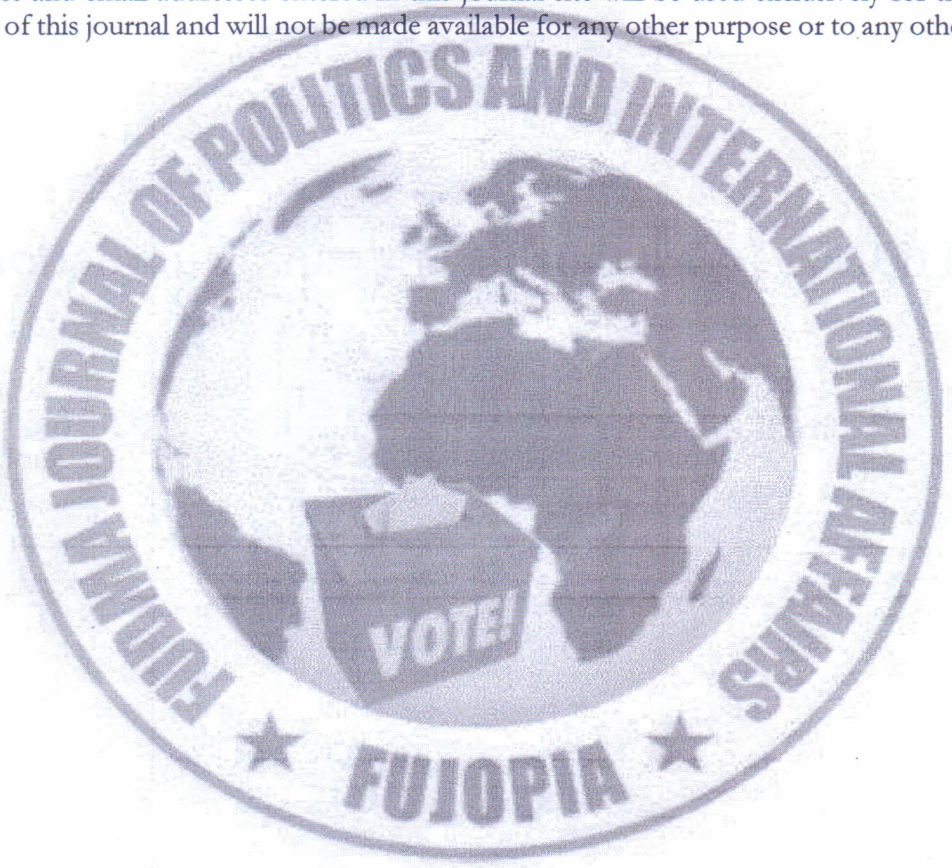

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# Nigerians in Diaspora and the Challenges of Withering Image: Is Citizen Diplomacy an Option?

[1]Aliu Fatimo Omotayo

**Abstract**

The withering image of Nigeria internationally has been an issue that has plagued the country since independence. In proffering solutions, successive governments have developed different foreign policies, the most recent one being citizen diplomacy, which entails the individual citizen helping to shape the image of their country. However, this citizen diplomacy has had mixed reactions from different quarters due to the mixed treatment that Nigerians in the diaspora have faced. Therefore, the study set out the objectives of examining the different foreign policies Nigeria has had, investigating the image problem of Nigeria, identifying the challenges those who are proffering solutions face, and investigating whether citizen diplomacy can portray the good side of Nigeria. Secondary sources of data collection were used with the aid of journals, magazines, newspapers and most notably, the internet. The study concludes that although citizen diplomacy has had its fair share of good and bad for the country, it is necessary to portray the image better by both the citizens and the country's government. It was then recommended that the government reorient its citizens accordingly and reduce the need for Nigerians travelling abroad for greener pastures.

**Keywords:** Nigeria/Diplomacy/Citizen diplomacy/Foreign policy/Nigeria's Image

## Introduction

In today's interconnected economy, a country's image is an important diplomatic symbol influencing how other countries view it. Based on this, Nigeria's international status and nation-building depend on her public image. Nigeria's expectations to become a great nation was high when the country gained independence in 1960. Building a good reputation was a legitimate goal for the country, as seen by its ample resources. Foreign governments were looking to Nigeria for diplomatic fortunes, and many were envious of its strategic deposits. Over 140 million people live in this country, making it Africa's giant. It is also the world's 10th most populous nation. Nigerians make up about one-sixth of Africans. A recent study estimates that Nigeria's 36 states contain at least 10 commercially viable mineral resources yet to be discovered (Salihu, 2014).

There has been a strong correlation between the emergence of the Nigerian Diaspora and the rise of globalised and racially stratified capitalism. Nigerians have been forced into an ever-expanding diaspora by post-colonial warfare, in particular the 1967-1970 Nigerian civil war, and economic hardship caused by Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) and neoliberalism.

Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Ben Okri, and Adichie Ngozi Chimamanda are just a few Nigerians who have achieved greatness in their respective fields. That Nigeria isn't just one of

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the most dangerous countries in the world is demonstrated by these individuals, who have been recognized around the world for their innovation, talent, and long-term achievements (Ojo & Aghedo, 2013).

Nigerians living abroad have elevated Nigeria to a nation known for producing honest, hardworking citizens. However, the country's image has recently been tarnished by the conduct of a small number of its residents. One example is Mutallab, a 23-year-old Nigerian who confessed to and was convicted of the attempted bombing of an Amsterdam-to-Michigan flight in 2009 on Christmas Day. The most recent case involves Hushpuppi, a well-known Nigerian social media celebrity accused of conspiring to launder money earned through fraud and other crimes. Hushpuppi faces felony charges. It has been alleged in the news that a policeman, Abba Kyari is an accomplice in many of the crimes Hushpuppi committed before he was arraigned, a situation that the USA now requests his extradition. Presently the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, has already approved the extradition request which further puts a dent on the image of the country on the international stage because those who should be preventing crime are said to be aiding it. Many of these have had an impact on Nigeria's international image and its residents living abroad.

People who are legitimately living abroad, doing business or studying have been subjected to unfair stereotypes. Because of this, many Nigerians prefer to identify as being from another African country when they meet new people. A similar situation has occurred in foreign nations when numerous Nigerians have been unfairly imprisoned, interrogated, and even killed because they were Nigerian natives or held a green passport issued by Nigeria. Nigeria's foreign policy has swung back and forth between Africa, the global world, Nigeria's elevated status, economic development, and the Nigerian citizen since time immemorial (Aleyomi, 2017). As a result, Nigeria's image has shifted from positivity to negative, good to terrible. In dealing with the global community, the foreign policy Nigeria aims at reflecting the country's commitment to promoting and defending the interests of Africa while also safeguarding its own national interests and economic prosperity (Adejumobi, 2016; Cooper & Flemes, 2013; Eze, 2010).

When foreign policy is mentioned, it is about the activities taken by the national government to further its strategic objectives around the world. Goals, alternatives, and an algorithm will all be in place for each state to determine which option is the best fit to achieve its objectives. The methods that guide governments' international actions are known as foreign policies, and they outline the goals that state leaders aim to achieve within certain situations or relationships.

As a result of decolonization, Olusegun Obasanjo's administration changed Nigeria's foreign policy from "Afrocentrism to global-centrism due to decolonization" to "global-centrism due to decolonization" during his term.—(Akinterinwa, 2011). As a result, there was a pressing need to market Nigeria to the rest of the world by projecting a positive image of its people and culture. This image rebirth was made possible by the Afrocentric foreign policy programme.

The falling amount of Nigerian public engagement and input is a major concern in Nigeria's foreign policy. Foreign policy in a democratic regime is state-centric rather than people-centric. Although Nigerians living abroad were aware of foreign policy goals, they were not disproportionately affected by them. Overseas, Nigerians were mistreated, and the country's foreign policy did not provide any safeguards or room to deal with these issues.

Following the Obasanjo administration, President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua rationalized a reorientation of Nigeria's foreign policy. In

2007, Ojo Maduekwe, Nigeria's former Foreign Minister, laid out the country's new foreign policy direction. As he put it, "citizen-centered diplomacy" aimed to put Nigerians' interests, both at home and abroad at the center of her national interest (Folarin, 2013). That is, Nigeria's new international behavior and actions would be centered on safeguarding the interests and well-being of its citizens anywhere in the world, reorienting the country's foreign policy away from its previous Afrocentric orientation and toward a more citizen-centric one.

**Problem Statement**

Nigeria, without a doubt, faces enormous difficulties as it strives to develop. The government's inability to care for its population has resulted in a negative reputation both within and beyond the country. While externally unchallenging, the country has faced numerous internal obstacles since gaining its independence. It has been established in literature that many things do not work in the country. A good example is Nigeria, a prosperous country with poor people blessed with oil but imports it. Some areas no longer have reliable power, and as a result, many Nigerians are being pushed further into poverty. While some sectors have relocated to neighbouring nations, others have folded due to Vision 2020's failure to deliver on its goal of making Nigeria one of the world's top 20 economies. The educational system is in disarray, with higher institution lecturers staging more widespread statewide walkouts. In addition, because of the scarcity of career possibilities for the youngsters that graduate from these institutions, many Nigerian youths are forced to leave the nation despite the obvious dangers they face in their quest for better opportunities. State behaviour is now under worldwide observation due to advancements in communication and digital technology.

