

## Foreign Policy and Nation-building in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

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### Abstract

Foreign policy and nation-building are two concepts with similarities, yet rarely discussed together. However, the three levels of foreign policy namely; primary, secondary and tertiary levels are linked to three attributes of nation-building. At the primary level, foreign policy centers on citizen's welfare, while nation-building focuses on active citizenship. The secondary level deals with the use of political power to achieve state objectives; similarly nation-building involves inclusive political participation. Diplomacy and law is accorded priority at the tertiary level, while nation-building focuses on state/society relations. With this relationship, we showed how foreign policy can, and has been used to promote nation-building in Nigeria's polity. Our central argument is that successive civilian administrations in Nigeria have vacillated in using foreign policy to advance nation-building, due to individual leader's perception of his role. Role Theory was adopted as theoretical framework, while relying on secondary data. Study revealed lack of consistency by the federal government in using foreign policy to promote nation building. Prioritizing things that promote oneness and community spirit in Nigeria's domestic policies will address this. Subsequently, this can be projected internationally through a synergy of nation building and foreign policy.

**Keywords:** Foreign Policy; Nation-building; Domestic Policy; External environment; Fourth Republic.

### Introduction

Foreign Policy and Nation-Building are two concepts that are rarely discussed together. Perhaps, there is a conceptual dilemma on the nature of relationship between the two. As a result, the extent to which one can be used to strengthen or reinforce the other, is a subject of polemics. What we did in this study was not to conjure a relationship which seemingly may not exist, but rather to use the variables that make up the two concepts to demonstrate, that there is indeed a relationship even when it does not seem apparent.

The first point to note is that nation-building could better be appreciated when it is discussed in the context of a country's political and socio-cultural certain. Foreign policy on the other hand finds more relevance when discussed with the external environment in mind. Secondly,

since foreign policy is the projection of a country's domestic interests in the external milieu, it presupposes that part of what is projected outside, has elements of nation-building. We would in a subsequent section attempt to give operational definitions of the two concepts and through that establish their relationships. But first, let's look at how Nigeria's foreign policy evolved.

Prior to Nigeria's independence in 1960, there was absence of political responsibility for the subject of foreign policy. In fact, Gray (1965) had written that the Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa had in August 11, 1959 stated that government could only register a protest, for all foreign relations had to be conducted through British channels and under British control. Similarly, Ofoegbu (1990) observed that before 1960, there was no Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but an External Affairs department together with units that performed routine administrative and protocol functions.

Moreover from October 1960 to July 16, 1961, the position of foreign minister was fused into the office of Prime Minister. It was only on July 17, 1961 when Jaja Wachukwu was appointed the substantive foreign minister that the two positions were separated. The Prime Minister had at the time considered all questions on foreign policy raised by rival political parties and other interest groups as being premature since Nigeria was still a British colony. However, these parties did not relent in their clamour for an articulation of a foreign policy for Nigeria. Consequently, during the 1959 federal elections, the issue of foreign policy was given considerable publicity in the campaigns.

The foreign policy of a country is contrived in ecological components that are both internal and exterior to it (Northedge, cited in Ogwu, 1986). Amplifying Northedge's thesis, Ogwu has remarked that a 'combination of political, economic, military and idiosyncratic factors can be viewed as critical variables in the foreign relations of Nigeria' (Ogwu, 1986, p.16)

Thus, the factors to look at, in examining the background to Nigeria's foreign policy are the nature of Nigeria's economy, polity and society. With respect to the economy, there are two major economic factors that inevitably affect the capability of a state to pursue its stated goals. These factors are the ability of the economy to mobilize and deploy its productive forces and the degree of external dependence on the economy (Ogwu, 1986, p.28).

As regards the polity, Lord Lugard contrived a federation of powerful regions with a weak centre. Under the federal arrangement, the regions were allowed to have external representation in London and some regions even attempted to open offices elsewhere around the world. What further demonstrated how powerful the regions were, was that the independence constitution

of 1960 demanded the consent of regional governments before treaties affecting regional subjects could become operative.

