

NIGERIA AND HER UNSUSTAINABLE DIPLOMATIC GAINS: A FOCUS ON THE FOURTH REPUBLIC

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Abstract

Nigeria emerged on the world scene with a lot of trepidation. The Balewa government that ushered her into independence was cautious in its interactions with the rest of the world. This tendency for tentativeness has been descended upon by authors on Nigerian foreign policy who have taken a swipe on the country's foreign policy under the government. The climate of little impact on external relations however received a rude shock from the Murtala and the Obasanjo governments when the two regimes pursued an activist foreign policy agenda for Nigeria. However, the desirable tradition set by the regimes in Nigerian foreign policy was played down by the Shagari civilian government in the early 1980s. This has continued up till the present except for the tokenism witnessed under the Babangida and the second Obasanjo governments. This paper therefore seeks to examine why the country has not been able to sustain the tradition of activist and dynamic foreign policy pursuits. Both primary and secondary data have guided the effort. It concludes that the downturn being witnessed in the foreign sector of the country is borne out of the little appreciation shown to the platform of foreign policy. To reverse this trend, the strategic importance of foreign policy in modern times needs to be recognised and appreciated by the country's leadership.

Keywords: Nigeria, unsustainable gains, external relations and fourth republic.

Introduction

Increasingly, the foreign policy platform has been coming under attacks across the world. This is a reality because of less prosperity that is being seen in nations of the world. As poverty is spreading even in the face of favourable forecast to the contrary, the foreign policy turf is being held

as a reason while the human race, especially in developing world, is facing acute economic crisis. People are gradually coming to terms with the conclusion of Claude Ake who, though influenced by ideological considerations, concluded that foreign policy is an elitist affair and a lever in the hands of the advanced capitalist states to further exploit and oppress the global South in an exchange system that is skewed more in favour of the imperialist states (Ake, 2009; Saliu, 2015a).

Although informed by the reality of existential living in developing world, the masses are not impressed with the commitment that their governments have shown to external relations. They are always linking their poor material existence to the crave for global visibility by governments in their countries.

In the case of Nigeria, there are still many who have not been convinced on the investments that the Nigerian state had made in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s. To these people, the humongous amounts spent on the two countries would have been enough to transform the educational sector in the country. It is instructive to note that the poor rating of foreign policy is not only a Nigerian phenomenon. That is the trend across the world.

However, as I have remarked elsewhere (Saliu, 2015a), that perspective is not fair to the platform of foreign policy. While one is not denying the fact that judging by the posted dividends of foreign policies in some African countries, it would appear that the citizens do have a point. Needless to remark that the blame being given to foreign policy concept is not essentially correct (Saliu, 2016a). The blame is not entirely its own fault. Rather, it should be put at the doorsteps of the officials who conduct it.

Essentially, being a platform for power game and influence peddling, every nation has relatively the chance to make a harvest of it especially if such a nation is well prepared for the game nations play in the international system. Based on this understanding, the platform of foreign policy is not therefore, a distracting reality as wrongly perceived by citizens across the globe. A careful reading of the extant structure of the global system would show that there are many potential benefits of foreign policy that are still hidden from the people. There are tangible and intangible benefits of foreign policy that a nation that is well

prepared for it can post which are sometimes unappreciated by the citizens.

Nigeria, in the 1970s after a sloppy start under the First Republic, had made some impressions on the global scene that qualified her to be a leader in Africa (Asobie, 2010). Hardly could any African concern have been discussed and resolved without Nigeria's efforts. This came about on account of her understanding of the immense benefits of foreign policy pursuits. Her diplomatic profile got shot up as her uncompromising stand on many African/black issues was strategically noted by major actors in the international system (Babawale, 2014).

Of course, the incidence of petrodollars that came to her kitty arising from oil exports gave more confidence to the Nigerian state in pursuing what was considered as a dynamic foreign policy agenda (Aluko, 1981; Fawole, 2003). This was witnessed under Murtala's and Obasanjo's military regimes. The standard set by the two regimes in Nigeria's international relations expectedly became a benchmark for assessing subsequent governments in the country.

After an era of missed opportunities witnessed under the Shagari and series of military administrations, the inauguration of the Obasanjo civilian government in 1999 especially based on the impressive performance of the President when he was a military Head of State, Nigerians and their foreign friends had expected a turnaround in Nigerian foreign policy with the swearing-in of President Obasanjo as a civilian president. He did his best during the eight years he spent as president to project a somewhat robust foreign policy agenda for Nigeria (Saliu, 2016b). The relative performance of the government in the field of foreign relations was not, however, built upon by his successors in office, leading people to wonder if, indeed, Nigeria still has a foreign policy (Lakemfa, 2018).

The mission of this paper therefore, is an investigation on why the relatively good performance in external relations as witnessed in 1970s and 1980s has not been sustained in the Fourth Republic that commenced in May 1999? I seek to find an answer to this question in this paper. In this regard, this introduction is followed by conceptualizing dynamism and effectiveness in foreign policy. The third section deals with the golden era in Nigerian foreign policy and the fourth section discusses the evidenced decline in the conduct of the

foreign policy. In the fifth section, the focus is on an analysis of developments and factors that sustain the lackluster performance in foreign relations of Nigeria. The sixth section is the conclusion. The overriding objective of the effort is to raise concern that the entrenched regime of ineffective foreign policy in Nigeria harbours a lot of implications for the country even in the management of her many domestic concerns.