The country has suffered from the destructive acts of its citizens in the diaspora in the outside world. A blemish on Nigeria's international reputation has been caused by the activities of Nigerians living abroad who commit various types of fraud, including advance money fraud, online scams, and love scams. Ex-Delta state Governor James Ibori is currently on trial in the United Kingdom to defraud his home state government and laundering funds there. Obinwanne Okeke, a Nigerian businessman who once graced the cover of Forbes magazine, was sentenced to ten years in prison in the US in February 2021 for participating in a cyber-fraud scheme that resulted in the theft of $11 million (Adekanye, 2021). Nigerian social media star, Olalekan Joseph Ponle, was arrested in the United States in July 2020 for money laundering and cyber fraud. He and his accomplice, Ramon Abbas, Hushpuppi, were apprehended in Dubai (Semeniworima, 2020).

According to Warner (2016), "Nigeria's low international reputation has contributed to a noticeable lack of soft power and consequently, legitimacy concerns, which it has diligently worked to downplay or explain away," on the country's image problem. The situation has deteriorated to the point where citizens of neighboring countries such as Chad, Cameroon, and Niger feel free to attack or harass those living along the border, as they face no consequences (Folarin, 2013). As Mailafia (2010) points out, it's "paradoxical that the government continues to grow its financial help to other countries, while its image in the world continues to deteriorate." Nigeria's image problem has defied all efforts to rectify it thus far, as the country continues to be struck by a series of man-made and natural disasters.

Nigeria's lack of international legitimacy is due to several causes. In addition to bad leadership, economic mismanagement and pervasive corruption, ethnoreligious conflict, and a general view of Nigerians as arrogant, boisterous and loud in some quarters (Adebajo,

2008; Warner, 2017). These and other factors have conspired to reduce Nigeria's international standing and influence. Moreover, according to Mustapha (2008), Nigeria's international reputation as a country of suspected fraudsters and drug barons makes it difficult to achieve some of its national foreign policy objectives. "While seeking global fame and strength, the country is constantly hindered by this aspect.

There is an urgent need to improve Nigeria's deteriorating image, as former Minister of Information and Communication Akunyili (2009) stated, noting that the country's reputation had been severely damaged both within and outside the country. Nigeria and Nigerians have such a terrible reputation outside of the country that anyone from Nigeria is assumed to be a fraudster or criminal. The benefit of the doubt is never given to us. Nigerian re-branding has gotten a lot of attention lately due to the country's perceived poor image. The government has made several attempts to re-brand Nigeria as a brand.

The three prior branding initiatives of the federal government were all failures. The first was the unintentional 'The Giant of Africa' initiative of the Yakubu Gowon regime. Then, after Obasanjo, there was the 'Heart of Africa' project, which was an intentional proposal, worldwide in scope and more of a spinoff from the EIP. Finally, to overcome perceived negatives and persuade the international community that Nigeria is a great country, the "Good People, Great Nation" campaign was launched under Yar'Adua (Mwantok, 2017).

"Change Begins With Me" is an initiative by the Buhari government that seeks to mobilise the nation's citizenry to effect change. However, the question remains: How much has changed in Nigeria's leadership at all levels? Corruption and nepotism remain widespread, and powerful centrifugal forces are currently attempting to tear apart the country's precarious sense of national identity. Additionally, when our leaders travel abroad for medical treatment or send their children abroad to study, they undermine the Nigerian brand (Mwantok, 2017).

In 2008, 2015, 2017, and 2019, Nigerians living in South Africa faced xenophobic attacks. The Nigerian government took little action to halt the attacks or assist their compatriots in South Africa. Others argue that the government may have succeeded in documenting policy rather than implementing it through citizen diplomacy, indicating a fundamental shift away from the Africa-centered drive (Aleyomi, 2017).

From the foregoing, the study is inclined to look into whether citizen diplomacy can be sufficient to combat Nigeria's recent bad reputation. This country's Afrocentric foreign policy, its image problem, and its nationals' struggles in the diaspora have all been studied extensively (see Duke, Agbaji and Charles, 2018; Campbell, 2017; Boma, Tafa and Tsegyu, 2015; Ajayi, 2005; and Bankole, 2018). It says that this new citizen diplomacy may assist Nigeria in reclaiming its former halcyon days in the international arena.

The study's main aim was to know whether citizen diplomacy can solve Nigeria's withering image, which affects the citizens in the diaspora. However, other objectives include: To:

- examine the different foreign policies about image building Nigeria has had in the past;
- investigate the image problem of Nigeria;
- identify the challenges those who are proffering solutions face; and
- examining whether citizen diplomacy can portray the good side of Nigeria

## *Concept of Foreign Policy*

Scholars have defined foreign policy in so many ways that it is hard to develop a consensus definition. Dauda (2015) demonstrated that, like any other social science concepts, foreign policy has eluded a widely accepted definition despite numerous attempts by researchers.

