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## THE CHALLENGES OF CITIZEN DIPLOMACY IN NIGERIA PROJECT, 2007-2010

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### Abstract

*Promoting the general welfare of the people and securing citizens' liberty is an incontrovertible project of any state's policymaking. Therefore, Nigeria's citizen diplomacy is one of the diplomatic drives of achieving this project. However, avid reader and scholar of the Nigerian polity will notice some national and international contradictions that have hampered the promotion of Nigerians' welfare and security, and thus challenging the positive image perception of the country. Therefore, the task of the paper is to underscore the challenges clogging the wheel of citizen diplomacy towards achieving Nigeria project, and to enunciate the way forward for Nigeria's regeneration. Utilizing both primary (direct observations, interviews and focus groups) and secondary (literature and document reviews) methods of data collection, which are qualitatively and systematically analyzed through inductive approach, the study reveals an obvious wide gulf between the Nigerian State and its citizens. The paper posits that this intricately complementary domain aids the country's image crisis. Among all other things, the paper recommends a comprehensive publicity of the concept of citizen diplomacy and a concerted institutional conspiracy in fighting corruption. Hence, enhancing the welfare of the Nigerian citizens, as well as, improving the rebranding efforts of Nigeria will be a mirage.*

### Keywords

Foreign Policy, Citizen Diplomacy, Image Building, Nigeria Project.

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## 1. Introduction

The promotion of general welfare of the citizens and securing liberty for all towards positive perception, both at home and abroad is an incontrovertible project of any state's policymaking. Nigeria's government, like any other state, employs its foreign policy thrusts in achieving this policymaking project, especially when dealing with other nations. Thus, the task of the study is to evaluate the holdbacks to achieving the plights of Nigerian citizens both at home and abroad (which is the crux for espousing citizen diplomacy), and to assess the effectiveness of the government initiatives towards Nigeria project.

Foreign policy has assumed an increased importance in the present international system. The ability of a nation to interact with other nations is a reflection of its acceptance internationally, which comprises a couple of evaluations, such as image perception, national development, and its level of civility in terms of behavioural conformity with legal principles as codified in both domestic and international laws, among others. The transition to civil rule in May 29, 1999, ushered in the Fourth Republic and manifested a remarkable watershed in the annals of Nigeria history. This has brought with it a new phase of reintegrating Nigeria, among the comity of nations globally, with a renewed faith in utilizing both internal and external dynamics as the ultimate solution to image crisis and high level of maltreatment bequeathed to the country by the military (Adeola & Ogunoiki, 2015; Alli, 2010; Zabadi, 2012).

Specifically, Obasanjo's efforts in the Nigeria project were manifest when he reversed the Nigeria's pariah status and reintegrated Nigeria back to global reckoning (Aleyomi & Abu Bakar, 2015; Aleyomi, 2017). Consequently, to consolidate on his predecessor's wave of a 'new' Nigeria, the Yar'Adua administration introduced citizen-oriented diplomacy as a thrust of foreign policy in 2007. Foreign policy is the basis for external relations of any given social formation through the internal dynamics of that formation for achieving certain interest that is national in configuration that all-encompassing the populace. Therefore, a state's external relation, which otherwise refers to as foreign policy, is absolutely an indispensable tool for image building and national development (Aleyomi & Abu Bakar, 2015; Bulley, 2014; Cantir & Kaarbo, 2012; Oppermann & Spencer, 2013).

Indeed, as a platform for engagement in the global system, every nation state, irrespective of its level of development, has been giving immense importance to foreign policy. From time immemorial, the focus of Nigeria's foreign policy has oscillated between Africa, global world, higher status for Nigeria, economic prosperity and the Nigerian citizen (Aleyomi, 2017). In addition, throughout history, Nigeria's image has fluctuated between positivity and negativity, good and bad. Since independence in October 1 1960 to date, the objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy in relations with the rest of the international community reflects its determinations to promote and defend Africa's interests while at the same time ensuring the defense of its national interest and domestic development (Adejumobi, 2016; Cooper & Femes, 2013; Eze, 2010).

These foreign policy objectives as highlighted by Sir Tafawa Balewa, the only Prime Minister of Nigeria, predicated on the national interest of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and its citizens (Amao & Okeke-Uzodike, 2015; Osuntokun, 2013). National interest is the thread that runs through both domestic and external policies. This underscores the thrust of the linkage school (Okeke & Aniche, 2014). Undoubtedly, Africa remains the cornerstone and centerpiece of Nigeria's external relations, but the role and significance of the national interest towards the quest of Nigeria's Afrocentric thrust has oscillated between activism and docility. The perception that the Nigeria government treats its citizens' plight/interest as secondary, has been (and remains) valid in the minds of many local and foreign scholars of Nigeria polity (Bach, 2013; Obi, 2008).

This point of view, though contested, was borne out of what appeared as inadequate attention paid to many Nigerian nationals abroad. This might be a possible rationale for citizen diplomacy. On the other related hands, Akinboye (2013) posits that Nigeria has executed various foreign policies, which tended to be beautiful abroad but ugly at home. It is axiomatic that while Nigeria has been exhibiting acts of benevolence abroad, but suffers such act at home. Besides, another possible reason might also be to seek to respond to new challenges of globalization.

