

Nigeria's New "Citizen-Centered Diplomacy": Any Lessons from the United States?

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Abstract

Nigeria’s repositioning of its diplomacy from an Africa-centered to a citizen-centered one under the Yar’Adua administration, represents a monumental departure and paradigm shift from an old foreign policy tradition. However, a more careful rather than vacuous conception of what it should look like and how it can be practiced is required. This paper interrogates the new policy focus and explores the American citizen diplomacy variation to see what can be learnt by Nigeria in implementing the policy. The new policy thrust does not however, put a stop to Nigeria’s Africa-centerpiece policy; and viewed from a realist perspective, the citizen-centered foreign policy could be engineered and implemented to make Nigeria regain its enviable image and more properly achieve its regional and continental leadership.

Keywords and phrases: Citizen Diplomacy, Citizen-Centered Diplomacy, Africa-centered policy, Foreign Policy

Introduction

A repositioning of Nigeria’s foreign policy was rationalized by the President Yar’Adua administration. The new thrust articulated by the Minister of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Ojo Maduekwe (2007) was called a “citizen-centered diplomacy”, which would, more importantly, put the interests of Nigerian citizens at home and abroad ahead of all other considerations. Nigeria’s new international behavior and actions during the current political dispensation would thus primarily be the protection of its citizens’ interests and wellbeing anywhere in the world. This approach suggests a paradigm shift from the traditional Africa-centered foreign policy, to a Nigeria-centered diplomacy.

In the Africa-centered policy, Africa’s interests are central and probably coterminous to Nigeria’s national interest; a development that has had little or no direct benefit to Nigerians and has come under severe criticism. This however does not put a stop to Nigeria’s continued regional and continental niceness. Such niceness, going by the new focus, would now be premised only on how any section of the international community treats Nigerian citizens. According to Maduekwe, this new foreign policy thrust would

entail an international behavior characterized by a “diplomacy of consequence” or, put differently, a principle of responsive reaction and reciprocity with states, in which “the acts of Nigeria towards other countries, and vice versa, would be determined by reciprocal niceness” (Onyearu, 2007).

Although a legitimate shift in a nation’s external attitude, the new position of Nigeria’s diplomacy is in some circles regarded as a dream or fantastic, with problems in application in its current form. This is because its practical application may be far-fetched, owing to huge domestic problems including lack of visionary and purpose-driven leadership, corruption, insecurity at home, and a hostile state towards its own citizens, all of which raise moral and legitimate questions about the new administration’s diplomacy. Other people assume that the “new” shift is not as new because the principle represents the assumed general approach of any nation’s foreign policy. However, in the school of power politics, this approach is germane to a number of things: use of national power to preserve national values and protect national interest; judgment of issues on the basis of national standards and expectations; ennobling the citizens in the international community so that the nation’s image and legitimacy is secure, and rational decision-making (Morgenthau, 1978; Kissinger, 1994).

The practice of citizen diplomacy has been a principal feature of American foreign policy for years (Wilson, 2007; Courtney, 2007), and while it has similarities with what the Nigerian foreign policy makers are suggesting, particularly in the area of responsive reaction; the American type is broader, more citizen-inclusive and more practicable than the Nigerian citizen-centered variation. Does Nigeria then have any lessons to learn from the American practice to make the citizen-centered diplomacy more effective and practicable? Would Nigeria also lose its regional leadership because of this paradigm shift? The paper interrogates the new foreign policy attitude and explores the strategies for its effectiveness using the U.S. example as a mirror.

Conceptual Analysis

To put the analysis in perspective, the central concepts in the paper would be operationalized. These concepts include citizen-centered diplomacy, citizen diplomacy, Africa-centered diplomacy and foreign policy.

Citizen-Centered Diplomacy:

This refers to a nation's reactive response to the way its citizens are treated or handled by other nations. By this approach, the foreign policy attitude of a nation towards other countries would no longer be based on geopolitical arrangements, but on merit, with individual nations judged by their disposition towards its citizens. Each nation would therefore account for its own stewardship towards the nationals of a particular country and expect same measure of treatment; like in the Nigerian context, as put by the MFA, in his own words:

If you are nice to our citizens; we will be
nice to you; if you are hostile to us, we will
also be hostile to you (Maduekwe, 2007: 2).