According to Chafe (1994), the interaction between the outside and the inside defines foreign policy, according to Northedges (1968). Foreign policy, by this definition, is a response to external stimuli while also taking into account domestic circumstances (Unaji 2007). Generally, a country's foreign policy is intended to promote and protect its national interests, which include defending territorial integrity and sovereignty, encouraging economic and diplomatic growth, and projecting strength and prestige to the world in order to influence current events (Dauda, 2015). An institution-designated decision-maker like Chibundu (2009) has described the foreign policy as manipulating the international environment to attain a specific national goal. Put another way; it refers to how a country responds to the rest of the globe. Many different aspects can go into this response, such as diplomacy, military action or trade. It can also take many various forms, such as educational or sport, depending on the context. On the other hand, Uhomoihbi (2011) defined foreign policy as a set of actions developed by states in order to influence the behavior of other nations and adapt their operations to the international environment.

## Citizen Diplomacy as Nigeria's Foreign Policy

citizen diplomacy is a term that developed in the US and referred to the utmost importance given to safeguarding the interests and well-being of citizens as a cornerstone of any nation's domestic and foreign policies. It's the use of diplomacy and reasoning in a world of competing for national and international interests. When a new Nigerian administration assumes office, it typically outlines its foreign policy objectives and goals regarding its interactions with the rest of the world. Foreign Ministers in Nigeria have a proclivity for coining catchy nicknames to describe their country's foreign policy approach. When Chief Ojo Maduekwe was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2007, Nigerian foreign policy had already made citizen diplomacy a central tenet. As previously said, the phrase has sparked a firestorm of criticism from both the 'town and gown' and the academic sectors of Nigerian foreign policy (Akinterinwa, 2010).

According to Folarin (2013), when citizen diplomacy became popular, Maduekwe (2008) understood that it was not a new foreign policy, but rather the same foreign policy repackaged to suit domestic policy challenges and the quickly changing global order at the moment. In his opinion, Nigeria's conventional foreign policy had been reinvented with a focus on the requirements of Nigerian citizens since basic needs would now be the basis for all foreign policy decisions.

Citizen diplomacy means refocusing the country's foreign policy goals to benefit its political stability and socioeconomic engagement while improving citizen well-being and public image. Foreign policy changes like this may seem bland, but the normative implications and transformation potentials are huge because they represent a significant shift in Nigerian foreign policy toward concentric approaches. Nigeria's foreign policy must be centred on individual Nigerians if these conceptualisations are to be taken seriously. Ab initio, citizens are key stakeholders and the first to benefit from whatever external engagement Nigeria undertakes as part of its concentric foreign policy circles (Akinterinwa, 2013; and Agbu, 2015).

For the sake of a unified national identity, citizens are treated differently at home and

abroad. As a result of International Law, all citizens are required to be treated as human. Citizens want fundamental human rights, and any denial of those rights must have an acceptable and valid justification. It is, without a doubt, the culmination of all of Nigeria's previous efforts in foreign relations in response to the globalisation-related difficulties (Akinterinwa, 2013).

Nigeria's citizen diplomacy is multifaceted (Eze, 2009). An important part of this effort is to rebuild the country's damaged reputation, as well as deal with a wide range of internal problems such as the current economic crisis and poverty as well as the political and security concerns that go along with it. These problems have been made even more difficult due to the recent emergence of international terrorism as well as increased globalization. With all of this in mind, it's clear that Nigeria's image-building efforts must be re-articulated within a framework that prioritises the survival of Nigerian society as a whole.

When it comes to citizen diplomacy as a policy, questions have been expressed concerning Nigeria's weak or non-existent capacity to carry out citizen diplomacy as a policy of "consequence," which is synonymous with the idea of reciprocity. In an interview with Professor Alade Fawole, Nigeria must have at least equal means to react against any discriminatory treatment of Nigerian nationals living outside of Nigeria (Fawole, 2016). Nigeria, on the other hand, may not have reached that pinnacle. Although functionalists reject citizen diplomacy for practical reasons, others oppose it for reasons that have not been proven (Akinterinwa, 2010).

## Impacts of Citizen Diplomacy

Foreign policy should be oriented around the needs of the citizens. Given that the majority of global news about Nigeria is negative, the new policy requires that for every negative story about Nigerians, stories about the positive impact Nigerians are having in these countries be included. Every Nigerian drug pusher, arrested or fraudster, or suspect in other countries worldwide owes it to their community to highlight those Nigerian surgeons making a difference. In other words, Nigeria would only be gracious to those who reciprocate. Those who portray Nigeria as a country rife with fraudsters and a place where nothing works undermine the country's national unity, deter investment, and contribute to unemployment and poverty (Adejumo, 2007).