According to Tyoden (1989), the collapse of the first republic and the subsequent civil war created an impetus for a reappraisal of Nigeria's diplomatic relations with emphasis on four issue areas, namely: the position of Africa in Nigeria's foreign policy; Nigeria's role in the Organization for African Unity (OAU) now African Union; the country's link with Francophone African states and Nigeria and the western world. As early as June 1966, the zonal summit of Nigeria Heads of Missions had presented a position paper to the military on the position of Africa in Nigeria diplomatic relations. This paper did not only emphasize Africa's centrality, but reiterated in stronger terms, principles enunciated by Balewa such as the maintenance of good neighbourliness, commitment to African unity, the sacredness of Africa's inherited territorial boundaries and Nigeria's abhorrence of racism and colonialism.

He observed that these recommendations, gave impetus to Africa becoming the 'centerpiece' of Nigeria's foreign policy, and African Unity becoming an 'article of faith.' This was what prompted the then Commissioner for External Affairs, Dr. Okoi Arikpo, to insinuate that Nigeria's foreign policy is 'constructed in Concentric Circles with Africa in the center.'

Subsequent administrations were military, with a civilian stint between 1979 and 1983, after which democracy was truncated again. Thus the way Nigeria's diplomacy evolved before self-rule, through independence to series of military interregnums impacted negatively on nation-building and foreign policy. Thus when Nigeria reestablished civil rule in 1999, fresh attempts at nation-building, using foreign policy began.

The study is segmented into six sections. Section one is this introductory part. In section two, we articulated the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Section three is a discourse on nation-building and foreign policy. We did an overview of Nigeria's nation-building and foreign policy during the military era in section four, while in section five; we appraised Nigeria's efforts at nation-building and foreign policy in the fourth republic starting with President Obasanjo's administration in 1999 and ending with President Jonathan's tenure in 2015. The study did not examine President Buhari's administration that spanned from 2015 to 2023 because there was no clear cut foreign policy direction. It also did not include President Tinubu's 4D foreign policy thrust (Democracy, Development, Demography and Diaspora) because it is still evolving. The recommendations were presented in section six.

## Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical framework was drawn from the explanatory variables of Role Theory. Role theory focuses on the reasoning of national political actors, their understanding of the international system and the perceived role of their own states within the larger system (Benes, 2011, p.1). The theory was developed in sociology, social psychology and anthropology, before it was adapted to the study of international relations and foreign policy. It first gained prominence in foreign policy discourse after the publication of K.J.Holsti's (1970) study of national role conceptions (Thies, 2011). Thies goes further to state that Holsti focused on the basic proposition, that the persona, in this case, the leaders of a state may hold a diversity of convictions and representations about the identity of the state and this in turn shapes the way the state conducts itself in the global system. Holsti tries to focus the attention of the discipline toward domestic sources of foreign policy behavior (Benes, 2011, p.3).

Role theory describes external relations conduct by examining the part individual countries play in the global system. The central idea of the theory is the National Role Conception established by Holsti. He explicates National Role Conception as the policy makers own explanation of the general kinds of resolutions, conclusions, regulations and conducts relevant to their state, and of the duties, if any, their state should carry out on a sustainable basis in the international system or in the lower regional system. It is their representation of the pertinent inclination or function of their state towards or in, the external environment (Holsti, 1970, p.245, cited in Benes, 2011, p.4).

Scholars like Krotz, 2002, cited in Benes (2011) and Le Prestre (1997a) share similar understanding with Holsti with respect to what constitutes the creation of federal functions and how it influences external relations. They argue that National Role Conceptions are domestically shared views and understanding regarding the proper role and purpose of one's own state as a social collectivity in the international arena. The articulation of a national role betrays preferences, operationalises an image of the world, triggers expectations, and influences the definition of the situation and of the available options. At the same time, National Role Conceptions make certain interests and policy options intuitively implausible, categorically exclude them as wrong or unacceptable or make them unthinkable.

Juxtaposing this theory with foreign policy, Walker & Simon (1987) observe that actors do experience role conflict which they defined as a situation in which multiple roles are elicited by competing or conflicting expectation, cues and conceptions.

However, Atte (1990) asserts that the theory sets out to answer the question according to David Singer, whether there are some factors at work in the decision-making agency or bureau which helps to produce behaviour peculiar to that particular type of structural setting. The emphasis here is not ... just on individuals and their innate characteristics, but on the sorts of psychological pressures under which they operate once they are in the foreign policy organization. One of such pressures is the need to conform to the expectations of a new peer group.

