

# The Changing Nature of Nigeria's Foreign Policy: Whose Interest?

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**Abstract:** Nigerian foreign policy thrust commenced in 1960 after the attainment of political sovereignty from Britain. Africa was projected as the centrepiece of Nigeria's external decisions. Every successive administration continued to emphasize and expand the principles of Nigeria's Foreign Policy decisions on Africa. Besides afrocentricism, the foreign policy served the interest of Mr President, ruling and business elites, and the ordinary citizens abroad. The previous governments showed little or no concern about the welfare of her citizens abroad. However, in 2007, the Nigerian government adopted citizen's diplomacy as her foreign policy thrust, whose aim was geared toward mobilizing the support of Nigerians at home and diaspora to develop the country economically and politically. Though, Citizen's diplomacy was misconstrued initially. The misrepresentation was anchored on the fact Nigeria has abandoned her traditional approach foreign policy thrust (afrocentricism) to Nigeria's citizens at home and diaspora. However, citizen diplomacy underscores the protection of Nigeria's image and integrity at home and abroad. At present, President Buhari's administration's foreign policy drive focused on Nigerians at diaspora as never before. Therefore, the paper aimed at examining the changing nature of Nigeria's foreign policy thrust; and its beneficiaries. The paper adopted a Concentric Circles model as its analytical construct. The paper recommends amongst others that Nigerian government should design robust economic programmes that are geared towards improving and enhancing economic development predicated on creating employment opportunities, encouraging local production, curbing corruption and supporting the industrial infrastructure.

**Keywords:** afrocentricism, citizens, citizenship diplomacy, concentric circle, elite, foreign policy.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Foreign policy is one of the wheels with which the process of international relations functions. Most political independent states regulate the course of their foreign policies within the limits of their powers and the realities of the outside environment. Nigerian foreign policy began in 1960 when she gained political sovereignty from Britain. The powers to make policies were handed over to Nigerian elites who participated in the nationalist movements that midwife the self-rule. The post-independence foreign policy of Nigeria was Afrocentric. Hence, on the 20th August 1960, the Prime Minister Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Belewa submitted a Foreign Policy Statement to the House of Representative (Parliament) in Lagos for debate and approval. In the

statement under reference, the prime minister categorically stated:

Very particular attention will be devoted to adopting clear and practical policies as regards Africa. [We will aim to] assist any African country to find a solution to its problems and to foster the growth of a common understanding among all the nations, and especially among the new nations of the continent...The difficulties which will confront us in promoting the friendly association of independent countries in Africa are fully appreciated, but we believe that they can be overcome if a start is made by emphasizing and building upon the culture and economic links which already exist (Chibundu, 2003, p.74).

Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Belewa statement in the House of Representative (Parliament) in Lagos was a clear understanding of Nigeria's Foreign Policy direction as a new independent state. Conventionally, "it is through a foreign policy that nations state their interests as well as [the] terms and conditions of relations with other states" (Sesay, 2011, p.10). The statement of Sir Belewa was developed in the speech made during the 16<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly by Hon. Jaja Wachukwu, Minister of Foreign and Commonwealth Relations on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 1961. He stated that:

Our Foreign Policy is based on three basic pillars; the concept that Nigeria is an African nation; it is part and parcel of the continent of Africa, and therefore it is so completely involved in anything that pertains to the continent, that it cannot be neutral and must never consider as a neutral country. We are independent in everything but neutral in nothing that affects the destiny of Africa. The moment Africa is affected, we are involved. We want to make this clear, Nigeria finds itself involved in anything affecting the African continent anywhere, [and] in any square inch of African territory- we are involved. We cannot be neutral, so that neutralism used in a broad sense, should exclude our country when it comes to Africa affairs. And being a member of the African community and feeling completely bound to its destiny and accepting our involvement in everything that pertains to it all questions of Africa must be considered as questions about Nigeria. The peace of Africa is the peace of Nigeria. Its tribulations are our tribulations and we cannot be indifferent to its future (UN General Assembly, 1961: Appendix VII).