In order to be safeguarded and appreciated from the standpoint of a renewed national search for an image of pride, citizen diplomacy demands Nigerians to reciprocate, develop, and impose self-worth on themselves in their conduct of activities both within and outside the country. Nigerians living abroad require consular assistance if they are arrested or detained in a foreign country in order to receive equal legal treatment (Eke, 2009). He observes the fruition of the Yar'Adua Administration's citizen diplomacy. On March 26, 2008, Baba K. Kaigama, an ambassador and permanent secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was unanimously elected to the United Nations Advisory Committee for a three-year term. Two are available: On December 11, 2008, Nigeria was elected as UNIDROIT's first African member. Its responsibility is to explore needs and methods for modernisation and coordination of private international law as it impacts members. United Nations Human Rights Council elects Nigerian as its next chair (UNHRC) (Unini, 2019). There are far too many instances of neglect to enumerate, but they are all tragic stories. Dickson (2010) noted this on his own. Neither our reputation nor the Nigerian diaspora has ever been cared for by Nigerian diplomats. As far as seeking reciprocity with other states is concerned, Nigeria has no moral, social, or economic basis. Citizen diplomacy has not

been adequately articulated because its effects have not yet been felt and its results have not yet manifested.

As a result, Nigerians abroad have an image of a country rife with corruption, where citizens lack basic necessities, where leaders steal rather than serve, and where even the highest officials of the law face impunity for their assassinations (Eke, 2009). As expected, Nigeria's corruption perception index (CPI) from Transparency International (TI) has not improved significantly. Taking Nigeria as an example from before citizen diplomacy was developed, the country ranked 142 in 2006, earning a 2.2 out of a possible 10 point scale. In 2007, the year citizen diplomacy was started, Nigeria's ranking dropped from 147th to 2.2. In 2008, Nigeria rose to 121st place, with a score of 2.7, while Nigeria fell to 130th place in 2009, with a score of 2.4. 2011 ranks and scores aren't available yet because 2011 is still in progress, although it's unlikely that either ranking or scores will improve significantly. There has been a negligible change from 2006 in Nigeria's rating on the Corruption Perception Index (CPI), with the score improving only slightly from 2.2 to 2.4 between 2006 and 2010 (Eke, 2009). According to Abati (2009), the Nigerian government has no regard for the life of its people or nationals. Nigerians have been killed in Spain, Asia, and Saudi Arabia regularly.

This has a huge impact on the way the world sees the country because a country that can barely take care of its citizens and keeps ranking high in the corruption index is bound to attract less investment from foreigners. In addition, the killing of Nigerians abroad with the country's government doing little or nothing about it is depressing for the overall commitment to citizen diplomacy. Diplomacy by the citizens only works in a country that provides the basic amenities such as security of life and properties for its citizens.

## Challenges of Citizen Diplomacy as a Consequence of Withering Image in Nigeria

The global community's Nigerian image crisis represents the country's shattered domestic image, portrayed as corrupt and politically unstable with ongoing conflicts and a place where nothing works Akinterinwa (2012). However, the vast majority of social media news stories exaggerate and present a skewed picture of Nigeria to other global communities. In the Diaspora, Nigerians are treated with distrust and prejudice because of this. Prejudice and violence towards Nigerians in South Africa, for example, are linked to the country's opinion of Nigeria as a corrupt one (Awosusi & Fatoyinbo, 2019).

Nigeria's reputation in the diaspora has been tarnished in part by the unethical reporting of domestic events in Nigeria on the internet by traffic-pulling and subscriber-wooing Nigerian bloggers who are not patriotic. Several uncensored profit-oriented blogging sites, such as Nairaland, Linda Ikeji Blog, Naij.com, and Bella Naija Blog, have been created by Nigerians who lack either the training or ethics of journalism and these litter the internet with myriads of unverified information about Nigeria's domestic issues and challenges for a global view, without minding the implications on the national image. This submission is not a call for a diplomatic "cover-up" but rather for the national media and bloggers to prioritise the Nigerian image in their broadcasts (Awosusi & Olagbaju, 2021).

Nigeria's internal difficulties are unquestionably damaging to the country's international reputation. Many exaggerated stories about Nigerian political leaders' corrupt practices, communal and religious crises, insurgencies, gross human rights violations, ballot box snatching, vote-buying, and other socio-political vices are reported to a global audience. These have harmed the country's reputation abroad (Awosusi & Olagbaju, 2021).

In another sense, some Nigerian youth have the "sharp-sharp" syndrome, which is based on the fact that there are many unemployed people in Nigeria, poverty, and an unwillingness of the Nigerian government to respond to their predicament (Adejumo, 2007).

Many Nigerian adolescents possess a wide range of skills that give them an advantage in any difficult situation. However, the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) regularly arrests and parades certain Nigerian teenagers for crimes such as 'yahoo-yahoo,' an internet fraud, and other similar vices because of the educational system's moral imbalance. As a result of what they've seen or read in the foreign media or on the internet, Nigerians have a strong desire to go to other countries and experience their cultures firsthand So; as conditions in their homeland worsen, they go to look for the Golden Fleece elsewhere, using various methods (Egwemi, 2010).