In this context, the new external disposition would rather venerate the ideals and expectations of the Nigerian people in foreign policy calculations, than on frittering away so much resources on regional, continental and global cause without direct bearing on the wellbeing of its people.

Citizen Diplomacy:

Citizen diplomacy is more encompassing. It refers to a political situation in which all citizens-directly or indirectly-may participate in the foreign policy making process. It is a concept of average citizens engaging as representatives of a country or cause, either inadvertently or by design (Gelder, 2006). It complements-or may subvert- official channels of diplomacy and could be more reliable when official diplomacy is no longer working effectively in a nation's interest. Such diplomacy may transcend formal state negotiations, but it could be more effective to reach successful negotiations, and to smoothen things when relations between two or more nations has broken down, or when

two or more countries desire to start a relationship, or when a nation seeks to polish its image, or regain it (Holsti, 1992).

At such rate, governments may step aside for average and internationally respected citizens to take over through such informal channels as scientific exchanges, cultural and educational exchanges, sports or games, and so forth. While these are going on, governments may calculate and consolidate the gains and then step in.

Africa-Centered Diplomacy:

Africa-centerpiece or Africa-centered diplomacy is the political concept that refers to the situation in which a nation sees the interests, concerns and wellbeing of the African continent as pivotal to its own interest and existence (King, 1996). It is a “live and let live” or existentialist principle that may compel a nation to extend its magnanimity and generosity to needy African nations. This philosophy and disposition accepts in wholesale manner, the mantra to the effect that charity begins at home- Africa. Mazrui (2006) views this concept as the manifestation of the Pan-Africanist disposition of Nigeria, which has underlined its foreign policy since independence, a position that has inspired foreign policy scholars, among whom is Inamete (1993) to describe the character of Nigeria’s foreign policy as Afrocentric.

Foreign Policy:

Foreign policy means a lot of different things to different people, commentators and scholars of the field. For Henderson (2005) foreign policy is a pattern of behavior that one state adopts in relating with other states, an idea that Waltz (2005) considers as the strategy and tactics employed by the state in its relation with other states in the international system. Idang (1973) regards foreign policy as a plan or program of actions of a state-its national interest- which determines the sum-total of the state’s objectives in the international system. The many definitions therefore require a conceptual framework for this paper. Holsti (1967) defines foreign policy as the actions of a state toward the external environment and the conditions-usually domestic- under which such actions are formulated. This seems to agree with Kissinger’s often quoted submission that in foreign

policy analysis, the domestic structure is taken as given; foreign policy begins where domestic policy ends (1994). Hence the domestic structure as identified by Holsti and Kissinger as decisive in the elaboration of positive goals validates citizen-centered diplomacy. These views of Holsti and Kissinger thus constitute the conceptual prisms by which Nigeria's new citizen-centered foreign policy is examined.

Theoretical Framework

Political realism or *realpolitik* is a theory that has several interrelated parts and constructs. The sub-sets include behavioralism, national interest, power politics and balance of power. The theory believes that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature (Morgenthau, 1978). It rejects legalistic-moralistic inhibitions in realistic political actions such as, for instance if Nigeria were to invade and annex Benin Republic just to secure its national elements who significantly make it up, or to gain the automobile market for the control of its people. It also refuses to identify the legitimate aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe, such as, for instance if Nigeria were to- in order to secure its more than a million people who had been occupying that place for generations, or to secure the oil region for its economic good-reject the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling of 2002 asking it to give oil-rich Bakassi away to Cameroon. Political realism holds that states' major driving force in international politics is caused by one or a combination of factors, namely the quest for power; desire to secure or promote national interest, whether economic, political or military; and need to create a power equilibrium for the sake of peace (Morgenthau, 1978). The realist perspective holds that the realization of national interest as an ultimate and indispensable goal by states may not consider the limitations or excesses of the means (Rourke, 2006), an a-moral position that flows from Sun Tzu, Thucydides, Hugo Grotius, Machiavelli, to Clausewitz, Carr, Morgenthau, Waltz and Holsti.