There is no doubt that Nigeria's Foreign Policy is Afrocentric in nature. Hence, Africa has since independence been projected as the centrepiece of external decisions. It is not contradictory to understand why successive regimes of the federal government have continued to emphasize and expand the principles of Nigeria's Foreign Policy decisions on African. For instance, severing relations with France over their testing of an atomic bomb in the Sahara desert in 1961 just three months after independence; refused to attend the maiden conference of the Nonaligned Movement in Belgrade; prevarication over the establishment of former diplomatic ties with the Sino-Soviet bloc until December 1961; acceptance of the Anglo-Nigeria Defence Pact until she was forced to abrogate it by students and the opposition. Considering the remarking achievement in foreign policy drive, Nigeria considered itself and as also being perceived by others, particularly in African region "as a global player on the world stage, from its role in the African liberation struggle and its leadership of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) during the Cold War era to more recent peacekeeping operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Nigeria's approach to both Africa and its immediate neighbours is based on a policy of decolonization, non-interference, respect for inherited borders, economic integration and commitment to practical policies that promote African unity" (Nuamah, 2003,p.1).

Nevertheless, the personalities of individual leaders have played crucial roles in foreign policy decision-making in Nigeria from 1960 to date. This could be attributed to the weakness in the overall functions of institutions in most developing countries. Though the Nigerian Presidential Constitution had made provision for Nigeria's National Assembly to play certain roles in foreign policy formulations, the Executive President remains the Chief Executive and Head of the Executive arm of government with enormous powers to determine internal and external policies.

One of the major challenges facing the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy is the declining level of input and participation from the Nigerian public. The foreign policy is state-centric rather than people's centred policy, especially in a democratic dispensation. The Nigerian citizens abroad were not relatively captured in the foreign policy objectives. The Nigeria citizens were maltreated abroad and the foreign policy provided no protection for them or room to address their challenges. Efforts have been made through conferences in the past to open the country's foreign policy space to enable ordinary Nigerians to make input through debates and consultations. There are several instances where decisions served the interest of the president. Uhomoihi (2011, pp. 108 & 109) opined that:

Not many Nigerians were impressed when former President Olusegun Obasanjo administration secured debt relief for the country in 2005. This same situation may have also accounted for the lukewarm attitude and even open hostility with which many Nigerians viewed the country's bid for a permanent seat

in the UN Security Council... Perhaps the greatest manifestation of the fact is the largely passive response that characterized the International Court of Justice (ICJ) judgement awarding the Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon and the willingness and acceptance of the Obasanjo administration to comply with the judgement.

The president is the fulcrum of the foreign policy process in Nigeria and is vested with the executive power to administer the day to day affairs of the nation. Osondu-Oti and Tolu (2016, pp.71,72) disclosed that "it is the president that directs the affairs of the nation, and that includes both domestic and foreign affairs. The functions granted to the president in the executive- legislative list include the conduct of foreign affairs where he also conducts summit diplomacy, negotiates and signs bilateral and multilateral treaties, as well as agreements, receives ambassadors/high commissioners, and attends meetings."

Every democratic government represents the interest of the electorates. In the parts, several external policies have been made without the approval of the National Assembly as stipulated in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended, which suggest that external policies are formulated and executed based on the individual interest that represents the state. Therefore, the paper interrogates to ascertain on whose interest foreign policy is formulated in Nigeria. Therefore, the paper examines the changing nature of Nigeria's foreign policy to ascertain whose interest is served.

## II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Foreign policy has been defined by various scholars in different ways that almost makes it not to have one acceptable definition. Subsequently, Dauda (2015, p.1) disclosed that "Foreign policy just like any other social science concept has defied one universally accepted definition notwithstanding many attempts have been made by scholars to define it." Hence, Chafe (1994 p.131) argued that "the primary requirement for debating anything is to first and foremost understand the actual thing being talked about." To Northedges (1968,p.15), foreign policy is defined as the interplay between the outside and inside". By this definition, connotes that foreign policy is a response to "external stimuli while reflecting on domestic realities" (Unaji 2007,p.63). Universally, a country's foreign policy is designed to promote and defend her national interests which include: "the preservation of national sovereignty, the defence of territorial integrity, the promotion of economic, military and diplomatic interest, the increase and maintenance of power and prestige to influence international events, to communicate one's capability to both potential and actual allies and adversaries" (Dauda, 2015, p.3). A technocrat like Chibundu (2003,p.1), defined foreign policy as a "strategy with which institutionally designated decision-makers seek to manipulate the international environment to achieve a certain national objective." In other words, it implies "country's response to the world outside or beyond its frontiers or boundaries"