Those who migrate as international students, expatriates, guests, or in other ways discover that life isn't always roses no matter where they go. Emigrants from Nigeria, known for their tenacity and resourcefulness, will use any means necessary to make it or stay in the country. To make ends meet, some take menial jobs; however, those who cannot conform to the social system of most foreign countries turn to vices like prostitution, drug dealing, and the so-called '419' advance fee fraud. This social vice is likely because their home country's educational system lacked moral instruction (Awosusi & Olagbaju, 2021).

Today, reports by Amnesty International and other organisations detailing the bleak status of Nigeria's international image are commonplace. The misbehaviour of a Nigerian is often exaggerated and portrayed as a universal problem that affects all Nigerians living abroad. As a result, Nigeria's economy is suffering due to a decrease in foreign investment and tourism. The sick, missionaries, businessmen, academics, and other Nigerians embarking on genuine missions to go outside the country face onerous visa application processes, visa prohibitions, or limitations. In addition, Nigerians have less access to international funding, grants, and scholarships than their counterparts in other African countries because of Nigeria's weak standing in the community of nations (Ezekwe, 2012).

The international scene has seen Nigerians abroad as criminals and people who have little or nothing to offer and as such treat them as such. It is disheartening that majority of Nigerians who embark on legal missions suffer from the menace created by both the government and deviant individuals within and outside the country. As a result, those who travel outside the country are treated with disdain and are discriminated against in terms of position, classes, roles and for those who succeed or excel in their chosen profession and career, their credibility is usually doubted.

## Past Solutions Proffered to the Withering Image of Nigeria

Nigeria is clearly in serious need of a makeover. Misconceptions about Nigeria must be corrected, but the country's achievements must also be promoted abroad. It aims to reassure the general public by countering misleading claims with evidence. Professor Dora Akunyili, the former Minister of Information and Communication, was the driving force behind the most recent rebranding attempt. According to her, since the initiative began on March 17, 2009, the majority of foreign immigration employees have intimidated Nigerians with green passports, demonstrating a bad international opinion of Nigeria. Aside from Nigeria's tarnished image in some foreign media, she mentioned the conduct of a few Nigerians who had done harm to the country as reasons for this. Nigeria's internal aims are to reunify the Nigerian people with the country, to empower Nigerians to own and be

proud of the national brand, and to reposition Nigeria as an advanced democratic nation with a rigorous code of behavior (Committee on Re-branding, 2009). This arduous undertaking attempts to favorably transform every Nigerian into the leading advocate for the Nigerian ethos through community involvement and media reorientation.

With this campaign, Nigeria aims to improve foreigners' views of its nation, raise its economic competitiveness, and take on the scourge of media imperialism in all its guises (Albert, 2009). To that end, the 7-Point Agenda outlined by Nigeria's previous president Umaru Musa Yar'Adua and Nigeria's vision 2020 are intricately interwoven. A "large market and some of the highest returns on investments found elsewhere in the world" may be found in Nigeria, which Akunyili (2009) sees as ready to be exploited and developed. Increased employment is factored into estimates of "crime reduction and national security enhancement" (Ministry of Information, 2009).

The first step in Nigeria's rebranding was to create a logo with the phrase "Nigeria: Good People, Great Nation." Some Nigerian high schools and secondary schools have formed rebranding clubs in order to create a culture of civility and patriotism in their pupils. With this in mind the initiative utilized 105 Nigerian embassies worldwide. No matter where they take place, international attention is riveted on Nigeria and elsewhere these days (Scott, 2009).

Nigerians from various walks of life, including residents who attend town hall meetings to express their views on government actions, are involved in the campaign. Since the film industry is widely considered as a powerful force for social change in Africa and other parts of world, Nigerian home video industry members have also been encouraged to participate in this rebranding drive. Additional National Youth Service Corps volunteers with experience in social work have also been dispatched to assist in the project's implementation (Alao, 2009). Strategic collaborations with a wide range of organizations and ministries are possible. In this way, the Ministry of Education is working with the National Youth Service Corps in order to use the country's nearly 300,000 graduate corps members as part of civic education. Source?

Government agencies, embassies overseas, and consulates here in Nigeria will be targeted by the rebranding campaign managers, who hope that ambassadors would spread the word and get the diaspora of 17 million Nigerians involved in spreading the campaign's message abroad. In addition to billboards, the campaign will include the design of T-shirts, face caps, table clocks, mugs, crests, and umbrellas; the creation of various pieces of Nigerian literature that will positively impact the country's image; and the design of collateral packages for the re-branding campaign. Strategic sites, such as airports, border towns, and other critical hubs, will be the focus of our outdoor billboard campaign. Additional dynamic websites will be established to exhibit current and relevant information about Nigeria and to discover and employ brand icons, such as persons who have excelled in their fields of work. Nigeria's image will be improved in the eyes of Nigerians and the international community as a whole, but it is also expected to rebrand a number of key state institutions such as law enforcement and government, as well as educational institutions, political leadership, and businesses and religious and social institutions (Akunyili, 2009).