Scholars that share this perspective as the appropriate approach for the realization of Nigeria's regional and continental leadership objective and role include Herskovits (1978), Akinyemi (1977), Obiozor (1996) and Nwolise (1999). Nwolise (1999: 67)

particularly stresses that the ultimate goal of foreign policy pursuit should be the economic development of the nation which should have direct bearing on the good of the people. This perspective by Nwolise, like that of Gambari (1990) and Thomas (2001) differ from the other perspective that regional leadership should simply be the ultimate pursuit even when and if it is at the expense of the economic wellbeing of the people.

In other words, the pursuit of regional hegemony or leadership should not be with the view of spreading the wealth of Nigeria around the continent without any tangible returns to Nigeria other than to gain regional or world respect and acknowledgement as the giant of Africa. This does not benefit the ordinary citizen. In the same manner, this realist foreign policy should still reflect the Africa-centerpiece of Nigeria without necessarily being or remaining a “father Christmas” in Africa, or parading good conscience, only with the view to earning the respect (feigned or real) and praises of sister nations. It should also and more importantly be a means to growing Nigeria’s wealth by strategic intervention and roles assumption that would yield national dividends. Political realism has characterized American foreign policy over the years; however, wherever the U.S. intervenes for what it describes as purpose of security and stability, there have always been economic, military or strategic benefits that could further ennoble the image and wellbeing of its people (Rosati, 2006).

The realist perspective supporting active internationalism by a state in order to earn regional and continental power but within the purview of strategic permutations that would benefit the citizens, would therefore, be the framework of analysis for the rest of the paper. This power politics perspective views the quest to assume permanent hegemony in Africa by Nigeria as being more possible when value is added to the citizens at home and abroad, which leads to a better and more awe-inspiring image; and when the world becomes more careful and courteous with the way they treat and see Nigerians because of the consequences of not doing so.

Africa-Centered vs. Citizen-Centered Diplomacy

From the very outset since its independence from Britain, Nigeria has made Africa the centerpiece of its foreign policy. In that regard, there has been a semblance of continuity in its foreign policy focus. Inherent in that doctrine has been the supposition that Nigeria would always have a leadership role to play in Africa and that whatever is in Africa's interest is invariably in Nigeria's interest. Under various Nigerian administrations -- military and civilian—efforts have been made to toe such guidelines and policy constructs, sometimes more faithfully, at other times not. Even the internationally embattled Abacha regime found an external role for itself in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

The Afrocentric policy from independence has been at a huge cost. In view of Nigeria's many roles in global peacekeeping and conflict resolution since 1960, the nation was ranked as one of the ten biggest spenders and one of the seventh greatest contributors in the United Nations Peacekeeping Missions (Ayam, 2004). Nigeria has played many roles in Africa, including liberating Southern Africa from apartheid and prolonged colonialism, liberation of Guinea-Bissau, Angola; peacekeeping and enforcement in Congo DR, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Somalia; mid-wifing the democratic process in Sao Tome, helping needy African nations with material, financial and technical assistance, et cetera (Fawole, 2000; Akinbobola, 2000).

However, in spite of all, Nigeria's external image and respect has been on the decline. The many interventionist roles to stop wars, offer grants, democratize, and even feed other African nations have been taking its toll on national funds and attention meant for the homefront. These factors, coupled with prolonged leadership ineptitude, economic mismanagement, general insecurity, unbridled corruption, advanced fee fraud (419), ethnic and sectarian violence, upsurge of militants' violence, gross electoral malpractices, inability to have functional refineries, decades of energy or power crisis, infrastructural decay everywhere in the country, and Nigerians' anxiety to cut corners to travel and stay illegally abroad: have made Nigeria an object of debauchery in international circles and punctured its erstwhile enviable image.