(Chibundu, 2003, p.1). This response may involve many elements, such as Diplomatic, Military, Trade, Economic, Social, Cultural, Educational, Sporting, etc. and varies in form, but focused according to circumstances. Similarly, Uhomoihi (2011,p.102), also defined foreign policy “as a system of activities evolved by states for changing the behaviour of other states and for adjusting their activities to the international environment... also, be seen as the pursuit of explicit objectives which a state strives to achieve beyond its borders and the strategies or tactics designed to achieve them.”

### III. ANALYTICAL MODEL

The paper adopted a Concentric Circles model as its analytical construct. The concentric circle model was advanced in Nigeria by Dr Ibrahim Gambari. Gambari posited that concentric circle puts Nigeria’s interest first, then, West Africa Sub-region next and the rest of Africa. Gambari (1989,p.21) assert that “the innermost circle represents Nigeria’s security, independence and prosperity and is centred on its immediate neighbours-Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger; the second circle revolves around Nigeria’s relations with its West African neighbours; the third circle focuses on continental African issues of peace, development and democratization; and the fourth circle involves Nigeria’s relations with organizations, institutions and states outside Africa.” The foreign policy thrust of Nigeria promotes and protects national interest; promotes African integration and support for African Unity; promote global peace and mutual respect in all aspects, respect for international law and treaties. The concentric circle continued to guide Nigeria’s foreign policy priorities. The four pillars “concentric circles,” starting with domestic security issues, focusing on the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African sub-region, assessing key bilateral relations with South Africa and Cameroon, and finally, analysing Nigeria’s relations with key bilateral (France, Britain, the US and Japan) and multilateral actors and organizations outside Africa (the UN, the European Union [EU] and the Commonwealth)” (Nuamah, 2003,p.3). However, there is a paradigm shift to citizen diplomacy in Nigerian foreign policy. Ojo Madueke referred to it as “citizen foreign policy.” Davis and Kaufman (2002,p.2) defined citizen’s diplomacy as “the bring together of professionals, opinion leaders or other currently or potentially influential individuals from communities in conflict, without official representative status, to work together to understand better the dynamics underlying the conflict and how its transformation from violence (or potential violence) to the collaborative process of peacebuilding and sustainable development might be promoted.” It brings about new ideas, injects new insight into the official process, “helps to humanize enemies, reduce tensions and misunderstanding, build capacity in civil society, promote reconciliations and build public support and political will for peacemaking and

long term structural development that will address the needs for all parties” (Davis and Kaufman, 2002,p.2).

### IV. FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MILITARY ERA

The First Republic of Nigeria collapsed as a result of a military coup, and suspended the Constitution, thereafter, established Decrees through which the country was governed in January, 15<sup>th</sup> 1965. The Military ruled Nigeria for 15 years before handing over to a democratically elected President in 1979. During these periods, the Soldier-President commands the helm of affairs that flows from the top down. There was no room for questioning or checkmating their activities or decisions. Fawole maintained that “decisions made at informal times and places among a thinner group outside the cabinet, called the inner caucus were ratified and legitimated at the meeting of the high command” (Fawole, 2003 cited in Folarin, 2011, p.65). The military leadership acts without any consultation or checks by any institution or pressure groups. The military with training and orientation dealt less with politics or international relations even foreign policy, until recently when the curriculum of Nigeria Defence Academy was reviewed and conventional courses were introduced. However, it is imperative to explain various military Heads of State’s foreign policy approach.

Under the Major General Aguiyi Ironsi administration (January 1966-July 1966), “the Foreign Service relied upon to initiate foreign policy and articulate government’s attitudes and pronouncements before they were released” (Inamete, 1981, p.43).