Whatever the case, the most important factor which is very crux to this study is the 'newness' of citizen diplomacy, its misunderstanding and/or its challenges of its application towards actualization of Nigeria project in the Fourth Republic, a time when Nigeria is touting its rebranding ethos and image building. Based on this background that this study examines the place of citizen diplomacy, as a new thrust, in the conduct of Nigeria's external relations, with keen interest on what it has covered and those yet to be considered. More significantly, the paper

is poised to highlight the challenges of citizen diplomacy under President Musa Yar'Adua between 2007 and 2010, vis-à-vis the administration initiatives towards Nigeria project and image management. It concludes by suggesting some way forward on Nigeria project.

## 2. Conceptual Perspectives

### 2.1 Nigeria Project and Image Building

The long regimes of military interregnum in Nigeria left a deep scar in the nation's domestic and external affairs that adversely affected the external image of the country. However, the period of Babangida and Abacha between 1985 and 1998 was the Epoch of Realism in leadership styles towards Nigeria's external relations (Alli, 2010). Suffice to say is that Nigeria's diplomacy was grounded during this era. Therefore, Nigeria project is a measure that prioritizes in-country research and draws on a network of Nigerian and international experts engaged on a range of issues to rebuild Nigeria's image. What is significant important about the Nigeria project in the Fourth Republic is the focus on how to re-launch the country in a way that it will be one of the politically stable and developed economies in the world.

A country's image is a multidimensional picture, description, inferential and informational beliefs about that given country. The direction of a country image can be internal (self) and external (mirror). Several scholars have written extensively on the concept of nation's image building/branding including Simon Anholt who theorized on the country of origin effect and the impact it could have on national politico-security and socioeconomics (Anholt, 2002; 2005). Frost (2004) makes a strong case for nation branding campaigns when he remarked that: "There's no arguing that the image we have of another country says a lot about how we view it as a tourist destination, a place to invest or a source of consumer goods" (p.9). Therefore, an understanding within Anholt and Frost's views suggests that a nation image/branding goes beyond fancy logo designs and slogans or insertion of the media jingoism.

The actions or inactions of a country both at the domestic and international levels are the key elements of a country image, which serves as reflections of perceptions. In this view, globalization means that countries are competing against each other in the same way as brands do. Therefore, powerful "country brands" have a huge competitive advantage (Anholt, 2005; Cotîrlea, 2015). Weak national image was part of the major catastrophe that reduces Nigeria attraction and places the country in low positions among the international community. Hence, the

concept of Nigeria project/image building becomes an important determinant and function of perception in the Fourth Republic on how well the country is doing at home and abroad.

In other words, Nigeria's image, be it self or mirror, is the perception of international community about Nigeria. Depending on what factors are considered, an image could be good or bad, negative or positive. There is no disputing the fact that a good/positive image constitutes a source of good will, respect, influence, prestige and patronage for a country. Whereas, bad/negative image shows the exact opposite of all attributes of positive image (Egwemi, 2010). International image gauges the international standing of a country and provides a basis for self-re-appraisal in the event of any bad image (Nworah, 2009). This is the essence of citizen diplomacy in image building.

## **2.2 Foreign Policy/External Relations**

External relations are synonymous with foreign policy (Palmer and Perkins, 2000). It is a broader term that entails all kinds of interaction that traverse states borders. The interaction could be in the area of economic, political, social, religion, cultural, military or even sports. The term external relations to Saliu (2015), is a holistic term that contains all the relationships between states and non-states actors (international organizations, multinational corporations, individuals etc.) in connection with other social structures (including economic, cultural and domestic policies). Indeed, external relations include almost everything that has to do with human relations across the world. Since international environment reacts to actions emanating from national policies, domestic conditioning is coterminous with external perception in the pursuit of foreign relations.

Therefore, foreign policy is the primary instrument for the conduct and management of that relationship, which is reflective on the citizens or national interests. From the strength of the forgoing, foreign policy is a substantive and legislative strategy, which a state intends to use in maximizing the opportunities that are available outside its geographical boundaries, at the same time minimizing the perils that abound. In other words, Nigeria foreign policy is the deliberate and conscious decision taken by the state in coping with its external environment.

Indeed, there is a general agreement among Nigerian scholars that the global perception of Nigeria, immediately after independence was that of a nation that had been destined to lead Africa and the entire black race, hence, necessitates Afrocentric posture (Bach, 2013; Saliu, 2015). Situating Nigeria's roles in the international environment is indispensable here. Nigeria

had participated in leading various peacekeeping and peacemaking efforts in so many countries that were majorly under the ravages of conflicts, colonialism, racial discrimination (apartheid) and in fact, internecine Wars. These countries include Congo, Liberia, South Africa and Caribbean among several others globally (Amao & Okeke-Uzodike, 2015; Saliu, 2015). This impactful role and orientation earned Nigeria significant image of a responsible and well-respected member among the global comity of nations.