In applying this theory to the explication of diplomacy and nation-building in Nigeria's fourth republic, it becomes easier to understand how national role conceptions and prescriptions were the explanatory variables that influenced foreign policy of Nigeria since the re-emergence of civil rule in 1999 and the consequence it has had on nation –building.

Thus the extent to which foreign policy was used as an instrument of nation-building during the period under review was a function of the perception of each of the leaders on Nigeria's role in the international system as well as the role prescriptions from the external environment. When it is also borne in mind that national role conceptions make certain interests and policy options implausible and inexpedient, then our rationale for adopting Role Theory as a framework for analysis, gets its true meaning.

### **Discourse on nation-building and foreign policy.**

Nation-building as a concept is often times used interchangeably, albeit erroneously with state-building. According to Dinen (2006), nation-building refers to the procedure of evolving a mutual identity or commonality among the diverse sections that constitute the population of a given state. Contrarily, State-building is the task of building functional institutions capable of fulfilling the essential attributes of modern statehood. Distinguished in this way, nation-building is concerned more with the character of the relations between citizens and the state, while state-building focuses on the practical task of building or strengthening state institutions.

Scholars like Dobbins, Crane and Degrasse (2007) posit that the primary goal of nation-building is to make a turbulent society strife-free. However, a cursory analysis of this conception reveals its inadequacy. This inadequacy arises from the fact that it conceives nation-building as the state and institutional interventions usually undertaken to reconstruct and resuscitate public infrastructures in war ravaged and conflict ridden countries. It is on this premise that United States and United Nations justify their post-war interventions in countries like Iraq and Libya. However, rebuilding of damaged infrastructures to make them functional

conduces to state-building and designating them as nation-building could therefore be misleading.

Dinnen (2006) identified three key attributes for nation-building to be: Active Citizenship, Inclusive political participation and State/society relations. Citizenship is nurtured and sustained when the state provides adequate security for citizens, functional utilities while making the rule of law the grund norm. As observed by Alesina & Reich (2015), these provisions predispose the citizens to feel a sufficient amount of commonality of interests, goals and preferences, so that they do not want to separate from one another.

Inclusive political participation, that provides a level playing field for all, gives citizens some level of comfort and recognition as stakeholders. State and society relations are facilitated by physical, social and communications infrastructure that is shared by the entire civil society. These assets when made accessible to all are used for transactions and communication and enhance cohesion. The ultimate goal of nation-building is to engender national integration. This integration is brought about when the process of achieving congruence between the boundaries of modern state and of national community is put in place (Mylonas, 2017).

In the words of Adigun (2016) nation-building is a concept that gained prominence in the late 1960's and 1970's when President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania strongly advocated it for fragile post-colonial African states. Originally, nation-building referred to the efforts of newly independent nations, notably the nations of Africa but also in the Balkan to reshape territories that had been carved out by colonial powers or empires without regard to ethnic, religious or other boundaries(Harris, 2012 as cited in Eme & Onyishi, 2014; Deutsch & Foltz, 2010). The process of nation-building is an attempt to grow the ethos of nationalism and harmony, to evolve a country whose people share oneness. The primary goal is to promote national unity by growing a new nation and a unified people (Hippler, 2002, pp.1-3 as cited in Eme & Onyishi, 2014, p.4).

Deutsch (1966, p.3), observes that the activity of nation-building could be likened to an architectural design or a machine-like prototype constructed based on the mastery, exigency and intensions of the designer. What could be inferred from the above statement by Deutsch is that to build a nation requires a deliberate and conscious effort by leaders who in the metaphor used by Deutsch represent the architect. The position seems to have found favour with Gambari (2008, p.2) when he stated:

Nations just don't happen by historical accident; rather they are built by men and women with vision and resolve. Nation-building is therefore the product of conscious statecraft, not happenstance. Nation-building is always work-in-progress; a dynamic process in constant need of nurturing and re-invention. Nation-building never stops and true nation-building don't rest because all nations are constantly facing up to new challenge.

Gambari believes that nations are raised by model men and women and supported by organizations that foster good governance and thus socio-economic development. He stated that Nation-building has many important aspects. First it is about building a political entity which corresponds to a given territory, based on some generally accepted norms and principles and a common citizenship... Above all else however, nation-building is about raising a commonality of motives, a sense of shared fortune, and a collective imagination of belonging. Nation-building is therefore about nurturing the physical and intangible strings that hold a political entity together and gives it a sense of purpose. It is about developing the institutions and values which sustain the collective community in these modern times.