Dynamism and Effectiveness in Foreign Policy Pursuits

Dynamism in the context of foreign policy analysis connotes an ability of a foreign policy to rise to the occasion when issues of concern to the nation rear their heads. Identification with popular causes and the readiness to stand up and be counted on such occasions, not minding the feelings of distractors that would not want the nation to play such a role mark out a foreign policy as being effective. It may also be seen as the readiness by a nation to act in sync with the objectives of its foreign policy through the deployment of material and non-material resources at its disposal to make an impression in the international system. Such a foreign policy seeks initiatives, not to react to events after they have occurred; intervening in a manner that tallies with the expectations of foreign policy elites in a country and outside it upon which it is applauded for its actions, even if some feathers are ruffled.

Dynamism in foreign policy is usually compelled by certain factors. The most prominent ones are the state of the economy, commitment to declared foreign policy objectives, level of domestic support, global public opinion, military might, among others. Since foreign policy is always foreign exchange consuming, the state of the national economy needs to be buoyant, and the political leadership must be ready to deploy financial resources in pursuing the desirable foreign policy actions as occasions demand for it.

Also, there must be a strong commitment on the part of the political leadership to identify with domestic public opinion in charting a foreign policy agenda, as no foreign policy can be dynamic and subsequently, being effective without some measure of domestic support. One other factor is the mood of the international system. Here, the emphasis is not on generality of the feelings of the system but the

crucial segments of the system, especially issues that a foreign policy considers a priority.

The bedrock of any dynamic foreign policy is its effectiveness. It is possible for a foreign policy be dynamic; changing with time but not to be effective. The end result of dynamism in foreign policy is the quantum of deliverables either tangible or intangible that it has made manifest. Citizens generally prefer a dynamic foreign policy in terms of rising to the occasion but applause will only be given when outcomes are more visible for them to see. In this sense, it can be said that dynamism in foreign policy relates more to the process of pursuing a foreign policy, while effectiveness makes more sense at the level of outcomes.

Often hidden in the assessment of a dynamic foreign policy are the outcomes that accompany it i.e., how pursuing a particular foreign policy objective leads to an anticipated outcome? Although the cost of an action is an important consideration, citizens are more likely to show better understanding when a desirable outcome signposts a foreign policy action. For instance, the manhunt for Osama Bin Laden cost the United States of America a lot of money and effort, but once he was gunned down, the American citizens heaved a sigh of relief and not much attention was placed on the cost that it attracted to the United States. This underscores the point being made about spotting the desires of people and using the appropriate mix of strategies to achieve a foreign policy outcome that tallies with people's expectation.

When the process is faulty, either through inaction or halfhearted commitment or even through the reactionary mode, it is not likely that a foreign policy will be effective. On the issue of effectiveness in foreign policy, certain common factors underpin it. These are the strategies used, promptness in action, the consensus built, and the extent of neutralizing obstacles on the way, funding, sufficiency of manpower, among others.

One observes that the vote against foreign policy in modern times has come about as a result of far-in between recorded successes in foreign policy operations or outright barrenness with a huge capital outlay. This perspective is likely to change when the favourable foreign policy outcomes either tangible or intangible forms even though citizens always prefer more of tangible gains especially in economic terms. No doubt, the worry of a foreign policy will multiply when new attainments

are not seen or those made in the past are fast disappearing, leading to the nation acquiring the status of a fall guy in the global system.

A Short Review of the Golden Era of Nigerian Foreign Policy

Customarily, Nigerian foreign policy began after the attainment of independence in 1960 though as recorded in the literature, some crucial steps such as the recruitment of pioneer Foreign Service officers took place before the attainment of independence (Fafowora, 2013). The seeds of what is today's Nigerian foreign policy were contained in the two major speeches made by Prime Minister Balewa to the parliament and the United Nations before and after the attainment of independence. Some idealistic objectives and principles were outlined for the foreign policy in the two historic speeches.

Being a coalition government, the Balewa government had tried to imbue the country's foreign policy with some principles. For six years, the government implemented the nation's foreign policy with some passions and accomplishments. Major outcomes such as the emergence of the country as a leading nation in Africa was achieved coupled with the adoption of the principle of African centerpiece were achieved by the administration (Gambari, 1980).

Yet, tentativeness characterized the conduct of Nigerian foreign policy under the government. This came about as a result of the little exposure of the Head of Government to international issues and the nature of the political arrangements in the country. Flowing from these realities, the government was duly criticized for its pro-western stand. However, this thoroughbred perception of the government was punctured with the belated action of the government on the issue of expulsion of the racist regime in South Africa from the Commonwealth (Asobie, 2010).

The coming into power by the military especially the Gowon, Murtala and Obasanjo governments was to change the orientation of Nigerian foreign policy. While the Gowon government exploited the circumstances of the country's Civil War and the new found oil wealth in the country to show some bite in foreign relations, both the Murtala and the Obasanjo governments broke new grounds in assertiveness and effectiveness in Nigerian foreign policy.