### 2.3 Citizen Diplomacy

While the concept of “citizen” qualifies a ‘legitimate’ member of a State, “citizenship” is a concept used to describe the processes and methods of becoming a citizen of a nation or society. Drawn from this position, a nation irrespective of its level of interaction with another nation puts into consideration its national interest, which should be noticeable on its citizenry (Chandler, 2011). Here, diplomacy is one of the means of implementing or achieving a state’s national interest. Considering it as a means to an end, suggests that it can be bad or good. Diplomacy is the peaceful process and skillful method of negotiation by which the government of nations manage their external relations with other actors in international politics (Saliu, 2015).

In other words, Citizen Diplomacy, which originated from the United States, describes the protection of interest and welfare of the citizen, which is sacrosanct, and constitutes the essence of any country’s domestic or foreign policy. It is the application of tact and intellect in an environment of conflicting international interests and belligerency. When every government comes into power in Nigeria, with respect to its interaction with international arena, it tends to articulate a particular vision of thrust of its foreign policy. Nigeria’s Foreign Affairs Ministers overtime like to give a distinctive appellation to their own foreign policy style. The appointment of Chief Ojo Maduekwe as the Foreign Affairs Minister in 2007 coincided with the adoption of citizen diplomacy as a thrust of Nigerian foreign policy. For emphasized, the coinage attracts deluge of attack from both ‘town and gown’ of Nigeria’s foreign policy communities (Akinterinwa, 2010).

Indeed, Chief Ojo Maduekwe, puts the policy thrust as a rebranding of the country’s *raison d’être* of interstate behaviour in Nigeria’s conduct of relations with others. According to Maduekwe (2009), citizen diplomacy “is diplomacy conducted at the behest of and the benefit of the people, the true custodians of sovereignty. ...is a foreign policy initiative that will be citizen-oriented in its approach, objective and outcome” (p. 8). Thus, citizen diplomacy is as old as

Nigeria's diplomatic history. Reemphasizing Nigeria's external relations which will manifestly benefit the interest of Nigerians and enhance their noticeable involvement of the citizen in the diplomatic environment, irrespective of where they live across the globe, necessitated the formal introduction of the concept as a foreign policy thrust.

Consequently, in the eyes of Ozoemenam Mbachu of Nigerian Defense Academy, Citizen Diplomacy aimed at economic recovery and increased democratization with the potential of ushering in increased export opportunities for Nigeria, increased foreign direct investments in Nigeria, financial assistance as well as bringing about technological transfer to Nigeria, especially from Nigerians in Diaspora (Mbachu, 2009). While Eze (2009) sees Citizen Diplomacy from two legal perspectives: State duty to the citizenry and sanctity of pacts or agreements, Akinterinwa (2010) opines that it is a technique and strategic use of millions of Nigerians, irrespective of where they reside abroad, as Nigeria's diplomats.

However, citizen diplomacy denotes a reorientation of Nigeria's external policy pursuits for the purpose of benefitting the politico-security and socioeconomic engagement, and enhancing citizen welfare and image building. This new direction in Nigeria's foreign policy may sound prosaic, but its normative implications and transformative potentials are enormous because it is a major development on concentric foreign policy. Based on these conceptualizations, it is obligatory that Nigeria's foreign policy focus should be on individual Nigerian. Citizens, *ab initio*, are important stakeholders and made first beneficiaries of any external engagement that Nigeria embarks upon in its foreign policy concentric circles (Agbu, 2015; Akinterinwa, 2013).

Nevertheless, the operative word of citizen diplomacy in Nigeria is on purposes of conception and action is *treatment* or *Nigerianness*. This explains how citizens are treated at home and abroad in other to have oneness conception of national unity. In other words, the Law of Nations requires that all citizens be treated as human beings. Citizens are entitled to enjoyment of fundamental human rights and there must be acceptable and legitimate basis before any of such rights may be denied. Without doubt, it is the crescendo of all the various thrusts on Nigeria's external relations since time immemorial, responding to the challenges of globalization (Akinterinwa, 2013).

However, governments may embark on the protection of their citizens through the philosophical foundation of citizen diplomacy, but the style, principle and effectiveness in

implementation remain blurred. Without losing focus, both the domestic and external environments are involved in diplomacy, and there is a thin line of demarcation between domestic and international politics. Hence, the interface between the two is inseparable. With this, Citizen Diplomacy articulates implicitly the major goal of Nigeria's policymaking, for the protection of all Nigerians and image building. (Eze, 2009; Saliu, 2010). It is therefore expedient to analyze the provision of the peculiarities, intellectual contents and scorecards of Citizen Diplomacy in Nigeria's image building.