In international relations scholarship, Foreign Policy is a concept whose true meaning rarely generates controversy. One of the classical definitions of the concept is that given by Modelski (1962) who defined foreign policy as the system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behavior of other states and for adjusting their own activities to the international environment. Holsti (1995) on the other hand, defined it as the actions of a state towards the external environment and the conditions usually domestic under which these actions are formulated.

Holsti's definition brings to the fore the domestic elements involved in foreign policy making. Such domestic factors include, but are not limited to the following: economic conditions, cultural and historical factors, social structure i.e. relationship between social groups, political accountability and the role of public opinion. Specifically with respect to Nigeria, Ogwu (1986) identified those domestic factors to be the nature of Nigeria's economy, polity and society. Giving further illustration with the economy, she stated that there are two factors that affect the capability of a state to pursue its stated goals, namely the ability of the economy to mobilize and deploy its productive forces and the degree of external dependence on the economy. Foreign policy comprises three components (Akinyemi, 2006). First, it is one of overall inclination and policy goals of a particular country towards another. The second component is

the purpose that a country seeks to achieve in her relations or dealings with other countries. The third thread is the means of achieving that particular goal or intention.

Meanwhile, Asobie (1986) opines that there are three levels of foreign policy: namely the primary level, the secondary level and the tertiary level. The initial sphere is concerned with the material life of a nation like increase in productivity and improvement of the living standard of the people. Citizens' welfare is accorded primacy here. At the secondary level, foreign policy deals with military/security and political matters. The focus here is the question of power and its use, particularly the power of a state to achieve its objectives. The tertiary level deals with matters of diplomacy and law.

A juxtaposition of Dinnen's (2006) attributes of nation-building and Gambari's (2008) views on the same subject with Asobie's (1986) three levels of foreign policy, reveals common concerns shared by the two concepts. Hence issues around active and common citizenship, inclusive political participation, state/society relations, security, functional utilities and rule of law are also reflected at the three levels of foreign policy. It is in this connection that the relationship between nation-building and foreign policy becomes evident, hence our rationale for bringing the two concepts together in this study.

### **Overview of Nigeria's Foreign Policy and Nation-Building during the Military Era**

The unconstitutional nature of military regimes tends to impose on them, the burden of illegitimacy within and outside the country. Prior to the return of democracy in 1999, the military establishment in Nigeria administered the country for a cumulative period of thirty years. Their proclivity to ruling by force rather than the will of the people makes them ill equipped for the task of nation-building. Related to that, the lack of legitimacy was reflected in the foreign policy directions pursued, inching sometimes towards a belligerent foreign policy to demonstrate that they cannot be dictated to by the international community. At other times, it tended towards a foreign policy of appeasement, to gain the goodwill of Nigerians and the international community.

Two striking examples will help to illustrate this admixture of different policy directions during this era. The first case is exemplified by the military regime of General Muhammadu Buhari from 1983 to 85 as well as General Sanni Abacha from 1993 to 98. Buhari's government reactions and handling of some events that happened in the international scene would suggest that he had a belligerent foreign policy.

There was a diplomatic conflict that erupted between Nigeria and Britain over the abduction of Umaru Dikko in London who served as Transport Minister under President Shehu Shagari's government and the ill-fated attempt to bring him back to Nigeria. The Nigerian government was implicated, though it denied involvement. Following this incident, the British Government detained the Nigerian Airways Cargo plane that was to fly Dikko to Nigeria. Two Nigerian envoys, Peter Oyedele, a Counsellor and Edet Okon, were also suspended by the British authorities for actions adjudged as irreconcilable with their position as diplomats (Obi, 2015).

As a reprisal, the Nigerian government instantly sent home two British diplomats from Nigeria, John Harrison, Head of Chancery and Stewart Evans, an Attaché. It also ordered back its High Commissioner in London, Major General Halidu Hananiya for a dialogue and requested the British Government to do the same to Sir Hamilton Whyte, its High Commissioner in Lagos. In addition, the Buhari government seized and held up, a British Caledonian jet en-route London with 221 passengers and 22 crew members. These passengers were treated as 'guests' of the Nigerian government for fifteen hours, under armed guards, but granted due courtesy. The British government saw this as hostage taking (Fawole, 2003 cited in Obi, 2015, p.16).

