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Nigeria's Foreign Policy and Prospects of National Interest: An Evaluation of the Fourth Republic

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Abstract
It is an established fact that 1999 marked the modern democratic trend in Nigeria, after years of military intervention. However, the former, president Olusegun Obasanjo, embarked on shuttle diplomacy as a foreign policy towards redeeming the country's image which had been dented by military regime. And such gesture assisted in reshaping Nigeria's stance within the international community. The emergence of Yar'Adua as the successor of Obasanjo, after the 2007 Presidential election, enhanced the introduction of 'Citizen Diplomacy' as the centre piece of his administration is foreign policy. This provided avenue for Nigeria's citizens especially those in the Diaspora to shape the country's external relations positively. The demise of Yar'Adua shortened the goals of his foreign policy. The present Jonathan's administration has also reviewed the foreign policy of Nigeria on citizen used focused and connects foreign policy to domestic policy with much emphasis on economic diplomacy. This makes it imperative in this study to explore Nigeria's foreign policy vis a vis her national interest. The paper argues that lack of consistency and continuity has been the major hurdle to the actualization of the country's national interest in her external relations.

Introduction
The formation of Nigerian state could be traced to the amalgamation of 1914 when the Northern protectorate and the Southern protectorate became an entity. However, such colonial antecedents stood until October 1 1960, when Nigeria became an independent state. This enhanced the beginning of Nigeria's diplomatic history as a sovereign

state. As rightly observed by Asobie (2010:1), Nigeria can be divided into five distinct periods. The first period, 1960-1975, was characterized as the age of innocence. The second, 1975-1985, was the era of awakening. The third, 1985-1992, was the epoch of realism. The fourth, 1993-1998, was the dark age. And the fifth, 1999-2010, may be described as the Renaissance. The aforementioned phases covered the history of Nigeria's diplomacy.

As it can be recalled, after Nigeria's independence, the objectives of the country's foreign policy were highlighted and emphasis was placed on African unity and independence. This propelled Nigeria's government to centre her economic and political strength on African states. In fact, Nigeria exercised hegemonic influence in the region via peaceful settlement of disputes; non alignment and non interference in the internal affairs of other nations; and regional economic co-operation and development. In carrying out these principles, Nigeria participated in the Organization of African Unity (OAU) now known as the African Union (AU) the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Non -Aligned Movement, the Commonwealth and the United Nations.

However, Abati (2012) points out that Nigeria has been extraordinarily naive by restricting its foreign policy to Africa as its cornerstone. It was a laudable goal before the 1990s but its evolution is needed for Nigeria to meet the needs of today's diplomacy as we move into next millennium. Africa as the centerpiece of Nigeria's foreign policy no longer suffices, a broader perspective is necessary. This makes it imperative in this paper to analyse Nigeria's foreign policy beyond African entity.

Conceptual Analysis on the Concept of Foreign Policy

Like any other concepts in social sciences, there is no general agreement among scholars as to the exact definition and scope of foreign policy. This makes it also to be a contested concept. However, foreign policy can be explained as the primary method by which a country pursues its national interest in the external domain. It consists of decisions or

actions taken by states in order to achieve the realization of those interests. Although it is often used interchangeably with diplomacy, which concerns procedure and process, foreign policy involves decisions and actions by government. Viewed from various perceptions, foreign policy may also be defined as the aggregate of a country's policies in its interaction with other members of the international community. These policies comprise the country's perceptions, attitudes and behaviours on issues, as well as towards other states in the international community (Mbachu, 2009:63)

Considering Mbachu's view on foreign policy, it can be deducted that diplomatic policy of a nation in its interaction with other nations, is the central focus of his conceptualization and meanwhile we have seen cases where military tool is necessary. In a situation where diplomacy fails, military action is necessary. Abacha's regime was not too diplomatic in dealing with foreign countries. Foreign policy can as well be regarded as goals that a country wishes to achieve when interacting with another country. These keep the goals set on the country's national interest and goals in the global economy. When interacting with other countries, the conversation is played like a game of chess, with each country lobbying for its own best interest (Pentru, 2007).