During Gowon’s regime (July 29, 1966 - July 29, 1975), the foreign policy was not well articulated, may be conditioned by the civil war in the country. General Gowon foreign policy, diplomacy was personalized. Somehow, “the Ministry of External Affairs seemed to have been frequently bypassed” (Garba, 1987, p.4). There were occasions where General Gowon spent lavishly to please Nigeria’s neighbours; bestowed largesse on countries, even as far away as Grenada and Guyana often without regard for or recourse to consultation, unilateral recognition of MPLA in 1975 without much consultation as the Ministry was effectively sidelined (Fawole, 2003, p.13).

General Muhammadu Buhari (1983-1985), was different from his military predecessor. General Buhari “had an unyielding personality and was responsible for the contempt with which Nigeria was treated in the West Africa sub-region as well as the disdain Britain had for the country in that period” (Ezirim, 2011, p.6). In the same vein, Akintenninwa (2004, p.23), maintained that “General Buhari drove his idiosyncrasy (as a tough-minded and disciplined military officer) to the extremes, forgetting that diplomacy is a delicate game of esoteric rules and procedures by which other countries understand and accept a country’s view and the projection of its interests.” General Buhari regime attracted lots of criticisms based on foreign policy statements. For instance, the seizure and detention of a British aircraft and its



passengers and crew in a diplomatic tit-for-tat; closure of Nigeria's land borders and refusal to reopen them despite repeated entreaties from concerned Nigerians and neighbouring states; and the expulsion of millions of West Africans in 1985 who was declared illegal aliens. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was put aside in major decisions and was often left to do the necessary damage control over the government would have already taken and implemented bad decisions (Gambari, 1989, p. 51).

General Ibrahim Babangida (1985 to 1993), worked alongside with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that enabled him to record successes in his regime. They include securing Namibia's independence; sustaining Angola in its war to consolidate her independence; paving the way for the realization of majority rule and final dismantling of apartheid in South Africa; quelling the crisis in the Liberian civil war; re-establishing diplomatic relations with Israel broken in 1973; attending to war-torn Liberia and the Sierra Leone crisis reinstating deposed President Ahmed T. Kabbah to power (Anifowose and Enemu, 1999, p.378). There was no doubt about the success of his record because General Babangida employed the best of brains in academic community who worked tirelessly to redeem the country's battered image abroad. Fawole (2003) opined that "since powers to make decisions were unregulated and unchecked by any law or constitution, the military ran foreign policy as they chose."

Under General Sani Abacha (1993-1998), the foreign policy was based on his personal decision. Akinboye (2005, p. 217) opined that "his stubbornness prevailed in policies and he executed a reactive foreign policy. The regime was incapable of foreseeing the devastating effects of some of its decisions, such as the hanging and its timing of the "Ogoni Nine" just before that year's Commonwealth summit. These diplomatic blunders happened because General Abacha underrated the importance of consultations with the MFA".

General Abdulsalami Abubakar (June 1998-May 1999), the foreign policy was not different from predecessors. During this period, he was relatively "amenable to advice even though he enjoyed similar authoritarian powers that military rule could confer. Through his competence, the international community started to warm up to Nigeria again" (Fawole, 2003, p.17).

#### V. FOREIGN POLICY IN DEMOCRATIC ERA

The realm of power was handed over to Nigerian elites at the time of political independence in 1960. The British style of governance was adopted. Nigeria operated a parliamentary system of government. The first foreign policy statement was made in the parliament in 20th August 1960, by the Prime Minister Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Bewlewa to the House of Representative (Parliament) in Lagos for debate and approval. The interest of the elites who represented the masses at the parliament prevailed. There is no record of how they arrived at the approval, and there was information that the representatives consulted their constituents before approving