Similarly General Sanni Abacha who became the de facto Head of State in November 1993, did not border to court the friendship of Nigeria's traditional friends in the international community. As a matter of fact, he presented a posture of a leader who did not want to be dictated to, by the international community. This he made very clear in his maiden broadcast when he said:

For the international community, we ask that you suspend judgment while we grapple with the serious task of nation-building, reconciliation and repairs. This government is a child of necessity with a strong determination to restore peace and stability to our country and on this foundation, enthroned a lasting and true democracy. Give us the chance to solve our problems in our own way (General Abacha's 1993 maiden speech as head of state, cited in Obi, 2015, p.192).

Abacha's tenure was characterized by human right abuses and hounding of perceived enemies. However, the execution of the 'Ogoni Nine' in 1995, while the Commonwealth Summit was holding in Auckland New Zealand, was a diplomatic faux pas. From then on, Nigeria became a pariah in the international community. Akinboye (2013, p. 35) summarized Nigeria's foreign policy under Abacha in the following words:

During his five years stewardship, General Abacha superintended over the most aggressive and protective foreign policy in Nigerian history. Abacha's line of diplomacy tossed the administration into altercation with the west, because of weak domestic policies particularly the issue of human rights which sentenced the government to a state of persistent segregation.

General Ibrahim Babangida' regime which spanned 1985 to 93 is used to represent a foreign policy of appeasement. One novel thing Babangida did with respect to foreign policy was that Nigerians were given the opportunity to make input into the country's foreign policy. The platform for this was provided by organizing an All-Nigeria conference on foreign policy which held in Kuru from April 7-13, 1986. The conference was attended by participants from the civil service, armed forces, public corporations, the media, student unions, labour unions, the universities, organized private sector, women organizations and research institutes (Akindele & Atte, 1986). The participants were mandated to present to the federal government, proposals and recommendations for the conduct of the country's foreign policy up to the year 2000.

The participants proposed to the federal government *inter alia*, the creation of a mechanism for foreign policy monitoring and initiatives involving the participation of representatives of a wide range of groups and interests in both the private and public sector. In other words, the need to have a standing and broadly representative national body to do on a continuing basis, what the 1986 All Nigeria Conference on Foreign Policy did, namely to monitor, examine and re-examine the conduct of Nigeria's external relations to ensure their consistency with national aspirations, goals and interests(Akindele & Atte, 1986). There is no evidence to show that the recommendations were implemented by the government.

The same gesture of appeasement was replicated with respect to foreign economic relations when Nigerians were invited to join in a debate on whether Nigeria should take IMF loan. In theory, these two incidents attempted to marry nation-building with foreign policy as they tried to weave into the foreign policy process issues around active citizenship, inclusive political participation, and state/society relations which are critical elements of nation-building. Regrettably, they were more of foreign policy rhetoric.

It is worthy to note too that, in spite of outright rejection of IMF loan by Nigerians, the government went ahead to introduce an IMF-inspired Structural Adjustment Program which

had all the conditionality's that were attached to the rejected loan. With this scenario, the task of nation-building and foreign policy were observed in breach during this era.

### **Appraising Nigeria's Foreign Policy and Nation-Building under the Democratic Dispensation**

Since democracy was resuscitated in 1999, it has produced five Presidents. Though there has not been consistency in policy direction and nation-building efforts, yet two policy thrusts seems to stand out. First is Economic Diplomacy; second and to a lesser extent is Citizens Diplomacy. Economic diplomacy is the conduct of foreign policy in a way that accords priority to economic objectives of a nation. It encompasses the diverse diplomatic strategies which a country deploys with a view to optimizing the mobilization of external and financial resources for economic development (Asobie, 1991, p.35). Saliu (1997) averred that Babangida's regime claimed to have initiated economic diplomacy in Nigeria in 1988. But he acknowledged Asobie's position that although its formal adoption is dated back to 1988, its conception could be traced further back.

Citizens' diplomacy on the other hand is a political concept that represents the participation of average citizens engaging representatives of another country or cause, either unwittingly or by design, sometimes called 'Track two Diplomacy' (Agbu, 2008). According to him, it further refers to informal relations between people of separate nations, as distinct from formal contact between government designates.