In a similar vein, Dokubo (2010) explains foreign policy as the entire range of activities which that a nation pursues in its day-to-day relations with other nations, in order to achieve its national interest as defined by its leaders. Meanwhile, Saliu (2010:311) clarifies the thrust of the country's foreign policy which, according to him, centers on two contending factors namely: domestic and external issues. His argument underscores the thrust of the linkage school that revolves on how domestic issues can easily be affected by the external environment and vice versa. According to him, what may appear to be national on the surface may afterall have external orientation underpinning its existence. It is also possible for an external issue to have deep national roots depending on how people understand the entire

dimension that may surround its existence. Derived from the foregoing therefore, foreign policy is a kind of lever in the hands of a nation with which it can navigate through the complex international system to maximize the abundant opportunities in it, and minimize the negative repercussions that attend participation in the system (Saliu, 2010:312).

Whatever category a thrust may fall into, Saliu pinpoints that, the thrust of foreign policy is generally aimed at mobilizing resources (human and material) for higher level of delivery. A situation whereby the thrust of foreign policy is only known and appreciated by a few officials connected to it will necessarily put the the foreign policy at a great risk of non-performance, while working to withdraw public support from its effective pursuit. Hereit the requirements of material comfort of its chief implementers will clash with the service aspect of the new thrust and one can be sure that once that happens, the promoters of the thrust in foreign policy will settle for the former. This is the tragedy of thrust of foreign policies in developing countries where the dangers facing foreign policy are more real (Saliu,2010).

Conceptualizing National Interest

Every nation within the international system struggles to sustain its national interest; this makes it paramount for country's foreign policy to be tailored towards ensuring her national interest. Historically, national interest, within the framework of its foreign policy, has gone through different phases of mutation from the immediate post colonial period to date even when the core elements have remained largely the same. The fundamental issue that confronts Nigeria in the 21st century, with the deepening of globalization and the emergence of new powerful actors, is how to re-conceptualize her national interest, provide the mechanism and strategy that will facilitate the pursuit of foreign policy to achieve its national objectives especially, given the pressing desire to transit from an underdeveloped economy to one of the most developed in the year 2020 and at the same time provide the means to ensure the security and the way of life of its people. This

vision requires that Nigeria employs its foreign policy to eliminate the serious deficits that impede the actualization of the status of a stable polity anchored on good governance, whose primary responsibility is the welfare and securities of its citizens, both at home and abroad, that not only commands respect but whose citizens are respected and not denigrated everywhere (Osita, 2010: 80).

However, what constitutes a country's national interest is another contention in academia. This argument is supported by Osita (2010) when he straddles national interest on two schools of thought. For the realist school, there are two main strands. According to power theorists of this school, objectives of foreign policy must be defined in terms of national interest and must be supported with adequate power. The national interest of a state can only be defined in terms of national security and national security must be defined as integrity of the national territory and its institutions (Morgenthau, 1967). This view of Morgenthau rejects moralistic approach to international relations while insisting that the core interests of a nation are relatively permanent and have to do with the protection of the physical, political and cultural identity of a nation against encroachment by other nations. With this national interests are peripheral (Osita, 2010).

The generally acceptable view is that national interest is a manifestation of the core values, objectives and philosophy underlying the actions of the leaders. It is a concept that describes those things which a state seeks to protect/achieve vis a vis other states. It is also argued that national interest is the interest of the people not of the state, where the state is seen to exist in order to promote and protect the welfare of the citizens. A nation cannot play a super power role outside when her citizens are plagued by insecurity, inflationary pressure, high unemployment and economic instability. It is even difficult to define national interest of Nigeria. Some foreign policy analysts believe that Nigeria has no clear-cut political ideology and national interest. Part of the policy indecision is attributable to the fact that foreign policy is inextricably linked to its domestic policy (Stevens, 2012).