Not only were they ready to confront the traditional friends of the country on some international issues they considered vital to Nigeria's interest, they mobilized all the available resources in the country to pursue a somewhat independent foreign policy agenda for the nation (Nwankwo, 2013). The two military administrations expanded the concern of Nigeria for Africa to embrace all blacks wherever they may be (Babawale, 2014).

In specific terms, the import of the anti-apartheid struggles in South Africa can hardly be understood without the singlemindedness that the country had displayed against the supremacist regime in South Africa. Both at the bilateral and multilateral levels, the country showed her uncompromising level of commitment to an end to the obnoxious apartheid regime in South Africa (Akinboye, 2013).

In addition to seizing all the vital global platforms in calling for an end to apartheid, Nigeria's military, diplomatic and financial resources were on display to generate more worries for the then apartheid government (Akinboye, 2005). It is noteworthy that the nebulous concept of constructive engagement espoused by major western countries could not fly because of the principled stand taken by Nigeria against it. Using the UN Anti-Apartheid Committee which the country had headed for most part of its existence, Nigeria succeeded in mobilizing global opinion against the main promoters of the principle of constructive engagement (Osuntokun, 2020a; Ajala, 1986; Akinboye, 2013). The stand of Nigeria on apartheid, no doubt, accelerated the march towards the liquidation of the odious apartheid regime that became a reality in 1994.

One would say that the anti-apartheid struggles championed by Nigeria was effective because there were abundant resources to pursue it and the high level of diplomatic support it enjoyed. Students and ordinary Nigerians caught the bug and were ready to make financial contributions to the struggle. Radical elements in the universities were not left out of the scene, as their profound articles, opinions and demonstrations served as a tonic to the Nigerian state in exposing the dark alleys of the apartheid regime and its promoters in the western world.

The dictates of the national economy that showed a critical level of dependence on western countries that were incidentally the supporters

of the obnoxious regime in South Africa were not sufficient in dampening the morale in pursuing the policy that found expression in the taking over of some western economic interests in the country, and even threatened certain economic concerns that were hobnobbing with the hated government in Pretoria (Ajala, 1986).

No doubt, this strand of Nigerian foreign policy especially in the decade of 1970s catapulted the nation to an enviable level that must be consulted on African affairs. This came about as the country wisely established her presence outside Africa such as the Nordic countries, in pursuing her anti-apartheid policy (Olusanya, 1986). Little surprise, Nigeria was admitted into the Club of Frontline States embracing neighbouring countries to the theatre of the apartheid policy. Again, this showed some measure of dynamism and effectiveness as such, a recognition that brought with it the opportunity of being an influencer of events in the whole of Southern Africa (Akinboye, 2005).

Nigeria also had another concern in Southern African beyond the apartheid regime. In line with the then objectives of the country's foreign policy, the goal of decolonization was an issue she was not ready to compromise on. Prior to 1999, Nigeria had decolonization as an objective of her foreign policy. Derived from this, she was committed to achieving independence for all African countries that were still under colonial rule. Angola, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe were all then still under colonial rule.

The Lancaster Conference and others were held to accelerate the march to independence for these countries. Material, diplomatic, military and financial resources were extended to the affected countries that buoyed their confidence level of engaging with their colonial masters.

Angola, for instance, stood out as a country that Nigeria had staked a lot on at liberating. The historic speech made by General Murtala Mohammed in 1976 at the Addis Ababa Conference of the Organization of African Unity, OAU, was the tonic required by the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, MPLA, in Angola to come to power as it changed the initial belief that a unity government was desirable in the peculiar circumstance of Angola (Aluko, 1981).

Nigeria, afterwards, committed herself to serve as a kind of catalyst for winning global recognition for her. Thus, the image of the

country soared high in the international system to the extent that some western countries felt unhappy with the development especially with the contempt with which the President Ford's note to African countries on how the Angolan matter should be resolved, was treated (Ogunsanwo, 1986).

In the crave for global relevance, the country also made some additional marks in the international system. More diplomatic missions were opened across the world and her hands of benevolence reached countries that were far and near. At the level of West Africa, the effectiveness of the foreign policy showed in the decision taken by the Murtala administration that the ECOWAS Secretariat should be moved from Togo to Nigeria which the subregional organization had no choice but to comply with. Indeed, the weight of Nigeria followed issues of concern to her.

On peacekeeping operations, the impact of the country was quite noticeable. For instance, the OAU-sanctioned peacekeeping operation in Chad commenced during the period. Unlike now that Nigeria is unfortunately a part of the crowd in enacting peacekeeping operations, she had led others in moving to Chad, and according to Aluko (1981), bore about ninety per cent of the cost of maintaining the troops in the country. Again, this goes to prove the point that Nigeria was quite confident and effective in implementing her foreign policy agenda during the period under review especially in Africa.

Any confident and assertive nation, the mood Nigeria was in the 1970s, would necessarily incur the wrath of the West. Indeed, she ran into troubles with major western nations that found her to be unbearably assertive and in questioning the West on certain issues (Ogunsanwo, 1986). However, Nigeria's somewhat effective foreign policy was marked by proper management of the fallouts of her actions. For instance, on account of the complicity of some western nations in the assassination of General Murtala Mohammed in 1976, Nigeria's relations with UK and USA went frosty but the succeeding Obasanjo government went to work soon afterwards, especially with USA that led to the exchange of visits by the two Presidents in 1977 and 1978 respectively, and the subsequent adoption of the American-styled presidential system of government under the Second Republic.