the foreign policy brought before them. It can be said that the First Republic foreign policies served the interest of the Nigerian elites. The military toppled the government in January, 15<sup>th</sup> 1965 because of internal contradiction among the political class. This led to the collapse of the First Republic. The military ruled for 15 years before handing over to a democratically elected civilian. It is imperative to note that, the military jettisoned the Parliamentary System and introduced a Presidential Constitution in 1979. By implication, the cabinet system ceased to exist. "The formation of the new constitution provided an opportunity for the existing and ever-increasing interest and involvement of the masses in foreign policymaking to become an integral part of the foreign policy process" (Okeke, 1981, p.206). The presidential system produced an Executive President with enormous power as the Chief Executive of the country. Under the 1979 Constitution, the Executive President is the locus of foreign policymaking. The President is empowered to appoint a majority of the members of those councils which advise him regarding foreign affairs. According to the 1979 Constitution, the council was empowered to advise the President on matters relating to the defence of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Nigeria. Similarly, the National Security Council was also empowered to advise the President on matters relating to any organization or agency established by law to ensure the security of the Federation (Nigeria Constitution, 1979:S 140(h)). Above all, the President is the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces (Nigeria Constitution, 1979: S 122(2), and is responsible for the accreditation of diplomats.

Nevertheless, the 1979 Constitution empowered the legislature to play certain roles in foreign policymaking. For instance, the National Assembly is empowered to approve war for the nation; the budget process; and powers of investigation. Even though the 1979 Constitution had split it out that the President cannot declare war without the consent of the National Assembly.

In respect to the international agreements, the Constitution is silent regarding which organ of state has the ultimate power to bind the nation internationally. However, the President is empowered the 1999 Constitution to negotiate, sign and implement treaties on matters on the Exclusive list. Although the Constitution was explicit that such treaties must be enacted into law by the National Assembly. Irrespective of the power vested on the legislature, Mr "President is still the highest authority and agenda-setter in the formulation of the country's policies" (Osondu-Oti and Tolu, 2016, p.72). The president sends bills to the National Assembly, and also empowered by the Constitution to assent or reject the bill if it those not serve his interest.

It is imperative to note that all the presidents that have served Nigeria since the inception of the Presidential System of government have been the chief maker of Nigeria's foreign policy in their respective ways. Under Alhaji Shehu Shagari (1979-1983), Nigeria witnessed retrogression in foreign policy (Akinboye, 1999, p.380).

The Minister of External Affairs, Professor Ishaya Audu was not a member of the National Party of Nigeria, “therefore [was] seriously handicapped in his conduct of foreign policy as it was difficult for the Ministry of External Affairs to become an authoritative point of inter-ministerial coordination for external relations in all dimensions” (Gambari, 2004, p.26). The foreign policy under President Shagari served his interest and that of his party members.

Under President Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007), the foreign policy was a personal affair, especially having led the country in the past as the Head of State, his dictatorial disposition manifested on most foreign policy matters. This assertion was supported by Egobueze (2017,p.111) when he argued that “Obasanjo’s coming was amidst scepticism and unpredictability judging from the character of the Nigerian Military that had tasted power, drunk in power and never willing to quit to its legitimate functions as enshrined in 1999 Constitution and others that predated it.” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was a mere figurehead as the President also plays the role of minister of foreign affairs and act without consultation. For instance, President Obasanjo did not consult Nigerians before accepting the judgement of the International Court of Justice that ceded the Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon and the willingness and acceptance to comply with the judgement.

Under President Shehu Musa Yar’Adua/ Goodluck Jonathan’s (2007 -2015), the administration introduced Citizen’s Diplomacy as her foreign policy. Diplomacy is a term which broadly speaking describes the *raison d’être* of interstate behaviour in the conduct of relations between nation-states. The relationship is about the interaction between entities with “people” at the centre of that interaction. The nation-state is an expression of inhabitants who occupy a geographical entity. Citizen Diplomacy is about people. It is about the citizens of a nation-state. It is diplomacy conducted at the behest of and the benefit of the people, the true custodians of sovereignty. Citizen diplomacy is a foreign policy initiative anchored on citizen-oriented approach, objective and outcome (Eze, 2009,pp.7-8). The knowledge of citizenship diplomacy became a child of necessity because of the lifelong ill-treatment meted to Nigeria citizens abroad. In most cases, Nigerians are attacked or maltreated by countries who are still or beneficiaries of Nigeria largesse. Citizen’s-centred foreign policy is all about the welfare of the Nigeria citizens (Bibi-Farouk, Ezembi and Yomi, 2016, p.166). Citizenship diplomacy is referred to as Tract-Two-Diplomacy. Abati (2009) opined that “placing the citizen at the centre of the national programme reinforces the original purpose of the Government and when those in power provide the necessary leadership.” Hence, the government effortlessly secure the trust of the Nigerian populace and establish