Economic diplomacy was pursued vigorously in the first eight years of Nigeria's democracy commencing 1999. As Akindele (2000) posited, the foreign policy objectives articulated then by the administration were:

- Creating a better persona for Nigeria in the global community and thus making the segregation and exclusion of the country from the core of international interaction an antique of the recent past.
- Strengthening of democracy at home which is a *sin qua non* for Nigeria's foreign policy.
- Encouraging and welcoming foreign investment, recognizing that foreign investment is a vehicle for enhancing economic development and industrialization of a country.
- Debt burden depletion, revocation or forgiveness to the high echelon in Nigeria's foreign economic agenda.

The acting out of this role by the then President, was what majorly shaped the foreign policy of Nigeria during this era. Obasanjo believed strongly that his international credentials prior to assuming office put him in the best stead to accomplish the assignment. A synopsis of his international credentials prior to assuming office helps to illuminate this point. In the sixteen years from the time he voluntarily handed over to an elected government in 1979 (a fact that has not been forgotten in the West) and when he returned for the second time, he was literally embroiled in international affairs in the following ways:

1983-89, Member Independent Commission on Disarmament Security; 1985-86, Co-chairman, Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group on South Africa; 1987-1993, Director, Better World Society, Washington D.C; 1988-1999, Member United Nations Secretary-General's Group on African commodities questions; 1989, Member, Independent Group on Financial Development for Developing countries; 1989, Member Advisory council, the Institute for Global Ethics; 1993-95, Member, United Nation's Secretary General's Advisory panel on Africa; 1991, Member, Board of Trustees, African-American Institute; 1994-95, Member Advisory Panel United Nations World Conference on Women and Development. (Ogunbiyi, 2002 cited in Akindele, 2003).

Before now, Afrocentrism was presumably the overarching principle of Nigeria's foreign policy. Presumably, in the sense that Afro-Centrism presupposes that Nigeria places primary emphasis in her relation with other African countries both at the bilateral and multilateral level. It further suggests that the major external forces which propel Nigeria's foreign policy are to be found within Africa. However Ibeau (1987, p.39), belied this notion when he stated that, instead of Africa, the main focus of the country's external relations has been its relation with the capitalist countries of the west and this to a large extent determine her policy towards the rest of Africa.

Much as Ibeau's argument has some merit, it cannot be denied that issues concerning Africa have always been given prominent attention in Nigeria's foreign relations, regardless of where the influences underpinning this foreign policy posture lies. Nevertheless a deliberate attempt was made by Obasanjo to shift this focus. According to Akinterinwa (2004), Obasanjo's ascendancy to the office of President in 1999, brought about a radical departure in the direction of the country's foreign policy. Attention was shifted from an Afro centric foreign policy, to a global-focused diplomacy. However, he observed that Afro centrism still had its place at the political level, while there was a global emphasis at the economic milieu.

To lay credence to this, it could be noted that Nigeria's action and drive in articulating the Constitutive Act of African Union; The New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD)

and the African Peer Review Mechanism have greatly engrossed the country even more deeply into African Affair (Al-Hassa (2011). Also under NEPAD, Nigeria championed the Joint Africa/G8 plan to improve Africa's capability to undertake peace support operations.

President Obasanjo seemed to have set the tone for his new foreign policy while addressing newly appointed ambassadors in 1999. He stated:

Despite our worry for the welfare of our continent, the debt conundrum is not peculiar to Africa. Many countries in Asia, the Caribbean and South America are entangled in it. It is germane therefore, that the countries work in concert to seek better deals with developed nations of the world and this calls for a more universal approach to global issues than was hitherto the case (cited in Akinterinwa, 2004, p.445).

Obasanjo's foreign minister at the time, Ambassador Olu Adeniji gave further justification on what necessitated the policy shift. In his words, Nigeria's foreign policy direction had to lead to where there are development funds and technical assistance, particularly in the light of the weakness in intra- African cooperation, crisis and conflicts in Africa, as well as Africa's inability to bail Nigeria out of her economic doldrums. He submitted that Africa as cornerstone of Nigeria's Foreign Policy was geo-culturally and proximity factor-induced, while the global setting was issue-and economic reality-compelled (Adeniji, 2003, cited in Fayomi et al 2015, p.186).