Among the most painful foreign relations experiences resulting from all these have been embarrassing molestations of Nigerians abroad. Even small neighboring states have had to harass Nigerians in the border towns and villages: the gendarmes' attacks from Cameroon, Chad and Niger. Equatorial Guinea takes Nigeria to tasks in the Atlantic over territorial waters (Obadare, 2001); and Nigeria had to concede Bakassi to Cameroon after careless representations in the ICJ and the Orange Tree Agreement in Washington D.C. Even soccer teams and club-sides from Nigeria are cheated at matches, robbed of major trophies like in the 1988 and 2000 Cup of African Nations, and are even assaulted in African championships. Nigeria does not react or take the matter up continentally using its posture and diplomacy to deter such assaults on Nigerians in the future.

In short, the fear of Nigeria had long ceased being the beginning of wisdom for African countries who now take advantage of Nigeria's pacifist, patronizing, defeatist and weak approach in the continent because of its avowed commitment to African brotherhood. Nigeria allows these assaults in keeping faith with its foreign policy principles of securing the neighborhood and maintaining good neighborliness. The question is good neighborliness in whose interest and at whose expense? First, at the expense of its Bakassi citizens, millions of whom feel betrayed, and who are lost to a hostile but weaker neighbor. Second, at the expense of its oil fields, proceeds from which could be used to better the lot of its citizens. Third, at the cost of its respect, which may make other tiny neighbors to launch their own assaults with the citizens at the receiving end.

The nation has been at a discordant inflection point in its foreign policy. Nigeria's international voice and foreign policy lost so much luster and with what has been described as Yar'Adua's slow movement and his MFA, Maduekwe's initial vacuous conceptions, the nation's stature was being gambled. The slow action pace of President Yar'Adua, the anti-corruption crusade parody characterized by the disgraceful ouster and humiliation of the erstwhile Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) boss leading to loss of international faith in Nigeria's sincerity to clean the stables, were antithetical to what had earned Nigeria a good ranking in the international corruption index (Nwaoko, 2009). Also, Nigerians were being daily molested and abjected abroad

(on international flights, at the airports, in foreign lands), and were sometimes arrested, molested, and murdered. Generally, Nigerians also encountered extreme embarrassment with the global apprehension to have any serious dealings with Nigerians. There was also a lull in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as Nigeria's foreign policy got into its most lethargic state of all years. The non-invitation of Nigeria to the G-20 Summit held in London in early April spelled doom for Nigeria as it probably marked the end of international perceptions and expectations of its leadership roles in Africa. Indeed, the challenges confronting the nation at home and abroad had never been more self-evident.

Contrary to the perception that it was playing the "big brother" by its scriptural meekness, the insults from smaller nations Nigeria had even helped, have been ominous and clear indicators that Nigeria's status as a regional hegemon and bellwether for Africa may have gone burst. Furthermore, its huge human, financial and political investments in West Africa, especially in Sierra Leone and Liberia, were rarely acknowledged as other countries and organizations in the world such as the U.S. and UN now scramble to take credit for rescuing both countries from collapse. This pattern, however, is not new, as similar events transpired in the cases of Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Namibia, where Nigeria played key roles in their respective independence struggle, a fact forgotten once the nations respectively achieved independence.

Against these backgrounds, a re-branding of Nigeria was thus articulated. A dire need for a refocusing of its foreign policy had thus become evident as well. The image problem and foreign policy were part of the areas earmarked for the totality of the re-branding process (Akinyuli, 2009). The process would involve the Yar'Adua administration fixing the domestic political, economic and financial problems. By this re-branding, a citizen-centered diplomacy to come ahead of Nigeria's Africa-centerpiece policy was articulated. By this, Nigeria would place more value on its citizens, defend their interests, protect them from oppression, victimization and exploitation, and by these deter any nation abroad (government or nationals), alien in Nigeria from treating Nigerians without respect (Onyearu, 2007: 2). The Nigerian MFA clearly identified the direction which the government's tenure proposes to adopt with the international community. Effectively, it

expects the international community to take responsibility for its actions towards Nigerians, whether favorable or adverse (Maduekwe, 2007: 2).