From the record, the decade of 1970s reversed the lethargic foreign policy in Nigeria under the Balewa government and thereby boosted her image in the international system. Complementing her bold foreign policy pursuit was her readiness to place her new found oil money at the disposal of foreign policy that paved the way for the consolidation of ECOWAS and the enactment of some peacekeeping posts across the world (Yoroms, 2014).

It must be recognized at this point that there are still some analysts who have rejected the notion that anything had changed in Nigerian foreign policy during the period under review (Wright, 1983). While noting the arguments advanced to query the conclusion that Nigeria had pursued an independent foreign policy in the 1970s, it is appropriate to remark that the point being made is that it was only a courageous administration at that point in time when the Cold War was running its course that could have taken on the West without necessarily being in the mould of Cuba or North Korea in terms of being a protege of the Eastern bloc.

The fact that the nation staked her vital economic interests in the defence of its objectives of foreign policy would suggest a strong commitment to the ideals of its foreign policy. More importantly, when that era is compared with some other eras such as the first decade of the 21st century when more money came into the national kitty without a commensurate impact in the international system, it would be clear why the decade of 1970s is still being celebrated as the golden era of Nigerian foreign policy.

Even Wright (1983) himself admitted that some questions were indeed asked on the mode of integrating Nigeria into the global capitalist bloc. To that extent, one would say a commendable step had been taken by Nigeria in her foreign policy. If other governments have followed up by asking other germane questions, perhaps the dark cloud that has descended on the country's foreign policy would have been averted. The era therefore, serves as a benchmark for measuring performance of the Nigerian state in global affairs.

In rounding up my discussion under this section of the paper, it would be necessary to identify a few points/developments that combined to project the decade as a worthwhile era in Nigerian foreign policy.

First to be noted was the massive oil receipts that came in the way of Nigeria. As more foreign exchange came into the country, the confidence level of the Nigerian state was boosted as it was not under any revenue threat in implementing her foreign policy. Whatever diplomacy could not do, money was available to be called to duty. As informed by Obasanjo (1990), African countries were in love with the naira rain that was falling on them. Without being awash with petrodollars, the dynamism that was seen during that period would not have been seen. Technically and diplomatically, Nigeria was less dependent on the western world for its capital requirements as revealed by the initial expectation of the Third Development Plan in the country.

One must not forget that the experience of the Civil War waged in the period between 1967-1970 also played a role (Nwolise, 1986). The policy on rehabilitation, reconciliation and reconstruction introduced after the war was still running then. So, there was no credible threat coming from the domestic environment to lower the tempo of an activist foreign policy agenda. The drum of war being beaten in the country at present was virtually absent during that period.

While the West was unhappy with Nigeria over certain international issues, they were helpless in handling the country as some of them were critically dependent on the country's oil and huge oil revenues that were lodged with their banks. Above all, the commitment of national leadership at that point to foreign policy that has been traced to their prior exposure to international relations before their assumption office, could be considered as the most important development that brought about dynamism and effectiveness in Nigerian foreign policy during the period under review (Akinyemi, 1983).

I argue in this paper that one or two other governments also showed some interest in foreign relations by the actions taken on the foreign policy turf but by and large the administrations lacked a clear-cut direction as was shown under Murtala's and Obasanjo's military governments. This, no doubt made the decade of 1970s a remarkable era in Nigerian foreign policy. Subsequent decades have not therefore been able to match its record on international issues as the ensuing discussion on the decline in Nigerian foreign policy in the Fourth Republic will show.

Evidences of Decline under the Fourth Republic

The Fourth Republic began in 1999 after the swearing-in of President Obasanjo. Informed by the experience of the inaugural president who had previously served as a military Head of State, there was a huge expectation that, under his watch, things would start looking up for the nation, especially in the sphere of external relations that was left in tatters with various regimes of sanctions imposed on the country for all sundry offences, most notably the country's unwillingness to democratize (Saliu, 2006; Fawole, 2003).

In fairness to the administration, it did try to make an impact in the country's external relations through what the then President called "Face-to-Face diplomacy" that had generated a debate in the country on whether the shuttle diplomacy embarked upon by the then president had brought in the expected foreign policy dividends (Saliu, 2005). Undeniably, through it, Nigeria was restored to global reckoning as she became a host for some international events such as Roll-Back Malaria project and President Obasanjo became a toast in the global system, thereby reversing the negative image of the country in the international system.

However, the despicable effort at elongating the tenure of the president and the activities that were associated with it reversed the little gains made by the government in foreign relations by turning the global searchlight on country for her dubious tenure extension venture (Saliu, 2007). Three other presidents have presided over the affairs of Nigeria between 1999 and 2020, as such the observed evidences will be based on some strands of Nigerian foreign policy in place of a regime-based analysis.