### **3. Empirical Exegesis of Nigeria's Citizen Diplomacy: Its Dimensions and the Challenges**

The following are the eight major pillars of Nigeria's citizen diplomacy according to Chief Ojo Maduekwe cited in Akinterinwa (2010):

- i. Nigeria and Nigerians should be at the centre of Nigeria's foreign policy;
- ii. Nigeria's foreign policy must meet her development aspirations and objectives in a manner that impacts more directly on the lives of the citizenry;
- iii. Nigeria's foreign policy must seek a synergy with domestic policy to ensure that the former benefits ordinary Nigerians. Indeed, the boundary between domestic policy and foreign policy has collapsed into national security for collective well-being of Nigerians;
- iv. In line with the Servant-Leadership philosophy of Mr. President, Nigerian Missions abroad must actively engage the Nigerian community and Nigerian Diaspora and render quality consular and other services as a matter of rights, duties and obligations;
- v. Foreign policy making and implementation must be democratized to involve Nigerians from all walks of life, and not left for a small circle of experts and practitioners alone;
- vi. Every foreign policy endeavor must meet the litmus test of determining the extent to which it protects and advocates what is best for Nigeria and what will best benefit the Nigerian people;
- vii. Nigeria should be guided by the principle of reciprocity or 'diplomacy of consequence' in its interactions with the rest of the world; and

- viii. Nigeria and Nigerians will not accept being criminalized by the international community simply based on the despicable conduct of a few of their nationals. Due recognition must be given to the remarkable feats and tremendous contributions of Nigeria and Nigerians to world civilization, socio-economic and scientific development, as well as international peace and security (pp. 63-64).

Going by the above, Nigeria's citizen diplomacy has multifaceted outlook to the state (Eze, 2009). This includes the country's renewed determination to reposition itself in the global democratic arena; to rebuild its battered image; to address the clutches of economic crisis; poverty; politico-security crunch; and scourge of diseases among other internal vices coupled with the external pressures like the new face of international terrorism, and the deepening implication of globalization. The immediate implication of all these, without any jot of doubt, is the need for re-articulation of Nigeria's image building within an acceptable framework that takes into account, as a matter of priority the survival of Nigerians as a people.

Sequel to the above, citizen diplomacy is an instrument that can change the negative perception of Nigeria. How realistic it is? In this regard, it is a legitimate desire for Nigerian state to shape outcomes of contestations in a way that suit its preferences. This implies from the diplomacy of consequence that Nigeria will reciprocate whichever treatment meted on Nigerians by any country. From the foregoing, the philosophical instrument for the advancement and protection of the interest and dignity of the Nigerian citizen at home and abroad is the essence of Nigeria's citizen diplomacy. This conception leads to public reactions on its conceptual, functional and oppositional.

Indeed, the functional reactions raise arguments on the workability of citizen diplomacy as a policy, especially in light of the little or no means available to Nigeria to execute citizen diplomacy as a policy thrust of 'consequence', which is synonymous with the principle of reciprocity. In an in-depth interview with Professor Alade Fawole, he opines that for Nigeria to implement diplomacy of consequence, the country must have at best, equal means at its disposal to be able to reciprocate any shabby treatment on Nigerian nationals in diaspora (Fawole, 2016). Debatably, Nigeria has not arrived at that climax. However, while the functionalists are opposed for operational reason, there are those who opposed citizen diplomacy for different considerations that have not been justified (Akinterinwa, 2010).

On the conceptual reactions, within the internal dimension, citizen diplomacy is multilayered and to some extent diffuses in various chapters as constructed in the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, from the politico/pseudo legal manifesto among others on one hand (Chapter II, III on Citizenship, and IV on Fundamental Human Rights of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution). On the other hands, its external dimension is regulated by public international laws which has increasingly converged in many areas, particularly in those of individual rights and on the country's image, with domestic law, thus rendering nearly non-existent the wall between the "monists" and "dualists" (Maduekwe, 2009). Saliu (2010) finds this quite strange and puzzling. He observes that the Nigerian government tries to be discriminatory in operationalizing the concept by maintaining that the country will not be using the opportunity of citizen diplomacy to defend lawbreakers.

True to Saliu's position, how else can state display irresponsibility towards its citizens. It seems the state has bought the argument that most Nigerians are fraudulent (Marwa, 2009). The standard practice in the international system is to reasonably assume that all citizens undergoing judicial processes are tagged 'guilty' until pronounced otherwise by a competent Court of law and their state is expected to get involved in the judicial processes. The important point emphasizing here is that citizen diplomacy in its conceptualization does not make any distinction between law abiding and law breaking citizens. Consequently, the foreign policy of a state is to achieve national interests that are domestically structured and exercised at the external environment (Renshon & Renshon, 2008). Hence, all Nigerian citizens should get Nigeria State's protection irrespective of where they reside.

Despite the pool of confusion, and its poor intellectual development notwithstanding, Nigeria's citizen diplomacy is develop to emphasize the *Nigerianness* in the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy. Citizen diplomacy has created the awareness among organs of Nigerian foreign policy about the need to get more Nigerians involved in the conduct of their country's foreign policy. The Foreign Missions of Nigeria are really gearing up to meeting the expectations of Nigerians in the Diaspora (Saliu, 2015). The feeler getting from most of the commentators and respondents confirmed that the Foreign Missions are responding to questions bordering on harassment by security agencies in their countries of abode.