Nigeria's basis for seeking reciprocal respect from the international community is a legitimate and required one. Nigeria is the ninth most populous country in the world. It is the most populous country in Africa with an estimated 140 million people and a population density as high as 139 people per square mile. 20 percent of the world's black population lives in Nigeria and as is commonly said, one out of every four Africans is Nigerian as also one out of every five black people in the world. It is alleged that over 1 million Nigerians reside in the US, of which over 25,000 are, it is asserted, doctors and that UK Home Office statistics relating to those holding Nigerian passports puts the number at more than 2 million. Second and third generation Nigerians in the UK swell that number significantly, most making a serious and substantial contribution to the social and economic life in the UK. Economically, Nigeria is the economic powerhouse in West Africa and the second in Africa, only behind South Africa. With a GDP of over \$170 billion, it contributes 50 percent of the GDP of the West African region. The GDP per head amounts approximately \$692. Nigeria is the twelfth largest producer of petroleum in the world and the eighth largest exporter. Nigeria has the 10th largest reserves of petroleum and as of April 2006 became the first African country to fully pay off its debt, estimated at approximately \$30 billion, owed to the Paris Club. These developments make it, in many respects, one of the most attractive business environments in the world, a fact demonstrated by its substantial trade relationships with the US, UK, China, Russia, France, Japan, and the Middle East, these being the major economies in the world. With a booming industry in telecommunications with more than 30 million mobile phone subscribers, it has the fastest growing market in the world, having overtaken South Africa (Onyearu, 2007).

Also, in the area of regional and continental politics, since independence in 1960, the liberation and restoration of the dignity of Africa has been central to the development of Nigeria's foreign policy. From the era of Tafawa Balewa, its commitment to the eradication of apartheid and racism from the African continent has remained supreme.

Under the military of General Yakubu Gowon, Nigeria committed itself wholly to the liberation struggles in various parts of the Southern African region and supported many of the movements including, for instance, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) with substantial funding. Nigeria was central to the formation, in 1963, of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) now the Africa Union (AU) and in 1975, of the ECOWAS. Not only did the country donate substantially towards ECOWAS' secretariat, it regularly paid its annual contribution of approximately 32.5 percent of the community's budget which was subsequently revised upwards to 40 percent (Ayam, 2004).

In the pursuit of world peace, Nigeria has played a leading role in international trouble shooting in conflict-ridden zones across the world. Nigeria has contributed more than 200,000 troops to various United Nations peacekeeping forces and, by itself, initiated and funded the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) which monitored and managed the conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire at the expense of several billion dollars. Most African countries have and continue to receive aid, assistance and grants from the Nigerian government. Despite its much publicized difficulties in providing electricity domestically and in the spirit of assistance, Nigeria exports its limited electricity to Benin and Togo, by way of assistance to the Ghanaian government to enable it fulfill the terms of a bilateral agreement to supply those countries following the drop in water level at the Akosombo dam in Ghana. A similar situation exists with petroleum products with several countries in West Africa (Onyearu, 2007: 2).

With all these meaningful contributions, it is expected that Nigeria should not only command global respect and recognition, but that its citizens should walk tall anywhere in the globe like Americans do until the peak of Bush's poor global leadership. But since the reverse has been the case over the years, then a citizen-centered diplomacy was considered necessary to take priority over its traditional Africa-centered diplomacy. Indeed, countries to remain in and benefit from the Africa-centered scheme of Nigeria's foreign policy would have to be countries according Nigerian citizens respect in their

countries. The object is to re-build Nigeria's image and global respect. This is the context of the citizen-centered foreign policy of the Yar'Adua administration.

US' Citizen Diplomacy

“If only people will get together, then so eventually will nations.”
— President Dwight D. Eisenhower

America's citizen diplomacy, which is also referred to a cultural diplomacy, is as old as the American nation itself. It is rooted in the nation's history, and its history is a product of its traditions (Mattern, 2006). From the declaration of independence in 1776, to the writing of the Federalist Papers by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, the founding fathers, the average American citizen was considered also as a diplomat, or ambassador or representative carrying the full diplomatic baggage of the nation. President Kennedy had in the 1960s called on every American to consider himself as a national servant-leader who first should conceive what to offer the nation and not what the nation could offer him. To this end, the involuntary service and enlistment in the Draft to fight in Vietnam was considered as an act of citizen diplomacy- war diplomacy, in which every soldier is a war diplomat of the United States. The idea of citizen diplomacy became clearer after the Second World War when average citizens from the academia, military, science and medicine, and entertainment industry were actively involved in U.S. international diplomacy. The citizen diplomat was considered as an informal character in the foreign policy process with a strong pull or influence-and in some cases people with cross-continental popularity who could help increase the approval rating of the international image of an administration or government of the nation (Patterson, 2007).