Nigeria's Foreign Policy in the Fourth Republic

The successful transition to civilian rule in 1999, after years of military governance, marked a watershed in Nigeria's foreign policy. It is still fresh in our memory that the country's image was seriously dented within the international community due to previous military and undemocratic ways. Several sanctions were imposed on Nigeria during military regimes and Abacha's government in particular. The implication of this was lack of acceptability among western economies. However, the economic scenario substantially changed with the deepening of economic globalization, and economic reforms in various sectors as a result of civil governance. Although has rightly observed by Osita (2010:47), one of the most crucial dimensions of Nigeria's national interest during civilian administration of Obasanjo and up to the present Jonathan's government has been the consolidation of its hard-won democracy, the civilian administration restructured more on economic driven diplomacy.

In a nutshell, the beauty of this segment is its exploration of different foreign policies right from the inception of democratic government in 1999 up to date. For simplicity and clarification, the section evaluates Obasanjo's Shuttle diplomacy, Yar'Adua's citizen Diplomacy and Jonathan's citizen and Economic Diplomacy.

Obasanjo's Shuttle Diplomacy

> *"We shall pursue foreign policy to promote friendly relations with all and will continue to play a constructive role in the UN, the OAU and other international bodies. We shall also continue to honour existing agreement between Nigeria and other countries. It is our firm resolves to restore Nigeria fully to her previous prestigious position in the continent" (Obasanjo, 1999).*

Upon the return to democratic government in Nigeria in 1999, President Olusegun Obasanjo came with a new direction and style in the Nigeria's foreign policy drive in reaction to existing domestic situation and international image of the country. The administration embarked

on foreign trips referred to as shuttle diplomacy, which took president Obasanjo to several parts of the world. It was rightly pointed out that the resort to frequent traveling by the president was all that was needed to repackage Nigeria for external consumption (Saliu, 2007:46). The objectives of these shuttles include:

1. Re-integration of Nigeria into the comity of nations
2. Attracting foreign investment and fresh financial flows
3. Securing debt relief from the country's creditors
4. Promoting Nigeria's external trade

It is the realization of the above imperatives that necessitated Obasanjo's numerous trips to abroad. Though many observers of Nigeria's international relations were critical to this shuttle diplomacy, the government succeeded in improving the country's national image, attracting foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and in recovering a significant portion of the looted monies lodged in foreign bank accounts. That the president could be said to have been his own foreign minister was not in doubt, he was obviously an international personality, loved it and used this status in the pursuit of Nigeria's foreign policy (Osita, 2010 : 48). This, in the view of Akinterinwa (2004), is a good tool in promoting national objectives and perceived the shuttle as necessary, and an expression of the acceptance of the country by the international community. Zabadi (2004) views the role of Obasanjo foreign trips as an avenue in creating room for integration into the comity of nations and becoming active in multilateral organizations, as the rationale behind the numerous trips by the Nigerian government thereby creating room for foreign investment inflow.

Considering the objectives of his shuttle diplomacy, particularly the government in its determination to regain Nigeria's lost glory and re-integrate it to the civilized world, the president during his extensive foreign trips was able to address the United Nations (UN), Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) the Group of 8 (G8) Group 77 (G77), the Common Wealth, African Union (AU) and European Union (EU). The significant gain of these apart from the psychological

relief following its re-integration and accommodations into the comity of nations, Nigeria had assumed the leadership of several international organizations notably the ECOWAS, AU and G77. It had hosted very important international summits thereby attracting foreign players to the Nigerian soil (Ajetumobi, et al 2011:312).

The administration consolidated this as the country regained her respect within Africa, got a strong voice in the Common wealth, and was instrumental in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict around Africa. Not only that, the government of Obasanjo contributed towards the management and resolution of conflict in Cote d'voire, adopted diplomacy to avoid a disguised military coup in Togo, ensured that a democratically elected government is maintained in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), sent military troops under the OAU peace monitoring and donated relief materials worth over US $50,000 to DRC to cushion the effects of the country's civil strife. Nigeria also used skilled diplomacy to re-instate the democratically elected government in Sao Tome and principle (STP) after a coup d'etat and donated US $50,000 to the government of Sao Tome and principle towards the country's July 2006 presidential elections (Osita, 2010:49).