The above commendations notwithstanding, the appraisal of citizen diplomacy under President Yar'Adua administration was not entirely satisfactory. The empirical exegesis of the

challenges of Nigeria's citizen diplomacy and the nature of the cases of maltreatments of Nigerians both at home and abroad is not only complex but also vindictive (Akinterinwa, 2010). Without doubt, some Nigerians have committed offences that are punishable under the laws, however, the law enforcement agents, more often than not, taken laws into their hands in mistreating Nigerians even before they are proven guilty or not.

On Sunday January 3, 2009, The *Nation Newspaper* (one of the Nigeria's national dailies) reported that some Police officers who were allegedly said to have been on routine patrol in Ilorin, the Kwara State capital (one of the states in the north-central geopolitical zone of Nigeria) gunned down a taxicab when the driver allegedly failed to stop for check. The stray bullet that was *ab initio* targeted at the driver of the taxicab hit on and killed a nursing mother, Titilayo Olutunde, who was 20 years and her eight months old baby, Anuoluwa. When the victim father, Mr. Jimoh Olatunde, was recounting the ordeal, he confirmed that the Police killed his daughter and his grandchild because the taxicab refused to give them (Police) money as extortion (Dickson, 2010).

In a similar manner, on September 18, 2014, the Amnesty International launched the released of a report accusing some security operatives of extra-judicial killings in some parts of the North-East, where the Army is battling with insurgency. The Amnesty International shared their findings on conflict torture right on their own soil, an incommunicado detention centres, and other inhuman and degrading treatments on Nigerian citizens (National Human Rights Commission, 2016). The disturbing aspect of the foregoing scenarios, which are just few in a thousand cases of citizen ill-treatments by the Nigerian security agents, is the lackadaisical attitude of the government. The government seems not to have come to terms with the domestic content of Nigerian Citizen Diplomacy.

Under an ideal situation, Citizen Diplomacy, through the officials conducting Nigerian policymaking and implementation that represents the state and the people, is to galvanize the domestic environment, which does not seem to be excited about the policy. Meanwhile, as the governmental institutions seem to be weak in the services of citizen *welfarism* and protection, cases where the citizens are also retaliating by engaging in an unholy and unpatriotic activities are abound (FGDs with some Respondents in 2016).

While analysing the role of security agencies on Nigerians at home, Dickson (2010) observes that:

Reconnecting the state with the citizen and vice versa is a major area of needed intervention for all Nigerians. Back home, the average Nigerian is treated badly by the authorities. For instance, the Nigerian Police Force vested with the responsibility of maintaining internal peace and security have in all ramifications become agents of terrorism engaging in extra-judicial killing, arrest, and detention of innocent citizens, extortion of multifarious dimensions, and brutality (p.7).

In view of the above, one may be cynically assumed that Nigerian government has ever been more security concerned about the protection of wellbeing of every Nigerian at home let alone those outside the shore of the country, despite the introduction of Citizen Diplomacy

Undeniably, the issue attached to Nigeria's Citizen Diplomacy is complex. A field survey to both the Lagos and Abuja offices of the High Commissions and Embassies of major Asian, American and European countries shows a picture of the anguish and ill-treatment Nigerians undergo, simply because they (Nigerian) want to visit some countries. Nigerians are treated with disdain and disrespect. Most of these embassies do not have waiting rooms for visitors or even entry visa applicants. At times, the applicants who are mostly Nigerians are subjected to stay under the sun and in the rain for merely seeking visa to visit some of these countries. This suggests that the application and implementation of citizen diplomacy in Nigeria has not been holistic.

Outside the shore of Nigeria, the impact of Citizen Diplomacy on Nigerian traders in Ghana is an empirical test case in this study. On the 28<sup>th</sup> day of November 2007, a task force set up by the Ghanaian government sealed the shops owned by Nigerian traders in Ghana up. A commentator corroborating Akinterinwa (2010) position, in an in-depth interview, confirms the event on the basis that Ghanaian government had asked the Nigerian traders to pay three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) to the Ghanaian Investment Promotion Center before they could continue to do business in Ghana.

To get the order reversed, the Association of Nigerian traders made concerted efforts but to no avail. Hence, they wrote a petition to the House of Representatives. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the representatives of the traders were at the National Assembly on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2008 to brief a House committee on the matter (*ThisDay*, February 24, 2008, p.23). Is the payment discriminatory and limited only to Nigerian traders? Is the sum to be paid by individual Nigerian traders or collectively settled by the Association of Nigerian traders in Ghana? These are some of the unclear questions about the assault of Nigerian traders in Ghana.

According to Stanley Nkwazema of *ThisDay* on February 21 2008, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, represented by Professor S.U. Ahmed, could not give satisfactory answer on State efforts to address the plight of Nigerians in Ghana. Professor Ahmed revealed that the law about which the Nigerian traders are complaining about became law in 1994. This suggests that the law has general application and do not specifically or restrictedly meant for Nigerians doing business in Ghana. Any responsible government, like Ghana, would ensure compliance with its laws. The chairperson, House Committee on Foreign Affairs in the Federal House of representatives, Hon. Nnena Elendu-Ukeje confirmed that a Committee of enquiry was empaneled but regrettably posited that the Committee was ‘piqued’ because the Ministry was not proactive in protecting the interest of Nigerians outside the country.