The creation of the Public Affairs Section (PAS), formerly US Information Service (USIS) of the Post (embassies) by the Department of State became a more effective but informal way of engaging citizens in foreign policy. The PAS, and its other components such as the Bureau of Educational Cultural Affairs, et cetera, promote public diplomacy by the Fulbright Fellowships and other academic scholarship programs, in which American Fellows are sent to African, Asian, Latin American, and European universities

for different periods, while scholars from other nations are also selected on merit as Visiting Fellows to U.S. universities. Public diplomacy can be seen as the transparent means by which a sovereign country communicates with publics in other countries aimed at informing and influencing audiences overseas for the purpose of promoting the national interest and advancing foreign policy goals. This diplomacy includes educational exchange programs for scholars and students, visitor programs, cultural events and exchanges et cetera (Johnson-Pizzaro, 2007). By these, it can be inferred that public diplomacy may be official state-to-state kind of diplomacy, it however, facilitates very informal or citizen diplomacy.

By opening their homes, offices and schools to foreign visitors participating in exchange programs across the U.S., citizen diplomats foster international understanding and cooperation, constructive economic connections and peaceful interaction (Gelder, 2006:12).

Citizen diplomacy was a central emphasis of President Carter's administration. Using this informal network, he encouraged meaningful cross-continental interaction between the U.S. and Africa and Middle East, to boost U.S. image and strengthen ties with its traditional allies in the regions. No wonder the Carter era is regarded as the peak of America's *Détente*. No era in the foreign policy history of the U.S. has however taken fuller advantage of citizen diplomacy than the Bush era. Two factors explain this. After 9/11, the American nation realized the attack represented the peak of global disdain, which required their being more friendly with the world. Secondly, after Bush had bungled the war on terror in Afghanistan and Iraq, it dawned on him that he needed for himself and America an image damage control, which could not have been done by his mostly war-mongering neo-conservative Cabinet, but by the ordinary and popular citizens of the nation. More American citizens, including academics, tourists, celebrities, entertainers (on concerts or charity missions) visited Africa and Asia more during this period more than anytime else because the U.S. government encouraged it despite the fear of being terrorist targets (Segal, 2004; Chait, 2003). The notable visits of American

Hollywood and musical stars to Iraq and other areas where Bush had created misgivings towards America were instances of citizen diplomacy.

The US citizen diplomacy has some elements of the Nigerian typology. However, it is significantly different. For the U.S. it is basically the concept that the individual has the right, even responsibility, to help shape foreign relations; it is woven round the idea of “one handshake at a time”. Citizen diplomats can be students, teachers, athletes, artists, business people, humanitarians, adventurers, tourists, and journalists. They are motivated by a responsibility to engage with the rest of the world in a meaningful, mutually beneficial dialogue (Mattern, 2006: 23). It is believed that when official diplomacy fails, citizen diplomacy is employed by the American government because of its effectiveness.

The implications of citizen diplomacy are multiple. These include the fact that public opinion would be a central player in the foreign policy process. As a corollary to that, civil-society would be active in the formulation of foreign policy as, indeed, the foreign policy can be called a civil-society foreign policy even if the American Constitution grants the President almost exclusive powers to direct external affairs (Rosati, 2006: 56-58).

The Congress and Senate would also be active players because of the fact that they are citizens’ representatives, just as other bodies which Beasley *et al* (2001) have termed as “decision units” would also be active. The foreign policy decision units include research institutes such as The Brookings Institution and Carnegie Institution; and think-tanks such as the Center for a New American Security (CNAS), United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA).

