

## **Harnessing the Potentials of Foreign Policy through Public Sector Reforms for the African Society: the Nigerian Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

Capable and adequately resourced public organizations are key to the delivery of public services and form an essential part of the enabling environment for attracting investment and supporting private sector development. The public sector in African countries was expected to spearhead socioeconomic development to reduce poverty. However, it has proved largely ineffective in performing this task for a number of reasons and has stimulated the demand for a redefinition of the role of the public sector. As a contribution to the debate over the proper role of the public sector and how it has coped with the new public management reforms, this paper examined the state of public sector management in Africa by focusing specifically on the strengths and challenges facing the state and its bureaucracy in relation to socio-economic development by harnessing the potentials of a robust foreign policy. Data is sourced from secondary sources which include- journals, periodicals, magazines, published and unpublished works, books and the internet. The theoretical framework adopted is the system theory. The mode of analysis is qualitative as the contents of the benefits of foreign policies properly articulated through public sector management reforms in some African states are highlighted and backed by empirical underpinnings. The results exposed the fact that Nigeria is yet to reap the full benefits of its foreign policy potentials due to poor implementation of its public sector management policies. The paper therefore, recommends a more articulate implementation of such policies.

**Keywords:** *Public sector management, Foreign policy, System theory, Empirical underpinnings, Enabling environment*

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### **Background to the Study**

The Organization for European Cooperation (OEEC) was established in 1947 to run the US-financed Marshall plan for reconstruction of a continent ravaged by war. By making individual governments recognize the interdependence of their economies, it paved the way for an era of co-operation that was to change the face of Europe. Encouraged by its success and the prospects of carrying its **work** forward on a global stage, Canada and the US joined OEEC members in signing the new OECD convention on 14 December 1960. Thus, the OECD was officially born on 30 September 1961, when the convention entered into force. Other countries joined, starting with Japan in 1964. Today, 34 OECD member countries worldwide regularly turn to one another to identify problems, discuss and analyze them, as well as promote policies to solve them. The track record is striking. The US has seen its national wealth in terms of per capita GDP almost triple in the five decades since the OECD was created. Other OECD countries have seen similar, and in some cases even more spectacular progress.

More interesting is the experience of emergent economies which, a few decades ago, were only minor players on the global stage. China, India, Brazil have emerged as economic giants just as most of the countries which constituted part of the former soviet bloc have neither joined the OECD or adopted its standards and principles to achieve common goals. As the OECD turned 50 (1961 – 2021), the focus is on helping governments in five main areas. Two of such areas are worthy of mention whatever the circumstance. First, governments need to restore confidence in markets and the institutions and companies that make them function. This will require improved regulation and more effective governance at all levels. Secondly, governments must re-establish healthy public finances as a basis for future sustainable economic growth. As a matter of fact, the organization seeks ways of fostering new sources of growth through innovation, environmentally friendly 'green growth' strategies and the development of emerging economies. For any country to achieve such 'green growth' and acceptance in the global community, it needs robust foreign relations which is only possible through effective public policy mechanism.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

Most African countries have different trade and foreign policies. Nigeria's repositioning of its diplomacy from an African to citizen-centered one under the Yar'Adua administration represents a monumental departure and paradigm shift from the old foreign policy tradition. The new thrust articulated by the then Minister of foreign Affairs (MFA), Ojo Maduekwe (2007), was called a "citizen - centered diplomacy", which aimed more importantly at, putting the interests of Nigerians at home and abroad ahead of all other considerations. Thus, Nigerians new international behavior and actions during political dispensation was primarily towards the protection of its citizens' interests and wellbeing anywhere in the world. Such interest well quite encompassing in an approach that suggested a paradigm shift from the traditional Africa – centered policy to a Nigeria-centered diplomacy which is only policy vis-a-vis the formulation and implementation in carefully articulated public sector policies. Such paradigm shift is aimed at harnessing the obvious potentials and advantages inherent in the interdependence of the global community. This study examines the scenario in which African countries like Nigeria have enunciated public policies that will enable them harness the benefits of robust foreign policies.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The broad objective of this study is to evaluate the extent to which Nigeria's foreign policy initiatives have enhanced the realization of the improved livelihood for Nigerian citizens. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- a) Ascertain the improvement in Nigeria's foreign policy
- b) What benefits have accrued to the average Nigerian citizen through the improved policy in the form of general welfare and standard of living?