(a) Relations with Her Neighbours: One had thought that with the coming into power by President Obasanjo in 1999, the texture of Nigeria's relations with her neighbours would have changed for the better. This was not, however, the case. As witnessed under the military, relations with West African states have been on a troubled journey. For instance, in 2013, Nigeria supported a Congolese to vie for the chairmanship position of the African Union Commission for a second-term in office. Surprisingly, some West African countries broke camps with Nigeria, as they lined up behind the South African candidate, who eventually emerged victorious. This development angered President

Jonathan to the extent of threatening that Nigeria would review her African policy in order to pay back some of the countries in their own coins.

This defeat was also followed with the defeat of Nigeria's candidate at the level of a chair of African Union due to what was attributed to the suspected conspiracy of the country's neighbours. More significantly, the tension is growing high in Nigeria's foreign policy machinery on the loss of power in ECOWAS's hierarchy where the influence level of the country does not reflect her financial muscle in the organization.

How could Nigeria be responsible for between 40 to 60 per cent of the cost of running ECOWAS and yet still be digging below her weight in the organization? Keen observers often ask! To demonstrate the displeasure of Nigeria, in 2016 she withheld her contributions to ECOWAS (Onyeama, 2016). People were thus, surprised with the new turn of events, as the nation was not known to be asking questions on ECOWAS' operations as the security-cum hegemonic considerations had weighed more than economic arguments in the country's scale of preference in appreciating the sub-regional organisation.

Perhaps, no other incident has shown Nigeria's loss of influence in ECOWAS more than the ongoing war against insurgency. As a leading nation in the West African sub-region and based on her past experiences, the country was not expected to be facing any stress in galvanizing support in defeating insurgents in the sub-region. However, the reality is that up till present, the war against insurgency is proving the inability of the country to garner the necessary support on the war, with some countries involved in the Multinational Joint Task Force (MJTF), expressing reservations on Nigeria despite the huge sums it is sinking into the arrangement (Albert, 2015; Tar, 2019).

The war against insurgency thus raises questions on a once liberator or peacekeeper in Africa now being unable to do the needful on behalf of other West African countries in subduing the insurgents in her backyard as was experienced on the Chadian crisis of the 1970s and 1980s. It is disappointing that under the Fourth Republic, Nigeria had to count on the support of other nations to contain what had begun as a rag-tag army of insurgents (Adeniyi, 2017; Abdullahi, 2018; Buhari, 2019).

It is the view of some observers that if the current insurgency ravaging the country had taken place in the decade of 1970s, Nigeria without, the support of the defunct OAU and ECOWAS, would have long put the phenomenon behind her.

Although, there has always been discordant voices among members of ECOWAS, the situation now is more depressing as countries such as Ghana, Senegal, Gambia and Mali have all developed a new culture of snubbing Nigeria on international issues. This has shown more on the issue of the adoption of a single currency for West Africa (Onyeama, 2020a).

(b) Relations with Larger Africa: Many issues compete for attention in Nigeria's relations with larger Africa but only a few of them will be highlighted in this section of the paper. Hatred for Nigeria and her citizens is becoming widespread in Africa. Some have advanced the arguments about the attitude of the country and her citizens as being responsible for this. With the unhealthy economy at home, more Nigerians are migrating to other African countries to find a succor. In the process, and in their determination to succeed, they often cross the boundary of civilized behaviour.

South Africa has become a major country that has developed the tradition of trampling on the rights of Nigerians who live in the country without minding the protocol on diplomatic relations. Nigerians are attacked at every point without remembering what their country had done to end the apartheid regime in South Africa. Xenophobic attacks on other African nationals have become a past time issue in South Africa. In 2019, an apology was again tendered to Nigeria by South Africa but that has not stopped the regime of discrimination against Nigerians who are resident in the country (Choane, Shulikg and Mthomben, 2011).

To be fair to the Nigerian state, it has been reacting to each round of the attacks but the general feeling is that it has not done well enough in this regard. For instance, in 2018, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the two countries entailing early warning regime and other proactive measures. Yet, the September 2019 edition still took place, reflecting the ineffectiveness of the measures taken in 2018 (Saliu, 2020a). Of much importance to this paper is the penchant of South Africa blacks to be targeting Nigerians for attacks. One can

argue that xenophobic attacks have been occurring because Nigeria's diplomacy towards Pretoria is very weak and it reflects the declining power of the Nigerian State.

The kind of reactions which Gambari (2010) had called for when Nelson Mandela was being buried in South Africa when Nigeria was snubbed by South Africa in making a speech at the expense of other world leaders are not being seen. Nigeria also had disagreement with the country under President Jonathan when Nigerians travelling to South Africa without yellow cards were turned back in early 2013. Although Pretoria later apologized to Nigeria over the matter, the frequency of xenophobic attacks especially the widely reported cases of 2018 and 2019 would suggest that Nigeria is losing the diplomatic grounds she had gained in years past (Saliu, 2019a).

Indeed, the world was shocked when President Jonathan, during a State visit to France, disclosed that Nigeria would not be participating in Central African Republic, CAR, on a peacekeeping mission due to certain domestic occurrences in the country. Thus, the crisis in Central African Republic is being worked on without the effective participation of Nigeria, the supposed giant nation in Africa. This would not have been the case under Murtala and Obasanjo administrations informed by the interest that the two regimes had shown toward external relations.