centres of national solidarity and more agents for national progress. However, several events have shown that the interest of Mr President’s prevails in all foreign policies in the country, even though the government said they have adopted citizen diplomacy to ensure citizens protection.

Under Muhammadu Buhari’s Administration (2015 to date), the government has made some achievements in foreign policy in the last few years. First, the improvement of its foreign relations with Nigerian neighbours. Second, the administration has also improved its economic relations with China. Third, the administration also gained a kind of recognition when she was invited to attend the G7 meeting immediately after he was sworn in. Fourth, the leadership style in negotiation and restoration of the democratically elected government in the Gambia. Fifth, Nigeria’s relation with the US has improved under the leadership of President Buhari. Though, the President was been criticized for administering the country for months without the Foreign Affairs Minister at the beginning of his first term in office.

## VI. THE CHANGING NATURE OF NIGERIA’S FOREIGN POLICY

Retrospectively, Nigeria’s migration crisis and the desire to travel in search of greener pasture date back General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida’s economic reforms in the 1980s that brought untold hardship for the people. “The Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) that was meant to heal the country of its debt-induced development crisis ended up complicating the country’s economic woes, leading to unimaginable hardships with associated unemployment, poverty and corruption. This resulted in large numbers of young men and women seeking better livelihoods abroad....in the 1980s and 1990s, the SAP destroyed the economy and any social progress made in the country after [political] independence from colonial rule in [1960]” (Alemika, 2013,p.24). “Many of the SAP policies led to government downsizing or withdrawal of social services, thereby creating a huge population of deprived and excluded citizens”( Alemika, 2013,p.24). Hence, many Nigerians whose conditions became unbearable took to crime, while began to migrate to out of the country by any means made available to them. The situation became worse at the face of a government crackdown. Sadly, Nigerians in diaspora became vulnerable to attacks by other nationals in their countries. For instance, when Nigerians are killed abroad, the government shows less concern about them. Nigerian citizens in South Africa have experienced xenophobic attacks for numerous years (Ade-Ibijola, 2013). Besides, Nigerian are been beheaded or brutalized in Asian countries like Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Thailand, China, Spain and other countries over drug-related offences without proper trial or investigation on the alleged offences by the Nigerian government. Kupoluyi (2017) reported that Nigerian immigrants were beaten to death by the Chinese police official, and 500 Nigerians are held in Chinese prisons without trials on offences ranging from robbery to

drug-related issues. It is on record that “over 16,300 Nigerians across the world serving jail terms for drug-related offences alone, serving as a pointer to the fact that a lot more has been imprisoned...” (Ezugwu, 2015, p. 1) For instance, the case of Dr Ngozi Ugo, who was qualified to be nominated for the position of Assistant Secretary-General of the UN-based on her outstanding records on three different occasions. This position requires the endorsement of her the home government, Nigeria. Sadly, Mr President did not consent to that appointment and she lost it. It is without contradiction that Nigerians at home and in Diaspora, are left to their survival tactics; and least expecting anything from their government (Monday, 2010, p.8). Nigerians are being dehumanized and deported daily. There are acceptable international or diplomatic standards how deportees should be treated while in transit, and yet, there are instances where Nigerian deportees in handcuffs and leg chains abound (The Guardian Editorial, 2017). These abuses were treated with kid-gloves by the previous administrations.

The tenet of citizen diplomacy is basically to protect the welfare of Nigerians both at home and abroad, which should be guided with a major interest in foreign policy. Akinterinwa (2017) buttressed that “diaspora is a component of foreign policy and it is a Nigerian affair.” Furthermore, Akinterinwa (2017) maintained that in the context of international relations, diaspora related matters fall under the jurisdiction of private law, which makes it significant for every responsible government on the subject of foreign policy.