### **Research Questions**

Two questions will guide this investigation. They include:

- a) what is the improvement on the foreign policy of Nigeria?
- b) how has such improvement led to a boost in the wellbeing of the average citizen?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Conceptual literature**

**Foreign Policy:** Foreign policy refers to different things to different people, scholars and commentators on the field. Henderson (2005), posts that 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". Holsti (1967), views foreign policy as "the actions of a state towards the external environment and the conditions – usually domestic – under which such actions are formulated". This seems to agree with Kissinger's (1994) often quoted submission that "in foreign policy analysis, the domestic structure is taken as given; foreign policy begins where domestic policy ends". Thus, 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 therefore, constitute the conceptual prisms by which Nigerians new citizen – centered foreign policy is evaluated. Idang (1973) regards foreign policy as "a plan or program of actions of a state, its national interest, which determines the summation of the states objectives in the international system.

#### **Citizen Diplomacy**

This is quite encompassing and refers to a political situation where all citizens, directly or indirectly, may participate in the foreign policy making process. Gelder (2006) believes "it is a concept of average citizens engaging as representatives of a country or cause, either inadvertently or by design". It either subverts or compliments official channels of diplomacy and could be more reliable when official diplomacy is no longer working effectively in a nation's interest. "this kind of diplomacy is capable of transcending formal state negotiations, but could as well be more effective in reaching successful negotiations, and smoothen things when relations between two or more nations have 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).

**Africa-Centered Diplomacy:** Africa-centered or Africa-centerpiece diplomacy "is the political concept which refers to the situation whereby a nation sees the concerns, interest and wellbeing of the African continent as pivotal to its own interest and existence" (King, 1996). While its approach maybe premised upon existentialism, it emphasizes 'live and let's live' which may compel a nation to extend its magnanimity and generosity to needy African nations. The philosophy and disposition accepts in a wholesome manner, the mantra to the effect that

charity begins at home – Africa. Hence, Mazrui (2006) views the concept as “the manifestation of the Pan – African disposition of Nigeria, which has underlined its foreign policy since independence, a position which has inspired foreign policy scholars, among whom is Inamete (1993), to describe the character of Nigeria’s foreign policy as “Afrocentric”.

### **Public Sector**

In general terms, the public sector consists of government and all publicly controlled or funded agencies, enterprises and other entities that deliver public programs, goods, or services. The concept is broader than simply that of core government and may overlap with the not – for – profit or private sectors. Types of private sector organizations may exist at any four levels – international (multistate entities or partnerships), National (an independent state), Regional ( a province/ state within a national state), Local ( a municipal – level body such as a city or town). Adams (2004), defines public sector accounting as “a process of recording, communicating, summarizing, analyzing and interpreting government financial statements and statistics in aggregate and details; it is concerned with the receipts, custody and disbursement and rendering of stewardship on public funds entrusted”. However, Premchand (1999), sees public financial management as “the link between the communities aspirations with resources, and the present with future”, while Ojiakor (2009) argues that “the factors and forces which militate against accountability in Nigeria include ethnicity and tribalism, corruption, religious dichotomy and military culture”. Johnson (2004) posits that “public accountability is an essential component for the functioning of our political system, as accountability means that those who are in charge with drafting and / or carrying out policy should be obliged to give an explanation of their actions to their electorates”.