Buoyed by this policy thrust and the role he perceived, he should be playing, Obasanjo embarked on the most extensive foreign trip by any Nigerian President to different parts of the world ostensibly to attract foreign investment and seek debt relief/cancellation. The President as at mid-August 2002, travelled out of the country for one hundred and thirteen times since he took over leadership at the end of May 1999, and that as of June 2002, he had been out of Nigeria altogether for a period of 340 days ( Akindele, 2005, cited in Obi, 2005). Within a three year period in office, the president was out of the country for a cumulative period of a year, save for two weeks.

Although, he got a debt cancellation of \$18 billion from Paris Club out of a total debt of \$31bn owed the body, the point remains that Nigeria had to dole out a huge sum of \$12bn in upfront payment before getting a cancellation of \$18 billion. Added to this, the debt cancellation came with conditionality that was set by IMF with respect to meeting its Policy Support Instrument. What is even more revealing as pointed out by Dr. Abraham Nwankwo who was the Director of Portfolio Management at the Debt Management Office at the time the cancellation was granted, is that Nigeria had in thirty eight years paid about \$42 billion to the Paris Club as

interests and penalties on \$15.5 billion loans to Nigeria. Despite this humongous amount, the country's debt obligations to the club stood at \$31 billion as at then, as a result of accrued interests (Obi, 2015).

Attention paid to external matters seems to have been given a disproportionate attention during this period compared to domestic issues. Professor Ibrahim Gambari who was Nigeria's foreign Minister from 1984-85 shared this sentiment when he stated:

Nigeria's foreign policy is rarely targeted at the needs of the ordinary people; rather it is planned, hinged and applied in haughty cliques. Hence the country's diplomatic policies have epitomized the concerns and yearnings of an exclusive group in commerce, government, and military establishment (Gambari cited in Akinterinwa, 2004, p.451).

Needless to say that attention paid to local issues, helps in nation-building, but this was neglected. The point here is that the factors that promote oneness, solidarity and sense of community – issues that promote nation-building were lacking in the content and execution of foreign policy during this era. This much was admitted by Ambassador Adeniji, Obasanjo's foreign minister when he stated:

The citizen has hardly constituted the focal point of our foreign policy. Priority is on rules rather than man...the law cannot be more salient than its maker, safeguarding and preserving a nation whose people are worthless is equal to being senseless. Likewise, Africa as the linchpin of our foreign policy is also illogical without Nigerians. Diplomatic triumphs that do not profit Nigerians would neither affect nor get endorsement of, the people...positive and rewarding concentration therefore, fills the void in foreign policy thrust... (Adeniji, 2004, cited in Fayomi et al 2015, p.187).

In the second phase of Nigeria's democratic journey starting from 2007, Economic Diplomacy was supplanted by Citizens Diplomacy for a short-lived period up to middle of 2010, before Economic Diplomacy again became the focal point. Citizens' diplomacy was used by the Nigerian leadership to leverage the gains made from reintegrating Nigeria into the comity of nations, in the immediate past era (Agbu, 2008).

In explaining what the concept meant, Ojo Maduekwe, the then foreign minister said that Citizens Diplomacy means that Nigeria's foreign policy will henceforth be focused on the Nigerian citizens at home and in Diaspora. The minister further stated that the country will endeavour to achieve harmony between foreign policy and domestic affairs in a manner that will place the citizen at the pivot of foreign policy. This was a demonstration of intent to use foreign policy to promote nation-building. This much was captured by Agbu(2008, p.16) when he stated, 'there was a deliberate attempt to infuse in Nigeria's foreign policy relations, some

element of popular representation, through which the interests of tax payers who are often removed from the centers of decisions affecting them are protected.'

With all the potentials the policy had for bringing Nigerians together and promoting a sense of oneness and community, it failed to deliver on its promise when a call for action was required especially as it applied to Nigerians in Diaspora. The policy existed in the realm of slogan which seemed not to have direct impact on Nigerians both at home and abroad. A few examples as highlighted by Obi, (2015, p.234) abound. The efforts made by the government to have Nigerians serving various jail terms abroad to return home and complete their prison terms in Nigeria did not yield any positive result. There were cases where Nigeria failed to react appropriately to unjust treatment meted out to Nigerians living abroad. Eighty four Nigerians were killed in South Africa between January 2007 and April 2008. A Nigerian diplomat was killed at the Nigerian Embassy in Prague, Czech Republic in May 2007 by an irate victim defrauded by a Nigerian. There was also the May 2008 xenophobic attack on Nigerian immigrants in South Africa. In all these cases, Citizens Diplomacy did not live up to its bidding.