Decline also stares one on the face on the platform of the African Union, AU. Both Libyan and Ivorian crises were somehow managed without Nigeria occupying a front row position on the two cases. What one saw during the peak period of managing the crises was the isolation of the country. South Africa had outshined Nigeria as her preferred policy options were what constituted the AU's reaction mode (Saliu, 2015b).

One notes that Nigeria later congratulated herself on the two issues as events dramatically vindicated her positions but the point is that she had failed to sell her policy option, favouring military intervention in Cote d'Ivoire to other African countries, a position not fancied by South Africa that eventually championed what later became the AU's position on the matter (Saliu, 2015b). The same was seen on the Libyan case as her position on early recognition of the transitional government which South Africa had frowned at later got wide

endorsement of many more African countries especially after the murder of President Gaddafi.

The point being made is that other countries can disagree with Nigeria's position but rather, that should not be seen in the context of Nigeria operating at the margin of relevance. Her wide ranging investments on the world scene should have given her an edge over countries that would appear not to have her rich experiences and the adequate manpower to rub shoulders with her.

(c) Nigeria's Relations with the Wider World: To be sure, Nigeria's relations with the wider world have become important to her that hardly would anything happen in the country without counting on especially the West and China for support and assistance. As argued by Akinyemi (1989), it may be due to the incidence of colonialism that contributed to shaping the general orientation of Nigeria's political leadership. Contrary to the expectation in the 1990s that the only thing that was preventing the country from the path of rapid development was the phenomenon of military rule, the return of democracy in 1999 has not led to a warmer level of relations developing between her and the West. There seems to be many more issues in contention now than the previous times. Corruption, insurgency, gay marriage, shift in policy towards China, influx of Nigerian youths to the West and other parts of the world, among other issues, have dogged their relationships (THISDAY, 2019). For instance, the issue of illegal migration to the West is cardinal upon which the collectivity of West has been complaining about. Laws frowning at the development have been enacted that would be against Nigerian migrants with the Nigerian state not being able to respond appropriately (Adesina, 2019).

The argument that not all those that have been caught in the web are all Nigerians being pressed by the state is noted but the issue is how did the affected youths come about Nigeria's passports that they are carrying? (Buhari, 2016). This has remained a puzzle for the concerned authorities to respond to. One argues that the mileage being lost to the incessant migration is that the country is not being perceived as capable of organizing herself which has led to sad commentaries being run about the country in other parts of the world.

A tendency whereby the Nigerian migrants are being caught in the circles of unlawful scene has equally added more worries to the

Nigerian State (THISDAY, 2019). To forestall misunderstanding, citizens of the world are much freer to move around but that is not a license to be desperate and not to accord respect the laws of the lands they live in. Once the number is more as we have for Nigeria, a statement is being made about the country. Deportations of Nigerians without the usual diplomatic courtesy are being seen and that represent a reversal of the red-carpet treatment that had been extended to Nigerians in the 1970s and 1980s (Aribisala, 2019; The Guardian, 2019).

Issues affecting Africans are taking place without proper notice being taken of the giant nation and the largest economy in Africa. Adequate consultations with the country are not being made and some other smaller countries that lack the weight of speaking for the continent are being preferred because, as argued by Gambari (2012), Nigeria has failed to maintain a healthy presence in global affairs.

The country has consistently looked in the direction of western countries to come and resolve national issues in the country. This development is a contradiction of the stand of Nigeria in the past that centered on independence and sovereignty. Indeed, a serving minister has said he does not see anything untoward about the sovereignty clause contained in a loan deal with China. Although the clause has become a standard in international economic transactions, Osuntokun (2020b), has argued that the minister ought to have been circumspect in downplaying the sovereignty issue that has raised the concern of Nigerians on the matter of loan acquisition with China. What critical Nigerians are concerned with which was lost to the minister is the heavy debt standing against the country in the face of growing concerns on the ability of Nigeria to pay back the multitude of loans being contracted (Punch, 2020a).

An incalculable damage is being done to Nigeria's image in the international system by the desperation of the state to seek support from the West to execute the war against insurgency. At a point, the country counted on France and UK to persuade some neighbouring countries to complement the efforts of the Nigerian state at overcoming the insurgents (Saliu, 2018). The State, in particular, has castigated some western nations for not delivering weapons paid for to the country (Mohammed, 2020). Nigeria in the past especially during the period of

the Civil War never showed the kind of desperation that has characterized her efforts at containing insurgency in the country.

Individually, some countries in the West have had cause to run commentaries about Nigeria without minding her status in Africa. Some of them have even forgotten that Nigeria once served as a leader in Africa in concrete terms. They are therefore, preferring to regard her as a giant nation in West Africa apparently using their own parameters. Thus, the American ex-President, Barack Obama could visit some African countries without considering the leading nation in the continent or West African subregion.

Cases of discrimination against Nigerians are becoming rampant in the world. China, the toast of Nigeria, is not left out of the club. Nigerian citizens living in China have many tales to tell on how they are being treated in the country (Saliu, 2020a). Stigma bordering on the suspicion of being carriers of coronavirus and criminality is being given to Nigerians with the State barely adequate in interceding on their behalf (Onyeama, 2020b). The loss of power and influence by the country is responsible for the low level of engagement of Nigeria in countries such as United Arab Emirate and Germany. In modern times, complaints coming from Nigeria and her citizens are treated with contempt and disdain (Adesina, 2019; Daily Trust, 2020; Punch, 2020b).