**Public Sector Reform:** Okonjor-iweala and Osafu-kwaako (2007); Soludo (2007); King (2003), opined (during the Obasanjo administration), that “poor public expenditure management in Nigeria, greatly hampered the quality of government capital projects. In their view, “strengthening the budget preparation and execution process was, therefore, urgently needed in order to improve the efficiency of government spending and improve service delivery to the Nigerian public” (Okonjo-Iweala and Osifokwaako, 2007). This reasoning triggered the process which culminated to the enactment of the Fiscal Responsibility Act (2007). The Act provided the framework for the implementation of the public sector reform undertaken by the government to convince the world that it was serious about improving the economic and development indices ranked Nigeria among the poorest, most corrupt, and least developed countries. public sector reform is therefore an improvement upon an existing policy framework aimed at achieving better results for the citizenry.

**Public Policy:** Public policies are governmental decisions, and are actually the result of activities which the government undertakes in the pursuance of certain goals and objectives. It can also be said that public policy formulation and implementation involves a well planned pattern or cause of activity. Hence, Dye (1972), defines public policy as “whatever government chooses to do or not to do”.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The System theory by Betalamffy constitutes the theoretical framework of this study. Its underlying assumption is that there is order in our system in international relations. It sees nations as being in constant contact in an intricate framework of relationships resulting from the process of interaction. The theory holds that every nation is involved in some degree of

participation in the international environment. A nation's behavior according to the theory is a two-way activity of taking from and giving to the international environment. It is this process of exchange that the theory referred to as the international system.

The systems approach views international system as a result of diverse actions. International relationships are conceived as the consequences of vast number of particular purposes, intentions, expectations and efforts. According to the theory, since international system is the idea of transformation in some form or the other. This is because the interactions of state behaviour are always subject to change under the impact of new factors.

### **Hegemonic stability theory**

The theory of hegemonic stability was originally formulated by Kindleberger (1973), when he applied the term to the rise and decline of the US's influence in international affairs. His main argument was that since states are regional egoists seeking to maximize their own interests and welfare and defined in material terms, there is the need for a single leader to ensure the public good of international stability. International economic stability is only possible when there is a clear identifiable preponderant power/state in terms of material capabilities. By implication, the stability of the international system rests on a single dominant state that is able to articulate and enforce the rules of interaction among the most important members of the system. Kindleberger identifies a number of preconditions for a stable international economic system: provision of a market for distress goods, producing a steady flow of capital, maintaining a rediscounted mechanism for providing liquidity when the monetary system is frozen, managing the structure of foreign exchange rates, and providing a degree of coordination of domestic monetary policies.

### **Empirical literature**

As earlier indicated, good foreign policies and good international relations have immense benefits. Most such benefits are found in the area of economic aid, growth and development. For instance, many studies reveal the benefits associated with increased flow of foreign direct investments, etc.

Borenstein (1998) sees foreign direct investment as an important vehicle for the transfer of technology, contributing to growth in larger measure than domestic investment. Balasubramaanyan (1996), reports positive interaction between capital and foreign direct investment. They had found significant results supporting the assumption that foreign direct investment is more important for economic growth in export – promoting than import substituting countries. This implies that the impact of foreign direct investment varies across countries and that trade policy can affect the role of foreign direct investment in economic growth.

Durham (2004), failed to establish a positive relationship between foreign direct investment and growth, but instead suggests that the effects of foreign direct investment are contingent on the “absorptive capability” of most countries. At the current level of gross domestic product, the success of governments' policies of stimulating the productive base of the economy depends largely on her ability to control adequate amount of foreign direct investments comprising of managerial capital and technological resources to boost the existing production capabilities. Shiro (2005) posits that “foreign direct investment is supposed to serve as a means of augmenting Nigeria's domestic resources in order to carry out effectively, her development

programmes and raise the standard of living of her people". The consensus in the literature seems to be that of foreign direct investment increases growth through productivity and efficiency gains. This empirical evidence is not unanimous. However, available evidence for developed countries seems to support the idea that "the productivity of domestic firms is positively related to the presence of foreign firms" (Globeram, 1979; Imbriani and Reganeti, 1977). the results for developing countries are not so clear, with some finding positive spillovers (Blomstrong, 1986; kokko, 1994) and others such as (Atiken et al; 1997) reporting limited evidence. Still, others find no evidence of positive short run spillover from foreign firms. Empirical studies have also revealed that direct foreign and facilitates growth. The results from these works are mixed (while some suggest a negative relationship, some others suggest a positive association).