The ‘Afrophobic’ widely known as xenophobic attacks in South Africa especially the May 2008 was horrendous and noteworthy. Nigeria’s citizens and their businesses were the target in 2008 attack. According to Ashaver (2014), the attack claimed over 62 lives and displaced several others. Many lost their properties and their shops were looted, an indication of an orchestrated attack on the businesses of Nigerians in South Africa (Alli, 2010; Charman & Piper, 2012). In fact, this is an indication that South Africans harboured morbid hatred for other Africans and Nigerians in particular. Just as Okeke-Uzodike et al (2013) would believe that the agony Nigerian people face was baseless, “just by being citizens of the most populous Black nation in the world” (p. 26).

Indisputably, however, some of the perpetrators of the May 2008 xenophobic attacks had alleged that foreigners were responsible for taking their jobs, which the some media had reported that foreigners are the ones engaging in crime and corruption (Charman & Piper, 2012). Eke (2009) confirms, “Many Nigerians were killed in the 2007 extra-judicial circumstances, besides cases of harassment, intimidation and brutalization by South Africa police and security agencies” (p. 138). This suggests that if there are enough jobs opportunities in Nigeria for employable citizens, the number of Nigerians clamouring to travel to South Africa or other foreign countries for employment opportunities would have been minimal let alone exposing Nigerian nationals to hazard and horrendous treatments.

More worrisomely, in the mid-March 2010, Muammar Gaddafi of Libya, while addressing some students in his country, pessimistically advocated the partitioning of Nigeria into two new countries, based on ethnicity religion, North-Muslim and South-Christian, as a

possible antidote to the sectarian violence in the Northern part of the country (Akinterinwa, 2013; *Daily Trust*, Tuesday March 20, 2010). This, not only to shows the hatred for Nigeria but also diminished Nigeria's status and credibility. Without prejudice, all these are attributes of envy and external contradictions.

The brutalization of Nigerians is not limited to African states. The maltreatments of Nigerians in some European, Americans and Asian countries are more notorious. This is not to suggest that Nigerians have become unwanted persons in all countries of the world, but to justify the motivations and curiosities in this study. Meanwhile, there are pockets of problems of Nigerians in these countries that are associated with violation of immigration laws and involvement of some Nigerians in one crime or the other. Nevertheless, the lackadaisical attitudes of Nigeria's diplomats in those missions relating to renewal of passport and other diplomatic issues, reports of mistreatment, as it is the case in countries, like the United Kingdom (UK), the United States of America (USA), France, China, Poland and Indonesia to mention but few, are cases in point.

In some specific cases, the ill-treatment of Nigerians is ridiculous and unexplained. The global contempt and disdain for the country and its citizens cannot be divorced from the image climate of the country. The energy exacerbated in security checks of Nigerians at many gateways are ostensibly embarrassing. Worst still, when security apparatuses clear them, they are usually trailed and monitored. On April 28 2008, a former state governor of Ogun, one of the Southwest states in Nigeria, Commodore Kayode Olofin-Moyin, was humiliated at the Heathrow Airport in the United Kingdom (UK). According to Akinterinwa (2016), Mr. Olofin-Moyin who was not only accosted by the British Customs Officials, but was also handcuffed, like a criminal, and taken to the Red Zone where he had his chest and stomach x-rayed. At the long run, the security operatives did not discover anything incriminating on and in his body. This act was barbaric and inhumane to humankind let alone a former military governor.

He was released and simply told; "there was insufficient evidence for prosecution as there was nothing incriminating found on him" (Akinterinwa, 2010). One would have believed he be compensated for human right violation, unfortunately, that was not the case. Without doubt, this kind of molestation cannot be without diplomatic row if meted on a Briton or American. It was equally perplexing, despite the complaint lodged by Commodore Olofin-Moyin at the Nigeria's Embassy in the UK, the embassy did not do anything to address the abuse of

human rights on the Nigerian national. A Nigerian diplomat in the UK confirmed the incident. Though he said he was new at the Embassy but confirmed there was no record of follow up on the matter.

More disturbing is the internal contradictions in Nigeria towards the drive of Citizen Diplomacy, which are contributing factors for ill-treatment and image crisis. High rate of unemployment, poverty, bad leadership as perceived by the international community, electoral malpractices, security challenges and lack of national cohesion, dwindling economy, and the effects of globalization on the country are consensus opinion from extant literature and respondent (during interviews) that exacerbates the challenge of citizen diplomacy and image crisis in Nigeria. These obviously environmental problems for the teeming population of Nigerians at home propel high rate of humiliation and maltreatment of Nigerian citizens in their various host countries (Bangudu, 2013). This is suffice to say that Nigeria government seems not to understand the domestic content of its foreign policy.

Under an ideal situation, citizen diplomacy is to galvanize the domestic environment, which does not seem to be excited about the policy. Not many issues of foreign policy importance are in public domain as against the cardinal principle of citizen diplomacy of benefitting the people who are true custodians of sovereignty (Saliu, 2010). The cause of loss of morale and high appetite for graft are gaining prominent.