From the foregoing analysis, the point has been made that there are crucial evidences of low esteem in which Nigeria is being held across the world and this runs contrary to a relatively better treated that was accorded the country and her citizens in the past (Vanguard, 2020a and 2020b). Reasons for this development under the Fourth Republic are not far-fetched. A few of them are discussed in the next section of the paper.

Accounting for the loss of Diplomatic Gains by Nigeria

The counter arguments that Nigeria is still relevant in the international system as the elements of power possessed by her are in support of the position. My position in this paper is that some diplomatic reversals that are being witnessed under this republic would not have been the case if all had been well with Nigerian foreign policy. Issues such as restrictions placed on Nigerian migrants to USA, many unfriendly acts against Nigerians in Ghana, Nigeria desperation at seeking international support to defeat boko haram, incessant attacks on

Nigerians in some countries particularly South Africa, among others, are indicative of troubled international engagements for Nigeria.

Why is Nigeria that was a toast of the world on account of her activist foreign policy propelled by petrodollar in the 1970s is suddenly witnessing discrimination and undiplomatic treatments across the world? To this question I now turn in this section of the paper.

- * More than anything else, the failure of the national economy to respond positively to many reform programmes that have been adopted has encouraged the influx of her citizens to other parts of the world with the attendant desperation to succeed in their new countries of abode. This has created some resentment against Nigeria and her citizens (Soludo, 2019). This is being strengthened by the activities of the affected Nigerians. No country will attach any importance to another whose citizens are everywhere sometimes through illegal routes.
- * As many of them are caught in socially unacceptable behaviour, they are avoidably damaging the integrity and image of their country in the eyes of other countries and their citizens. The feeling that one can quickly make it outside the country due to an unhealthy economy prevailing in Nigeria is a major motivation that has encouraged many more Nigerians to migrate to other parts of the world sometime through illegal routes (Buhari, 2016).
- * Insurgency and the manner of waging the war against it are other pull factors. Nigerians running from insurgency have moved out of the country to find a living. For more 10 years, the State has been waging the war with no signs of ending it in sight. Many discoveries being made by both Nigerian and non-Nigerian sources are not encouraging to entities outside the country.
- * The fear that every Nigerian could be a terrorist is prevalent in the world and the alleged gross violation of rights of Nigerians by the Armed Forces represents another worry for the state and the outside world. The reality of insurgents killing foreigners including international aid workers is not a good image-making for the country (THISDAY, 2020). All combined, the ongoing boko haram insurgency, banditry, herders-farmers conflicts and

other faces of insecurity in the nation are reversing the diplomatic gains of the country in external relations (Saliu, 2020c).

- * Nigeria was considered a leader in Africa because of her possession of elements of national power. But these elements have for long remained unharnessed, making the country to be a perpetual toddler or potential power in the international system. The oil that had given her an edge over other countries especially in Africa is no longer in high demand and some other African countries have joined the club of oil exporting countries (Campell, 2013).
- * As the revenue level of the country is declining, she has been resorting to more borrowing that has led to accumulation of debt, with the fear that with high level of debt obligations, Nigeria may not be able to escape the debt trap in the nearest future (Saliu, 2019). Swimming in the bad water of economy, as most of her peers in Africa, Nigeria is losing the economic power that had given her advantage in global affairs.
- * Foreign policy pursuits entail anticipation guided by the duly considered national interest of a country. Over the years, Nigeria's level of anticipation or scenario-building on international issues is very weak. Several events have been taking place with Nigeria's reactions to them falling short of expectations. For instance, in 2017 when The Gambia's problem took place and even before the electoral impasse, there were enough early signs. By the time Nigeria's attention was drawn to it, the crisis had accelerated to the extent that the country's role could not be adjudged as decisive in cooling the tensions despite the warm relations that had existed between her and The Gambia (Saliu, 2020d; Olisemeka, 2019).
- * The point made by Garba (1987) about the low esteem being accorded foreign relations in Nigeria is still relevant till today. At times, one gets the impression that the Nigerian state conducts its affairs as if the global system does not exist. How else can one describe the gamble of President Obasanjo with tenure extension or the continued detention of Omoyele Sowore

despite a court order for his release? It was the outcry of the international community that freed the country from the two developments. The poor funding level of Nigeria's external relations is also reflective of how important are external relations to the Nigerian State. A poorly funded foreign policy cannot but generate low level of foreign policy dividends to the nation (Uhmoibhi, 2012).