In trying to attract foreign investment and fresh financial flows, the administration under Obasanjo adopted the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) in 2003 with the intention to promote export and woo foreign investors through several reforms which include: deregulation, privatization, liberalization and transparency. In actualization of these, foreign investors particularly from China, Brazil, USA and Israel came to Nigeria to do business. As rightly observed by Saleh (2012) since the inception of Obasanjo's administration, the Bureau for Public Enterprises (BPE) rose to over $4 billion through the privatization and concession of more than 140 enterprises which include cement manufacturing firms, banks, hotels and vehicle assembly plants.

In addition, another notable achievement of Obasanjo's shuttle diplomacy has been the sharp reduction of the country's external debt.

This is one of the cardinal objectives of his foreign trips in the name of debt relief. According to CBN (2002) report, as at 1997, Nigeria's external debt stood at $27.008 billion which presented Nigeria as the highest indebted country in Africa. In order to secure debt forgiveness from Nigeria's creditors, Obasanjo's government lobbied Paris and London club to the extent of relieving Nigeria of the sum of $18 billion and also paid another $18 billion to be debt free. Nigeria's minister of finance under Obasanjo, Ngozi Okonjo Iweala was quoted to have said:

> *Initially we owed $35 billion and $30 billion of that was owed the Paris club group of creditors of 15 countries, most of them Western countries and Japan. Researchers exited the Parish club through the debt cancellation. So $5 billion is left. We do not owe the IMF even one kobo. Of the $56 billion that is left about $ 2.5 billion is owed multilateral institutions. This includes the World Bank, African Development Bank, among others and these are long term, 30 – 40 years loan of little or no interest (Afrodad, 2007)*

As a matter of fact, the country's foreign reserves grew to an all-time high of $34 billion in 2006 and at the period of expiration of Obasanjo's term in office Nigeria's foreign reserve was $43 billion in 2007.

In order to enhance promotion of Nigeria's external trade, the administration recorded success in investment promotion and protection agreement (IPPA) with Germany, trade pact with India. Countries such as Greece, Russia, Norway, Poland, Spain, Italy, Switzerland and Israel also established bilateral investment relations with Nigeria (CBN, 2008).

Yar'adua's Citizen Diplomacy

After the first ever successful democratic transition from one civilian administration to another, Obasanjo handed over the mantle of leadership to Umar Musa Yar'Adua, a former Governor of Katsina. Under Yar'Adua's presidency, a new framework of Nigeria's foreign

policy tagged "Citizen Diplomacy" was developed. The thrust of citizen diplomacy is that Nigeria's foreign policy will henceforth be focused on the Nigerian citizens at home and in the Diaspora. According to the then Foreign Affairs Minister, Ojo Maduekwe, citizen diplomacy is not necessarily a departure from the country's traditional approach to foreign relation in which Africa is taken as the centre – piece; however the policy is rebranded to focus on the citizen (Bakare, 2007 : 7).

The agenda of citizen diplomacy was a novel idea for the Nigerian environment even though it was not fully fleshed out on that occasion. People to people diplomacy is a familiar terrain involving grassroots and non - governmental organizations reaching out to their counterpart in other countries without necessarily being funded by the government in power. Such network of relationship helps to generate goodwill and to cut out unnecessary bureaucracy (Ogunsanwo, 2010: 19)

Citizen diplomacy as argued by Ojo Madwekwe would strive for a synergy between foreign policy and domestic affairs in such a way that the citizen is taken as the focus of foreign policy (Monday, 2010). The idea of citizen diplomacy is also simplified by Mbachu (2007: 9) when he gives the basic thrust of the new foreign policy initiative as what revolves around concerns for the basic needs, human rights and socio-economic welfare of Nigerian citizens in bilateral and multilateral engagements with other countries.