#### **4. State Initiatives towards Image Building/Nigeria Project**

At this point, it is inevitable to highlight the state response to the above challenges. It is suffice to state that President Yar'Adua's own principles for good governance in Nigeria are noteworthy traits. He became the chief advocate of 'zero tolerance for corruption' and peaceful approach to solving problems. He encouraged the application of dialogue in the management of domestic terrorism and unconditional respect for the rule of law, cum electoral reforms. He demonstrated unflinching level of integrity as the first Nigerian president to publicly declare his asset, and acknowledged the shortcomings in the elections that brought him to power, which necessitated the constitution of Justice Uwais led Electoral Reforms Committee. (Akinterinwa, 2013; Alli, 2011). According to Joseph and Kew (2008), "Yar'Adua, though came to power under a cloud, has plaudits for his modest demeanor, for his frankness regarding the conduct of

the 2007 elections, and for his accommodating approach (so different from Obasanjo's autocratic style)" (p.167).

What is noteworthy is that in the strategic initiative of Yar'Adua's administration, the government was poised to maintain the macroeconomic stability (against dropping oil prices and decreased production because of Niger-Delta terror) and confidence in the Nigerian economy. The key economic reform values, political and electoral reforms, upholding the Constitution and respect for rule of law, public transparency and accountability, national integrity, *inter alia* that would culminate into positive image management of Nigeria. Upon assumption of office, Umaru Yar'Adua aimed at addressing politico-security and socioeconomic issues bordering on the Nigerians and the country's image at the domestic level and its effects in the world, announced his administration's Seven-Point Agenda initiative. These 7-point agenda are:

- i. Strategic initiative to achieve educational development plan;
- ii. Giving adequate attention to power and energy supply to facilitate industrialization
- iii. Confronting domestic security challenges particularly, the Niger Delta militancy and religious extremism to create environment conducive for investment and national unity
- iv. To reform and develop transportation and other critical infrastructural sectors to facilitate movement of persons, goods and services.
- v. The government reforms the land tenure system and home ownership laws for commercialized farming and other large-scale business by the private sector to facilitate proper use of the Nation's land assets for socio-economic development and citizens' access to mortgage facilities.
- vi. The administration declared interest in enhancing agricultural and water resources to ensure adequate food supply/security for local consumption and export.
- vii. Diversification of the country's economy for wealth creation, revenue base, and increased production in the agricultural and solid mineral sector to provide jobs.

#### **4.1 National Security and Niger-Delta Amnesty**

Specifically, in order to fulfill the vision and mission of the Niger Delta Development Commission, Yar'Adua government included Niger-Delta region as one of the policy initiatives. The government under Yar'Adua revisited the Niger-Delta Master Plan, abandoned during the previous regimes, and it became a good ingredient for proper and long-term development of the region. Speaking at a meeting with the Governors of the region and the Board Members of NDDC on September 28, 2007 in Abuja, late Yar'adua said, "we believe that if the Master Plan

is implemented, it will completely transform the region and will remove all issues that brought about contentions and agitations” (cited in Amaraegbu, 2011, p.210). However, in line with its mission, the Commission embarked on massive development of both human and infrastructure in the region (Akujuru & Ruddock, 2016).

For national cohesion, the government implements a Demobilization, Disarmament, Reintegration and Rehabilitation (DDRR) programme in the region. This programme primarily consisted of a declaration of Amnesty for all Niger Delta Militants was in exchange to surrender of their arms and ammunitions within a 60-day period (from August 6 – October 4, 2009). The declaration allows all militants that complied not be prosecuted for the crimes committed during the agitation that was capable of crippling Nigeria’s oil industry. The government established trainings on various vocational skills both at home and abroad and also to secure gainful employments for them on completion of the trainings and become reintegrated into the society, coupled with payment of a monthly stipend of N65,000 to each ex-militant (Davidheiser & Nyiayaana, 2011; Dode, 2010; Editorial Comment *National Mirror*, Friday, June 17, 2011).

By official account, about 15,260 militants surrendered their arms at the various disarmament centres and on the whole, a total of 26,760 guns of different types, 287,445 rounds of ammunitions, 18 gun-boats and 1090 dynamite caps were surrendered (*Daily Champion*, October 27, 2009). Reacting to this, the then Nigerian Minister for Information and Communications, Professor Dora Akunyili, maintained that “the success of the offer represents a major breakthrough in government efforts to bring peace and development to the region (Akujuru & Ruddock, 2016; *The Guardian*, 28 October 2009).

#### **4.2 Anti-Graft War**

Another significant hallmark of Yar’Adua’s administration inescapable in the analysis is how he handled the issue of corruption and privatization agenda of his predecessor. During the dying days of Obasanjo led government, Obasanjo left chunks of Nigeria assets in the hands of his allies and private cronies in privatization frenzy. The government was allegedly ‘skewed’ use of the EFCC against its political enemies, and government nontransparent disbursement of funds allocated for repairing power plants among other notable corrupt practices (Brimah, 2014; Brown, 2016; Joseph & Kew, 2008). Specifically, Joseph and Kew (2008) observe that, “the Obasanjo legacy is a paradoxical one of both far-reaching reforms and anti-reformist actions” (p.169).