### Challenges Faced by those Preferring Solutions to Nigeria's Withering Image

Adequate financial resources are critical for job performance in diplomatic missions worldwide, and Nigeria's diplomatic mission suffers from a lack of them. Budgets allocated to international

relations have never been sufficient to provide the level of service expected (Fafowora, 2015). The foreign affairs ministry receives approximately 1% of the State budget in terms of ongoing expenses. As a result, the news of Nigerian diplomats owed wages, allowances, and rent in foreign embassies has been unsettling. Disconnection of utility services, the eviction of workers from their rented flats, the expulsion of children from school because of unpaid school fees, and arrears in diplomatic salary continue to harm Nigerian diplomatic posts, according to Fafowora (2015). Nigeria's foreign embassies' overall productivity is severely hampered by this situation. If Nigerian diplomats on diplomatic missions continue to suffer from this avalanche of embarrassments, they would not be able to carry out their duties with the zeal, attentiveness, and efficacy required of them. There have been several instances of this type of protest at the Nigerian Embassy in the United States, the most recent of which occurred on May 3, 2017. A humiliating scenario forced Ambassador Sola Enikanolaiye to pay three months of the five months outstanding to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' staff directly (Sahara Reporters, 2017).

A lack of money and training has put Nigerian ambassadors under scrutiny. As a diplomat, you must have a good educational foundation and an awareness of world events in order to succeed. This is a challenge. Because of this, Nigerian diplomats are woefully unprepared to deal with the complex concerns and realities of today's global globe, as shown by the following (Enuka and Ojukwu, 2016). Consequently, the reputation of Nigerian diplomats is rapidly degrading, which explains the burden on Nigeria's foreign policy (Salihu, 2012; Abati, 2011). While Nigerian Foreign Service officers are not fluent in any foreign language other than English, this is an incredible fact (Fafowora, 2008).

That gap between political and commercial representation has an impact on morale in Nigeria's mission, and the commercial attaché in particular. They are usually on loan to the mission for some period of time and return to their home ministry for future employment. This results in them treating themselves as a temporary employee and acting as if they were. A sense of isolation is harmful to the spirit of cooperation that is required for Nigerian missions abroad to be effective (Abdulwahab, 2016).

Inevitably, the argument will be made that applying quotas to the Nigerian diplomatic service has resulted in undesirable outcomes. When it came to the nomination of Nigerian diplomats to high posts, the federal character principle was used, which harmed the values of merit, ability and competence. The constitutional requirements for fair regional representation and a reflection of federal character in the selection and nomination of public servants have clearly impacted the diplomatic mission (Araoye, 2017).

Nigeria's diplomatic missions also have to contend with misunderstandings that frequently arise between the missions and the country's diplomatic headquarters. Since policies are articulated and made by the headquarters in Nigeria, headquarters depend on their missions to carry out their directives. Authorities at missions are frequently accused of presuming and asserting superior knowledge of the challenges they face, particularly when it comes to their home nation or organisation of accreditation, which causes some reluctance in adopting headquarters directions (ThisDay Newspaper, 2016).

## Social Constructivist Theory

Social Constructivism was also espoused by Immanuel Kant (Jackson and Sorensen, 2006). Kant claims that we can learn about the universe, but only if we are conscious of it. They depend on each other's understanding and interpretation of what they see (Jackson and Sorensen, 2006).

They believe that state interests and identities are linked and impacted by their contacts with other states, and they also believe that state identities are dynamic and ever-changing as a result of these interactions, which are often referred as socialization. A better explanation for the emergence of new identities and new social structures is provided by institutional changes rather than new forms of power and politics (Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2011). According to Weber, 2005, the constructivist theory's core ideas include the following: To put it another way: People react to things based on the connotations they associate with them. The interaction produces social knowledge or the meanings around which people's actions are organised. Thus, social identities and interests are created through and as a result of "situated action."

Social constructivism is an international relations theory that is based on how various actors define their national interests, the threats to those interests, and their relationships with one another. International Relations is then considered in light of more general social relationships. It asserts that states make decisions about what they want and need, based not only on material but also on social factors. As a result, states' actions are based on their identities and interests, which shift throughout time (Weber, 2005). Even in the international system, Constructivism admits that there is still power. It just concentrates on how people interact and how they see each other (Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2011).

Constructivists place a high value on individual identity and belief after analyzing the social context of international interactions (for this reason, constructivist theories are sometimes called idealists). People's perceptions of their friends, opponents, in-groups, fairness, and justice have a significant impact on the state's conduct. In spite of the fact that some constructivists acknowledge that states are rational self-interested actors, they maintain that distinct identities and beliefs are at work beneath the rationality ideas that lead states to desire solely survival, power and/or money (Slaughter, 2011).