The American citizen diplomacy also manifests in the Nigeria-type citizen-centered diplomacy such that the U.S. government is first and foremost concerned about the welfare of its citizens anywhere in the world, and other considerations in international politics is also about the wellbeing of its citizens. On the one hand, it sets out to protect all economic, military, security and socio-cultural interests of its citizens; and on the other hand it behaves locally and internationally in such a way that its citizens would

walk tall wherever they are and be proud to be called Americans (Bardes, 2007). It is important to note that the U.S. may go to war, or deploy a hundred marines, ten jetfighters, a war-ship and sophisticated munitions just to save one American life.

Lessons for Nigeria

Citizen participation in the foreign policy process cannot be overemphasized, makes it a diplomacy that may need to borrow from the American citizen diplomacy so as to give the citizens the opportunity to participate directly and indirectly in the foreign policy process. More so when Nigeria's image problem now, even requires persons more credible and respected internationally than government, such as Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Yakubu Gowon, Mathew Hassan Kukah, Pastor Adeboye, Bishop Oyedepo, et cetera, to engage in visits, meetings, businesses, and other levels of informal diplomacy to launder Nigeria' image abroad. Put differently, like in the case of the U.S., the Nigerian authorities could expand the base of this citizen centered diplomacy to also include the participation of civil-society (students, teachers, entertainers, pastors, etc), and should strongly consider public opinion and pursue a more people-oriented and not elite-driven national interest.

Secondly, by borrowing from the American citizen diplomacy, Nigeria could better accomplish its long-range objective of becoming most significant African power when it rather institutes cultural, educational and social programs of exchange in which scholars and students, cultural groups, nationals of Africa, are brought into the country to foster a better understanding and cooperation, and open doors for constructive connections and peaceful interaction. By this, a Pax Nigeriana may be more successfully achieved than frittering away the nation's wealth in endless African conflicts with the view to just be called "Giant of Africa". The big powers in the world today use such subtle socio-cultural and economic instruments to establish unquestionable hegemony than wasting resources on nations that would later turn against them like in the case of Nigeria. For instance, Liberia and Sierra Leone-two countries it helped out of wars- have been scrambling with Nigeria to occupy the only African slot in the UN Security Council's Non-Permanent Seat, and Ghana (on whose behalf Nigeria supplies electricity to Togo and Benin), Egypt

(for whom Nigeria mobilized African support during the Arab-Israel Wars) and South Africa (for whom Nigeria fought for its liberation from apartheid), have been contesting Africa's slots of the UN Security Council's Permanent Seats .

Thirdly, the Nigerian authorities should also emulate the U.S practice of going the extra mile to save Nigerian lives in trouble anywhere in the world. America had to swiftly evacuate its nationals in Somalia, Rwanda and Liberia on the outbreak of war. The Nigerian life should be cherished and protected both from the trigger-happy security agencies at home and the racist elements abroad. Damilola Taylor was assaulted to death in England, soldiers were killing Nigerians along the Cameroonian borders for years, Libyan authorities have been subjecting Nigerian illegal immigrants to physical and psychological torture, killing them sometimes, aliens including oil companies' expatriates in the Niger Delta have been subjecting Nigerians to dehumanizing conditions even right here in Nigeria. These are vices against Nigerians, and indicators of the high point of disregard for Nigeria, which government has to take seriously.

Conclusion

The paradigm shift in Nigeria's foreign policy to a citizen-centered one is long overdue. It demonstrates the dynamic or interactionist nature of foreign policy, as it is in response to the domestic needs and external pressures of the time. The idea of citizen or Nigeria-centerpiece is not a foreclosure of the traditional Africa-centerpiece. It is rather a complement. It should represent another way of creating the much fantasized Pax Nigeriana in Africa. The change itself suggests that in terms of Africa's progress, security, stability, peace and development, Nigeria has given a good account of itself and has paid its dues. Hence, the next phase now is for Nigeria to look inward and concentrate on its citizens and national development. These would include Nigerians at home and abroad.

To achieve this however, good governance has to be put at home, the economy has to be fixed, including "fighting the good fight" of corruption so that Nigerians overseas would return to grow their own economy, and so that those at home can be gainfully employed

and engage in such a way that they would stay at home and desist from sharp practices, in order not to soil Nigeria's external image.

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