However, the idea of citizen diplomacy faced so many hurdles. Nigerians living both at home and abroad believe it is a slogan to enrich its pronouncers (Daily Trust, 2009) . As rightly observed by Saliu (2010), crucial issues to the citizens are not well addressed at all. Domestic challenges such as infrastructure is not addressed. Roads are bad, power is epileptic, security is not being delivered, water is in adequately supplied and telecommunication services, though on the increase, their quality is not up to standard (Saliu, 2010) , The impact of these negative incidences are not enabling to citizen diplomacy. The citizens are therefore, not much bothered about its

pursuit as the domestic environment must be right before citizens can be empowered to be implementers of citizen diplomacy (US Report, 2010, Saliu 2010: 326)

The practicability of the slogan is also questioned by Osita (2010) when he considers the perspective and manner in which Nigerians have conducted themselves outside her boundary and ways in which they are being treated by law enforcement agencies of foreign countries even if they were illegal immigrants . Many have been brutalized, harassed and even killed in the name of repatriated them to Nigeria.

In a nutshell, citizen diplomacy anticipates an environment for its implementation but in a situation whereby our democracy is questionable; such enabling environment for the concept to strive is jettisoned. Elections have always been flawed leading to the assumption of office by leaders not desired by the people. Politics is seen as "do or die" affair in which all means are fair (Saliu, 2008). Definitely if the citizens at home are disappointed and consequently alienated from government, citizens living in other parts of the world may not feel much impact of the country (Daily Independence, 2010.Saliu, 2010).

The Jonathan's Citizen and Economic Diplomacy

The Jonathan administration like its predecessors also introduced a new foreign policy drive. Although while on acting capacity as the president of Nigeria, his foreign affairs minister, Odein Ajumogbobia had announced his determination to continue with the thrust of citizen diplomacy. However, after the 2011 presidential Election which was won by Goodluck Jonathan, a comprehensive review of Nigeria's foreign policy was carried out. The emphasis of Jonathan's administration is to seek and focus the country's foreign policy review on investment drive. The then appointed foreign Affairs minister, the late Ambassador Olugbenga Ashiru, announced the new policy initiative for the country which is said to be in line with change in international relationship. Nigeria's new foreign policy direction is now

on investment and economic cooperation, which thus ties foreign policy to the country's domestic agenda, a radical departure from the old one which has Africa as the centre point.

The president through his transformation agenda has restated that Nigeria's foreign policy is now anchored on the realization of foreign direct investment. Under the new policy thrust, Nigeria's diplomatic missions abroad have been directed to focus more on attracting investment to support the domestic programmes of government with a view to achieving not only vision 2020 but to bequeathing an enduring legacy of economic prosperity (Bello, 2012).

In his drive towards investment, the president has led the campaign of inviting investors to set up industries in Nigeria, and produce locally if they wish to take advantage of Nigeria's huge potential market. According to reports, foreign direct investment generated $8.9 billion in 2011 alone making Nigeria number 1 in Africa and a top investment destination in the world (UNCTAD, 2012). During the presidential visit to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Nigeria signed an MOU with Electrobas to invest in the generation of 10,000 mw of electronic Since then Brazilian investors in infrastructure, food and beverages and consumer items have been visiting Nigeria (Abati, 2012).

In October 2011, the president met with the Australian investment community in Perth, on the sidelines of CHOGM, where the Australian -Nigeria Trade and Investment Council (ANTIC) was established to facilitate the flow of investment into agriculture, mining and the petrochemicals sector. Australian Council members have since visited Nigeria and there is an agreement in place to provide technical support for the local mining sector.