- * Nigerian foreign policy operates from an environment of self-impotence that expects all other countries to see her in that mould. Unfortunately, foreign policy is not being operated in that manner, as self-respect is won, not awarded and defended, not taken for granted. While the nation wants to be consulted by other actors arising from her perception of self-importance, other nations are busy cutting their flour and baking their own cake while paying little regard to Nigeria's assumption of self-importance.
- * For instance, without proper engagement with South Africa, Nigeria expects Pretoria to treat her in a special manner on the strength of her record of assistance to South Africa during the period of the war against apartheid. However, South Africans have moved on and are ready to compete with their benefactor. That is the reality of modern international relations that the country is yet to come to terms with (Ramaphosa, 2019; Saliu, 2020a).
- * Nigeria parades unclear or idealistic foreign policy objectives, yet she expects a bumper harvest from her external relations. As a kind of navigational map, foreign policy objectives are supposed to be made clearer for other actors to know how to relate with them. The country is a great country in Africa, no doubt, but this has not been transmitted clearly to other African countries. They are therefore, seeing Nigeria in a different light from that which she wants to be seen.
- * The big elephant in the house of Nigerian foreign policy is lack of co-ordination. Being a multi-sectoral issue, there is need for more co-ordination in foreign policy pursuits. The primacy of the Balewa House is not yet being recognized in the

conduct of Nigerian foreign policy. Agencies and ministries that are involved in its implementation are acting almost independently of one another to the detriment of a coherent foreign policy agenda for the country (Keshi, 2010).

- * Aware of the position taken by Sanu (2016) on foreign policy being an executive activity, one still feels that the almost exclusive possession of the country's foreign policy by the executive arm is injurious to the health of the foreign policy. The parliament that we call the National Assembly in Nigeria needs to be more involved beyond the estado-driven concerns. Through its active participation, Nigerian foreign policy can be further democratized by making citizens to be more involved in its formulation and implementation. The current interest of the Assembly in loans and external debt management is commendable, but much more interest is required on the broader foreign policy issues to correct unintentional mistakes that have been observed.
- * No foreign policy can excel unless it is being backed by a strong research environment. On this, Nigeria is not yet a model. Nigerian foreign policy is being pursued in a complete disregard for research inputs. The available research arms, perhaps, due to the neglect they have suffered, have acquired notoriety for mis-governance and mandate neglect. For instance, the stories coming out of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, NIIA, could only have happened due to the neglect it suffers from the Nigerian state.
- * Nigeria has had series of elections since 1999, but on the whole, the quality of the electoral process needs to be improved upon. A number of untoward happenings including interference in the electoral processes have been inevitable that Nigeria is fighting hard to ward-off. The quality of the governance environment obtainable in Nigeria is another cause of worry for actors in the international system that has been making them to at times be cautious about meddling in the country's affairs with an attendant diplomatic cost for the nation.

- * It was like an anti-climax for Nigeria to be found in the midst of a few African countries that initially failed to sign into the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, despite her deep involvement in all the processes that led to the final stage of signing the agreement into law. Although an excuse was given for the failure of the country to initially sign it, the reality that about 50 other African countries had beaten Nigeria to the front row was a kind of diplomatic blow, as most other African countries had been seated in a kind of Hall of Fame before the country signed the agreement during the 'injury time.' This injury time signing of the document, however, represents losing some diplomatic mileage with a consequence on her diplomatic standing in the world.
- * Nigeria, at current time and stage, is deeply divided. Faith and ethnicity are the enemies of the country (Gambari, 2018). Perhaps, they are being made so because of the governance structure prevailing in the country. At present, sectarian crises are rife with some elements calling for secession from the country. Added to the problem of insecurity in the country, Nigerian foreign policy is already suffering from a system overload that impedes its pace and accomplishments. The country is being made to answer to some charges bordering on internal occurrences, not charting a worthwhile agenda for the international system (Amnesty International, 2019).

Conclusions

This paper has discussed Nigerian foreign policy in the past and present. It observed that the foreign policy has had a flourishing past when actors in the international system accorded much respect to the nation, leading to projecting a good image for Nigeria in the system. However, with the advent of the Fourth Republic, and contrary to expectation of a better outing for Nigerian foreign policy, there has been some troubles with the foreign policy, as people are fast forgetting the worthwhile outing of the country in global affairs.

Quite surprisingly, Nigeria and her citizens are lapsing into remembering other actors that the country had invested a lot in assistance. As such, this is the payback time. True to the position taken,

Nigeria had made more than a casual impact in the past that made her to enter into contention with some notable actors over certain issues of interest to her and come out unblemished with her image soaring on the global arena.

Noticeably, the Fourth Republic has not been all-round lucky in terms of foreign policy pursuits. There have been occasions when the external attainments of the country were not up to the level required. For instance, her response levels to influx of Nigerian youths to other nations, insurgency, incessant attacks of Nigerians in other parts of the world, restrictions or travel ban on her citizens, among others, were less than satisfactory. This has, however, reduced the scope of the diplomatic gains of the country under the current republic. This record of performance can be explained.

The victory song of Nigerian foreign policy has not been loud enough due to some developments and factors. Notable among them are; poor funding of Nigerian foreign policy, influx of Nigerians to other countries, simplistic policy environment, unclear objectives, low level of co-ordination, poor scenario-building and comatose research arms, undemocratic policy processes and not according much value to external relations.

The paper is therefore, concluded by arguing that Nigerian foreign policy in the decade of 1970s, devoid of ideological considerations, was more effective as the operators then exhibited some level of confidence and cherished more the country's independence in the conduct of her foreign policy. As a result, it had recorded more diplomatic gains as compared to the present when mounting domestic issues and poor reflections have reduced the matrix of the gains that the country is recording in the global system.

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