Consequently, the Nigerian government under the leadership of President Buhari has shown serious concern on the welfare of Nigerians abroad. First, the steps taken by the federal government on Xenophobia in South Africa was decisive and proof of citizen diplomacy. African Arguments (2019) reported that “the government’s response to xenophobic attacks this month, however, has been different. After initial hesitation, it seemed that the Nigerian government had finally had enough. It summoned South Africa’s ambassador to Nigeria, recalled the Nigerian ambassador to South Africa, and dispatched a special envoy. It strongly condemned the attacks and withdrew from the World Economic Forum meeting in Cape Town. The chair of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Kaduna state governor even called for South African companies operating in Nigeria to be nationalised, citing the British Petroleum precedent.” Similarly, President Buhari ordered the evacuation of stranded Nigerians in Libya back to Nigeria. “About 240 Nigerians were voluntarily flown home in a joint operation by Libya and the UN migrant agency” (BBC, 2017). In the case was the harassment of Nigerians and the black community in the Republic of China in 2020 COVID 19 pandemic. The federal government kicked against it and “it clear to the Chinese government that it would no longer tolerate attacks against Nigerians and other Africans” (Momoh, 2020). The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Geoffrey Onyeama (2020) warned that:

So we’ve made it known to the Chinese government in no uncertain terms that under no circumstances will we accept racial discrimination against Nigerians or indeed Africans or blacks in China, that that is a red line for us... We will pursue each single one very robustly with the Chinese government. If it requires compensation, damages etc... So for us, as I said, it’s a red line and we’re going to fight till the very end...

## VII. CONCLUDING REMARK

The President is the ‘primus’ in foreign diplomacy in Nigeria. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended states the roles of the Mr President in the formulation and implementation of Nigeria’s foreign policy. The President is the genuine power behind the foreign policymaking in Nigeria. The Constitution bestowed powers on the executive president to set directions of the country’s foreign policy in Nigeria. The Foreign policy agendas of Nigeria are primarily established based on the president’s ideas and his party’s programme. Even though the media, public opinions and civil society organizations would want to pressurize Mr President on foreign policy direction, however, the climax of it is that the President has the final say, which is determined by his interest, ruling elites and his cronies, and not the interest of ordinary citizens. However, the introduction of Citizens Diplomacy by former President Goodluck Jonathan’s administration was a landmark achievement in foreign policy drive. The present administration led President Mohammudu Buhari has shown concern on the welfare of Nigerians abroad.

## VIII. RECOMMENDATION

- (1) The government should design robust economic programmes that are geared towards improving and enhancing economic development predicated on creating employment opportunities, encouraging local production, curbing corruption and supporting the industrial infrastructure. This enables Nigerians to escape poverty, unemployment, hunger and reduce the degree at which the youths are migrating to overseas in search of greener pasture in European, American and Asian Countries.
- (2) The framework of citizens diplomacy that is situated within the ambit of national sovereignty should be extended and organized on the platform of sub-regional groupings in African continent within the global community tends to suggest that individual African countries are weak and unassertive in pursuing their national interest. This study encourages a multilateral approach to improving citizen’s diplomacy. This requires solidarity and integration of efforts by sub-regional African countries to build a powerful and robust framework of engagement with other continental institutions,



international organization and Security Council member states.

- (3) The government should have a rethink of political, economic and social factors of governance. The policies and programmes of government should be people-centric and driven by interest, preferences and values that promote human security. There is a need to realign citizens diplomacy as a tool of foreign policy with domestic governance agenda. The internal philosophy of governance needs to be anchored on values that promote citizens diplomacy. The government needs to create the institutions and policy connection that will serve the efficient purpose of citizen's diplomacy. Nigerians cannot be experiencing lack of fundamental human rights; compromised judiciary, police brutality and absence of rule of law, yet the government will be demanding international best practices treatment from other countries on her citizens.

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