The chief spokesperson of the then President summarized the foreign policy of this era in the following words: "with respect to foreign policy, Yar'Adua's tenure was described mainly in uncomplimentary tales. It was a period when Nigeria's seat in the international fora was mostly vacant due to the indisposition of the president which compelled him to travel less" (Adeniyi, 2011).

Economic diplomacy resurfaced again after the demise of Yar'adua. The thrust of Jonathan's foreign policy was articulated by his foreign minister Olugbenga Ashiru as:

The priority is now on investments and economic cooperation. The new disposition of government is that while we keep leadership of our sub-region and exercise our leadership role on the continent by broaching all pertinent issues on the continent, the foreign policy direction will also be used to drive the economic and industrial development of the country (Ashiru 2011, cited in Obi, 2015, p.243).

President Jonathan perhaps saw his role differently from his predecessor. However in abandoning Citizens Diplomacy as a foreign policy thrust, an opportunity for advancing the frontiers of nation-building using foreign policy seems to have been lost. Nevertheless, when the issue of protecting the interest of Nigerians came to the fore, the administration did not drop the ball.

Some few examples are worth mentioning here. First was the incident that happened in March 12, 2012 when 125 Nigerians who travelled to South Africa were refused entry at the Oliver

Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg because they did not have the yellow card, which is evidence of vaccination against yellow fever. The Nigerian government directed the aviation authorities to also stop South African airlines entry into Nigeria. The government in further retaliation wanted to move against South African businesses in Nigeria before the South African authorities apologized and sent a delegation to Nigeria to make peace. The Nigerian government also promptly evacuated stranded Nigerians in Libya between March and November 2011 and January 2012 in Egypt during the Arab Spring. This was Citizens Diplomacy at its best.

Although we could still see some semblance of economic diplomacy in practice, new challenges that have arisen in Nigeria's domestic environment such as crop farmers/herders conflict, ransom kidnapping, insurgency and separatist agitations continues to cause distractions. This has distorted Nigeria's foreign policy direction so much so that it is sometimes difficult to place a finger at what the foreign policy thrust is. In addition, the alienation, suspicion and distrust these challenges have foisted on Nigerians makes the task of nation building herculean.

Akinterinwa (2018), while depicting the scenario between 2015 and 2018 has stated that an evaluation of Nigeria's foreign policy in the past three years should be set on the basis of the level of comfort enjoyed by the people of Nigeria, the scope of security provided and the degree of efficacy achieved in using foreign policy as a tool.

### **Summary/Conclusion**

In this study, the task we set for ourselves was to demonstrate that there is a nexus between foreign policy and nation-building and that the former can be used to promote the latter. We first tried to provide a background, to the study, by looking at the evolution of Nigeria's foreign policy from the pre-independent through independent to the military and democratic regimes. Our framework of analysis was anchored on the role theory and we were able to show how interpretations of role conceptions by different actors were reflected in foreign policy directions across time. This accounted for the inconsistencies witnessed in the country's foreign policies during the period.

We went further to operationalise the two concepts of nation-building and foreign policy. Using the variables that make up the two concepts, we were able to establish a relationship between the two which provided a justification for our studying the two concepts together. In addition,

we examined the nature of foreign policy and nation-building during the military era and how it is different in with the return of democracy in 1999.

As has been demonstrated in this study, Foreign policy has not been adequately used to promote nation-building. The reason why this state of affairs has persisted could be that successive heads of government in Nigeria have not fully realized that both foreign policy and nation-building are mutually reinforcing. Economic Diplomacy and Citizens Diplomacy are two foreign policy thrusts that should have been used to galvanize Nigerians; by placing their interests first in a way they will feel that the governments have their interest at heart. Unfortunately, these were not properly harnessed. It is this strategy of placing citizens first, that Donald Trump has, working for him as President of United States America which in spite of his personal flaws, a good number of Americans gravitates towards him.

## **Recommendations**

Nigeria's foreign policy at all times should have as a constant, goals and objectives that reflect the basic needs and aspirations of Nigerians. Things that advance oneness, solidarity and community spirit should be prioritized in the country's domestic policies in ways that they do not only appear as slogans, but are made to resonate with Nigerians. Subsequently, this can be projected internationally through a synergy of nation building and foreign policy

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