In April 2012, the president visited Germany and got Siemens to commit investment in power generation, and turbine maintenance and repair in Nigeria. The president often times travels with Nigerian businessmen who are looking for a roads into foreign markets. The Nigerian private sector is involved in banking and insurance in Rwanda and other parts of Africa (Access Bank, IGI, GT Bank) in manufacturing in Ethiopia and Southern Africa (the Dangote Group,

LUBCON) and so on. Such investors often require the support of the Nigerian government which has been readily and consistently provided by the Jonathan administration (Abati, 2012).

In the presidential pursuit of citizen diplomacy, the Jonathan administration has always had cause to defend the interest of distressed Nigerians in Diaspora such as the evacuation of over 2,000 distressed Nigerians from Libya and more than 1,000 in Egypt between 2011 and 2012. The fifth Nigeria/EU dialogue in migration and Development which was held in Abuja in January 2012 emphasized on welfarism of Nigerians in their relations with other countries. The government has also stood up to all countries in upholding the principle of reciprocity.

In May 2013, World Economic Forum was held in Cape Town and Nigeria was opportune to host the 2014 edition in Abuja recently. This gesture is a plus to economic diplomacy of Jonathan's administration. Recently, both the World Bank and the IMF have equally commended Nigeria for its economic progress, under scoring the fact that the level of FDI inflow has increased from the foreign campaigns of this administration. The rebasing of the country's economy which puts Nigeria ahead of South Africa is a welcome development to the economy diplomacy of Jonathan's administration.

Challenges and Prospects

Nigeria's unhealthy domestic policy environment has narrowed down the menu of policy choices at the multilateral level (Idumanje, 2010). It has been posited that Nigeria's democratic ecology does not support her foreign policy posture. The shuttle diplomacy of Obasanjo created a vacuum in attending to domestic pressing needs. His frequent overseas visits paint a picture of a leader who pays more attention to foreign issues at the cost of local ones. And most scholars have attributed Nigeria's diplomatic hurdle as the inability of the country's leadership to define her national interest. Consequently, the nation has its edge in African diplomacy. Despite all Nigeria has done for Africa, and especially its immediate neighbours, it appears that the

general perception and attitude of neighbours to Nigeria have been one of an unwelcome intruder (Osita, 2010).

Not only that, the odds against citizen diplomacy are also attributed to internal and external challenges. Nigerians suffer rejection, deportation, imprisonment and other forms of maltreatment in other countries. The poor perception about the country is yet to be changed. Critical issues are not given attention at home. Unemployment ratio increases, infrastructural challenges, educational summersault and protection of lives and properties is not guaranteed. The realization of core national values is another problem.

The major challenge of the present administration is security. This has taken a form of international terrorism/suicide bombing and whereas the Jonathan administration economic diplomacy can only be sustained amidst peace and stability. The abduction of the Chibok Government Secondary School girls in Borno State by the Boko Haram insurgency is a huge blow to Nigeria's security (LGSS) has dented the country's image. Also, the recent rebasing of the country's GDP does not commensurate with the people's standard of living. In fact, the average Nigerian does not feel the impact of such economic improvement as claimed by the federal government. In order for Nigeria to have a vibrant foreign policy tailored on a well articulated national interest, this paper concurs with the need for Nigeria's government to adhere to the following six elements of national interest as identified by Aluko (1981) thus:

- Self-preservation of the country
- Defense and maintenance of the country's independence.
- Economic and social well being of the people
- Defense, preservation and promotion of democratic values
- Enhancing Nigeria's stance and status in the world and
- Promotion of world peace.

Conclusion

The paper explores Nigeria's foreign policy and her prospects of enhancing national the country'sinterest and it is argued that the

objectives of the country's external relations should go beyond paper work. Having considered the various foreign policies of different democratic dispensations right from Obasanjo's shuttle diplomacy to the citizen and economic diplomacy of Jonathan's administration, the paper maintains that Nigeria needs to promote democratic virtues that would improve domestic living conditions which invariably can add value to the country's foreign policy. The presently, terrorism as the most pressing security challenge questions the viability of Nigeria's military might and needs genuine attention from the government in order to manage the country's investment driven economy as the centre piece of the present administration foreign policy.

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