Paparek (1973), in a cross- country regression analysis of 34 countries in the 1950s and 51 countries in the 1960s, examined foreign aid, foreign investment, other flows and domestic savings as explanatory variables, found that foreign aid has a significant greater effect on growth than other variables. He explained that "aid, unlike domestic savings, can fill the foreign exchange gap as well as the savings gap. Unlike foreign private investment and other foreign inflows, aid is supposed to be specifically designed to foster growth and more importantly, is biased towards countries with a balance-of-payment constraint". based on the model by Paparek (1973) and then extended by Mosley (1980) and Mosley (1987), Snyder analyzed the relation between foreign aid inflow and the growth rate of gross domestic product in 69 developing countries over three periods (the 1960s, the 1970s, and 1980s - 1987), incorporating country size (measured by gross domestic product) in the model. He argues that when country size is not included, the effect of aid are small and insignificant but when this factor is taken into account, the coefficient of aid becomes positive and significant.

On the contrary, Knack (2000), in a cross country analysis indicates that higher aid levels erode the quality of governance indexes, i.e. bureaucracy, corruption and the rule of law. He argued that "aid dependence can potentially undermine institutional quality, encouraging rent seeking and corruption, fomenting conflict over control of aid funds, siphoning off scarce latent from bureaucracy and alleviating pressures to reform inefficient policies and institutions".

The above review indicates that while enough evidence abound to support the fact that a robust foreign relation is beneficial to countries, no study has shown how improved public policy can lead to such benefits with particular reference to Nigeria. This is a gap that needs to be filled and justifies the rationale for the current investigation.

### **Methodology**

Our methodology is content analytic using secondary data and the theoretical framework of systems theory. These are juxtaposed and brought to bear on questions one (1) and two (2).

**Question One (1):** what improvements/reforms have been recorded in Nigeria`s foreign policy in recent times? At independence in 1960, Nigeria`s foreign policy made Africa the centre piece. That is to say that the welfare of the African continent was the cornerstone of the nation`s foreign policy. However, with the coming into being of the Obasanjo administration, there was a paradigm shift to citizen-based diplomacy from the Afrocentric policy.

At a point when it became very glaring that the conventional orientation of thrusting Nigeria's external behaviour upon frivolous magnanimity, or say, unrewarding love for her African neighbours, has emptily translated into political bunkum, the emergent democratic leadership redirected the entire focus of the country's foreign policy. Being so apprehensive of the excruciating economic condition of the country, and more so, of the shallowness of the Nigerian purse for such flamboyant or philanthropic role of 'giant of Africa', made a progressive change and overwhelmingly refocused the country's external attention. Ogwu (2005), posits that "the foreign policy arrangement was built upon 'economic diplomacy'".

Interestingly, however, the subsequent administration of President Yar'Adua, made a radical and positivist step toward something very unique and so different – citizen diplomacy. This foreign policy thrust was directed at enhancing the country's citizens globally. Thus, in a postmortem analysis of Nigeria's foreign policy under Yar'Adua's administration, Nwanolue, Osegbue and Iwuoha (2013), examined the fallout of what it called "a unique and laudable but unaccomplished foreign policy thrust". The paper was of the opinion that, "Yar'Adua's practical incapacitation in office limited certain inherent potentialities and optimistic promises of the proclaimed citizenship diplomacy". The results of the study notwithstanding, it gives an empirical support to the fact that there was a paradigm shift from the Afrocentric foreign policy to citizen-centered diplomacy in the Nigerian foreign policy which provides the needed answer to research questions one (1) of our study.