## Application of Social Constructivism to Nigeria's citizen diplomacy

Social constructivist theory claims that when a state reimagines itself for the advantage of another state, international relations are transformed. International relations are based on a set of ideas and concepts, and if those ideas and concepts shift, so would the system. By highlighting Nigeria's identity and interests, as well as how the country should be seen through social interaction, this systemic shift will take place. With improved social ties to the rest of the globe, Nigeria's global reputation would improve.

According to the country's foreign policy, Nigeria is viewed by the international community as a whole. Developing a stronger image for the country is possible if her foreign policy is well implemented and well-articulated. Citizen Diplomacy was created as a foreign policy initiative to benefit the state's residents while also helping to clean up the country's image. As a result, Nigeria's image may be enhanced through citizen diplomacy, thereby elevating Nigeria's standing in the international system and enhancing bilateral relations.

## Conclusion

Nigeria's foreign policy used to be largely Afrocentric before the Obasanjo-led administration started the move and campaign for citizen diplomacy. This Afrocentric nature of the country's foreign policy resulted from the withering image that Nigeria had witnessed internationally, and Nigerians in the diaspora have suffered from this bad image for too long. Many Nigerians in the diaspora were still treated with disdain because of their nationality and irrespective of their achievements. This notion is not to blame the country's

government as there are Nigerian nationals who engage in illicit activities and break the laws abroad, thereby contributing to the withering image the country has to deal with in the international scene. However, the government of Nigeria has contributed largely to this image with its inability to take care of citizens both at home and abroad.

Charity, they say, begins at home. This African proverb relates to this withering image of Nigeria in terms of the fact that successive governments in Nigeria have failed to ensure that the welfare of the citizens is well taken care of, which should be the first objective of any serious government. As discussed in the study, there have been many challenges plaguing Nigerian society at home which contribute to the withering image problem that the country has today. Challenges such as poor educational facilities, poor roads, insecurity, inter and intra ethnic conflicts, molestation of citizens by the police, and inadequate health facilities propel the country's leaders to go abroad for treatment. It is difficult to hide these problems that the country faces from the external world because of the wave of globalisation in recent times. How can Boko-Haram or IPOB be hidden from the rest of the world or how can the End-Sars protest be hidden from the global community when popular international news agencies such as CNN and BBC bring the news live to Nigerians and the rest of the world. The internet age has not helped matters either with various bloggers and social media applications such as Twitter and Facebook broadcasting all these challenges Nigeria faces to the rest of the world. All these have negatively impacted the country, with a lack of investments due to insecurity being a major consequence.

Citizen diplomacy was deployed to ensure that the global community sees Nigeria differently and in positive ways. The Heart of Africa campaign, the citizen diplomacy campaign and the change begins with me campaigns have been helpful. For instance, the appointment of Okonjo Iweala as the Director of the World Trade Organization shows a positive image of Nigeria or the activities of footballers like Victor Osimen, whose name is being chanted in Napoli football club as well as Nigerian music artistes such as Wizkid, Davido. These people have contributed immensely to the country's good image, which makes the world see the country as a haven of talented individuals.

However, the fact that some Nigerians in the diaspora engage in unlawful and illegal activities has brought about a serious dent in the image of the country internationally. For instance, there are Nigerians in the diaspora who engage in fraudulent activities and have been convicted in recent times, most notably a former Governor, James Ibori of Delta state and the case of Hushpuppi. Thus, to the rest of the world, Nigeria is a place where criminals are bred.

In conclusion, citizen diplomacy has had its fair share of good and bad for the Nigerian image internationally and its citizens in the diaspora. Thus, the country and its citizens at home and abroad can work to ensure that this image crisis does not persist.

**Recommendations**

In the light of the above, the following recommendations are made:

- Internal crises such as unemployment, lack of electricity, roads, health facilities, education facilities, and poverty should be taken care of as the study discovered that these are the reasons Nigerians move abroad in search of greener pastures.
- The Nigerian government must reorient its citizens, both at home and abroad, to always act as good ambassadors for their country wherever they go or attend any gathering involving people from other countries. Therefore, there is the need to paint a good

image of the country internationally because it was discovered that the concept of citizen diplomacy is yet to be properly articulated.

- It was discovered that employees of Nigerian embassies abroad are poorly remunerated and usually are owed salaries. The government must do more to ensure that its diplomats receive adequate compensation.
- The appointment of qualified diplomats who have the prerequisites to perform their diplomatic duties should be assured.
- Bloggers and news media in Nigeria should be regulated and orientated because bad news spreads and sells easily, so it is understandable that they always try to articulate all this bad news. However, they are causing problems for Nigeria internationally, which is why the study suggests regulations.
- Finally, many Nigerian youths need to stop the make-it-quick syndrome as it causes them to engage in illegal activities that tarnish the country's image.

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