Consequent upon the above, barely two months into office in July 2007, Yar'Adua did not only summon the Bureau for Public Enterprise (BPE) to query the sale Nigeria's refineries and some other assets but also overturned these privatizations for being corrupt. More so, on June 15, 2009, President Yar'Adua gave a clear executive directive that Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) should stop subsidy claim on kerosene subsidy scam, through which huge amount of money that are supposed to be used for the welfare of Nigerian masses are being stolen (siphoned) by some selected few. According to the then Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) governor, Lamido Sanusi:

The government spent/spends millions of dollars every day, subsidizing kerosene that was/is sold to the masses at unsubsidized prices in an elaborate, cheap scam. In this scheme Yar'Adua met on the ground, and that is by all means one of the most gigantic fraud scams in recent world history, the government states that it imports 10 million liters of kerosene every day at the cost of N156/liter. It then claims to subsidize this to N40.9/liter to be sold at N50/liter to the masses. The NNPC now sells the kerosene to a handful of cabal portfolio marketers at the N40.9/liter and allows them sell it at N150+/liter to the masses, an unsubsidized price, raking in a whopping N100 on the liter for 10 million liters a day and billions of dollars a year (cited in Brimah, 2014)

Indeed, according to Joseph and Kew (2008), "Nigeria needs more than the false peace of corrupt patronage politics, which has enabled it to survive as a nation-state but has impoverished its people" (p.171). In another instance of Yar'Adua's stunning and committed actions in total war against corruption, he further gave executive orders to the EFCC to go after anyone alleged to be corrupt in order to rid the vestiges of corruption in the entire system and Nigeria polity. However, as commendable, the foregoing will suggest, chronic allergic disorder and intermittent kidney failure which eventually took his life on Wednesday May 5, 2010, stalled the 'plant' of Yar'Adua's anti-graft initiative to yield 'sweet fruits'. More so, State hostility towards public criticism of Government policies in certain sensitive areas is a noticeable element during the Yar'Adua led government (Lafenwa, 2016; The Observatory - Front Line, 2010, p.22).

#### **4.3 Establishment of National Human Right Commission**

In furtherance of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, at the domestic level, the Alhaji Umaru Yar'Adua led government deposited the establishment of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and Nigeria's commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights in Geneva in 2009, to fight any form of human right violations in conformity

with the international standard. The government established the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to create an environment for the extrajudicial recognition, promotion, protection and enforcement of human rights (Dada, 2013; The Observatory-Front Line, 2010).

#### **4.4 National Economic Development and Nigeria Vision 20:2020**

Nigeria's image building, in the form of national economic development plan, has been part of the country's political lexicon from time immemorial. Nigeria Vision 20:2020 (NV20:2020) is one of these developmental plans that Yar'Adua administration adopted as a cardinal objective in achieving its economic blueprint. Efforts at enhancing economic development in order to maintain good image amidst the global community, became a concerted attention of Yar'Adua administration through his government's pursuit of NV20:2020. The vision is a dream statement that Nigeria will become one of the first 20 economies in the world by the year 2020. The vision captures the road map and blue print to achieving national economic development and an innovative strategy of rebranding Nigeria's image.

### **5. Conclusion**

Nigeria's Citizen Diplomacy is not simple to understand because it is holistic in scope, very challenging in implementation, but remain an indispensable instrument for a positive image building and national development of Nigeria. In an increasingly globalizing world, if both the masses and government functionaries understand and devotedly apply its paraphernalia, citizen diplomacy is a strategy to douse the security tension and provide proper means for livelihood for all Nigerians.

Yar'Adua led government could not achieve much because citizen diplomacy was not clearly conceptualized, its functional benefit hardly known to the public and above all, humbled by a protracted health challenge that eventually claimed his life on May 5, 2010. With the benefit of hindsight, it is suffice to come to a conclusion that the biggest challenge of the application of citizen diplomacy in Nigeria project is the wide gap between *ad libitum* leadership and unpatriotic followership that are 'decorated' with chronic scourge of corruption. This situation gives an image of self-contradiction abroad.

Therefore, the main solution to Nigeria's image debacle is the need to reconcile and incorporate the pattern of outcomes of state's interaction and its behaviours. The government must sensitize the general public on the significance of citizen diplomacy and develop a manual

as a publicity strategy. There should be centers where young at heart citizens will be trained on citizen diplomacy, across the 774 Local Government Areas, so that when they grow up they will not only be “ambassadors” of Nigeria but they will also be patriotic to follow and uphold the country’s diplomatic practice with passion.

Above all, a deliberate institutional conspiracy is required to fight corruption. The executive should conspire with the legislature, and the legislature must conspire with the judiciary in a positive and creative way, not to undermine those institutions but to strengthen them. This will create an environment that will make corruption less attractive in every facet of Nigeria. Finally, penchant commitment to foreign policy thrusts and citizen diplomacy in particular, should be a priority in electing Nigerian leaders especially the President without which, the efforts on Nigeria project in the protection and promotion of the welfare of the citizenries towards image building will be a mirage.

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