**Research Question Two (2):** precisely, citizen diplomacy as a foreign policy thrust commenced in 2007. It is for this reason that, Ujara & Ibietan (2014), carried out an empirical investigation titled "citizen diplomacy and Nigeria's international image: the social constructivist explanation".

The paper holds the view that citizen diplomacy in Nigeria became necessary as Nigeria's international image oscillated between periods of positivity and negativity, with the later being preponderant. It believes that the restoration and sustenance of citizen diplomacy and vigorous drive have the potentials for creating a better image for Nigeria. Folarin, (2013: 122), highlights "the challenges of issuance of visas to Nigerians and the ridiculous immigration questions being asked". In 2010, it was reported that "over 200 Nigerians were on death row, out of which 18 persons were killed in Tripoli and Benghazi with exclusive refusal to part with their identities" (Akinterinwa, (2010b :22). More recently in 2012, it was reported also that, there were 53 Nigerians in Indonesian prisons, 18 on death row, 5 imprisoned for life and 53 others under detention (Akinterinwa, 2012a : 17). It must be observed that, the lack of confidence by Diaspora Nigerians in the country to rescue them in times of need is caused by the response and behavior of Nigerian foreign missions abroad. "The constant complaints is their inability to intervene in matters related to the safety of Nigerians" (Dickson, 2010:9). Ujara and Ibietan (2014), also observed that "the inhuman treatment meted out on Nigerians abroad also replicates itself right here in Nigeria by fellow Nigerian citizens". Folarin (2013:122) cites as examples, the inhuman treatment and the insecurity perpetrated by the Boko Haram group, all of which constitute indignities against Nigerians. Thus, Ogunsanwo (2009:19) posited in his work that the "concept of citizen diplomacy was a novel foreign policy orientation announced by the former Foreign Affairs Minister, Chief Ojo Maduekwe which would lay emphasis on the citizens".

A robust foreign policy is beneficial in every sense of the word. It could attract foreign aid which would impact positively on a nation's growth process. A study by Fasanya and Onakoya (2012), reveal that 'foreign aid flows have significant impact on economic growth in Nigeria while domestic investment increase in response to aid flows and population growth has no significant effect on aid flows'.

### **Findings**

Following an analysis, a number of revelations were made: these include –

- 1) There has been a paradigm shift in Nigeria's foreign policy from the 'Afrocentric' posture to the citizen-centered diplomacy.
- 2) This shift began with the Obasanjo administration but became properly articulated during the Yar'Adua administration following the pronouncements by the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the person of Ojo Maduekwe.
- 3) This was a foreign policy reform that aimed at protection of all citizens of the country resident abroad.
- 4) The result was to the benefit and wellbeing of the average citizen resident in foreign land.
- 5) The reform also improved the image of Nigerians in Diaspora as well as the nations.
- 6) There were some economic benefits in the form of foreign direct investments and aid.

### **Conclusion**

Reforms in the public sector often result from changing circumstances and dynamics of the global environment. Thus, such reforms are recorded both within and outside home countries. Governments are therefore, often drawn into revisiting various policies home and abroad. Foreign policies are revisited to improve the nation's image in the global community. At independence, Nigeria had as its foreign policy, a focus on Africa. This conferred on her, the position of a Godfather which was often at a cost too expensive to be borne by both the nation and her citizens. The Obasanjo administration led the way to the reforms which the subsequent administration of Shehu Musa Yar'Adua developed to the citizen –centered diplomatic approach to foreign policy formulation and implementation to the admiration of its citizens. This later reform saw an improvement of Nigeria's image and wellbeing of its citizens.

### **Suggestions**

The following suggestions emanate from the study.

- 1) Policy reforms should be a continuous exercise especially as it relates to a nation's foreign policy.
- 2) The citizen-centered diplomacy in Nigeria should be sustained since it leads to improved national image.
- 3) The wellbeing of citizens should be paramount in the course of any foreign policy reform.
- 4) Oversea tours by top government functionaries should be encouraged rather than criticized.

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