

**AN APPRAISAL OF THE ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FACING NIGERIA'S  
AFRICAN DIPLOMACY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

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**B. A. History (UNILORIN)**

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OF MASTER OF SCIENCE (M. Sc.) DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**2016**

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I certify that this research study was carried out by RAHEEM, Ola Rasaq (ADP12/13/H/1826) in the Department of International Relations, Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, under my supervision.

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Prof. E. F. Adesola  
Supervisor

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Date

## DEDICATION

To *Almighty Allah* who provides the strength and resources; *Family* members who missed me when most needed; *Friends* who showed concern, love and encouragement *en voyage*; and *Fans* who openly or secretly admired my thirst for seeking knowledge.

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I accept sole responsibility should my interpretation, representation or judgment of their ideas is inaccurate where mentioned in this research.

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## ABSTRACT

The study interrogated the contents of Nigeria's African diplomacy from 2000-2015; examined the nature, dynamics and impact of Nigeria's African diplomacy; identified the issues and challenges debasing Nigeria's African diplomacy and investigate the mechanisms employed for implementing Nigeria's African diplomacy in the face of contemporary global challenges. These were with a view to providing information on Nigeria's diplomatic challenges in global affairs.

The study obtained data from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were sourced through the conduct of in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDS). For the in-depth interviews, eight respondents were selected from different target group and ten respondents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were selected for the Focus Group Discussions using purposive sampling technique for both to make a total of eighteen. Secondary data were sourced from textbooks, academic journals, newspaper publications and the internet resource materials. Data collected was analyzed using content analysis.

The findings identified Afro-centric posture as the contents and defining characters of Nigeria's foreign policy between 2000 and 2015. It was however discovered that many Nigerians clamour for a paradigm shift in which the global order of economic multilateralism should be a framework for Nigeria's foreign policy. The study also revealed that Nigeria's African-diplomacy was not in itself "system-driven" but "personality-driven." This was because political leaders, particularly the body language of a president dictated the pace and direction of the foreign policy. Therefore, because it was not system-driven, Nigeria's foreign policy did not react naturally in line with the principle of reciprocity whenever changes occurred in the

international system. The findings also showed that the Afro-centric phraseology of Nigeria's foreign policy has continued to reproduce itself in many different ways amongst the various administrations within the fifty-five years of the nation's existence. Successive governments seem to be carried away by the philosophical allure of afro-centrism rather than what would benefit the larger population. Consequently, the considerations for any economic benefits, continental hegemonic pursuit, national interest, military partnerships and strategic engagements for Nigeria were often sacrificed on the altar of good neighborliness. Finally, the findings also revealed that at the specific level of foreign policy formulation and implementation, government adopted a top-bottom approach in which the citizens at micro and macro levels have no input. Closely related to this, the neglect of the multi-disciplinary intelligentsia in foreign policy making in Nigeria has been one of the "Achilles" heels. This to all intents and purpose has been dysfunctional and unproductive.

The study concluded that while Nigeria has shown commitment towards playing the 'big brother role in Africa through Afro-centric foreign policy, deploying huge human and material resources, its benevolence has not been requited in same measure by other African nations.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

Nigeria's African diplomacy refers to an initiative in which the nucleus of Nigeria's diplomatic agenda is making Africa the centerpiece of its foreign policy options. It is a foreign policy framework that focuses on Africa and became the prime consideration in Nigeria's external relations with the rest of the world.

At independence in 1960, Nigeria was at the fore-front of decolonization. Having gained independence from the British colonial rule, Nigeria's foreign policy was naturally geared towards emancipation of fellow African countries which were still under the shackles of colonialism to gain independence as well. Thus, given its size, population and vast natural resource endowment, Nigeria was destined to play crucial roles for progress and development in the world as a natural leader on the African continent.

The origin of Nigeria's African diplomacy is traceable to a candid foreign policy enunciation contained in the membership acceptance speech rendered by Nigeria's Prime Minister, Alhaji (Sir) Abubakar Tafawa Balewa to the United Nations in New York on October 7, 1960 thus:

So far, I have concentrated on the problems of Africa. Please, do not think we are not interested in the problems of the rest of the world. We are intensely interested in them and hope to be allowed to assist in finding solutions to them through this organisation. But being human, we are naturally concerned with what affects our immediate neighbourhood.

Thus, from then onwards, Nigeria provided visible leadership role on the continent as Afrocentricism became the official state policy trending in the foreign policy discourse irrespective of regime change. The objective of Nigeria's African diplomacy sought to facilitate robust trade relations between and among African countries, enhance easy cross border movements, fast-track conflict prevention/ conflict resolution, and engender political stability, prosperity and social well-being of its neighbours and unity across Africa. Therefore, Nigeria's posture of making Africa the epicenter in its external affairs has over the years been calibrated in the structure of its foreign policy strategy, policy formulation and implementation. Under the framework of an Africa-centered foreign policy, Nigeria got involved deeply in the decolonization struggles in Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, and anti-apartheid struggles in South Africa.

This study interrogates the myriad of politico-economic issues affecting Nigeria's African diplomacy. Chief amongst these are three thematic issues of intense international dimension in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century which are worthy of mention here, namely:

- (i) Peace and Security;
- (ii) Democracy and development; and
- (iii) Economic integration, empowerment and collaboration.

Nigeria as a well-resourced nation and as a leading light in African affairs was expected by the international community to key into these thematic issues which have attracted global attention. This is because a major metric of Nigeria's distinction on the continent is the Afro-centric leaning of its foreign policy. Since its over fifty years of independence, Nigeria has played leading, unique and distinguished roles in and outside the Africa. But, by the dawn of the twenty-first century, there emerged some major challenges to the hitherto smooth actualization

of the Nigeria's African diplomacy option giving the country a very poor visibility and image crisis among the comity of nations. These challenges are basically discernible in six different focal dimensions. These include but not limited to first, the declining economic fortunes arising from prevalent economic recession. This led to domestic outcry due to hunger, diseases and general poor living conditions culminating into social crimes and worsening life-styles. These negative domestic vices have a direct corollary on Nigeria's capacity to influence external relations.

Second is the variation in the handling of the afro-centric postures by successive Nigerian leaders. Each regime approached Afro-centrism with its own idiosyncrasies, whims and caprices. The personality of the heads of government became the mirror through which the international community see and relate with the country.

Third is the perennial mismanagement of resources caused by inept leadership, weak political structures, ineffective institutions, bad governance and lack of forward planning, corruption in high and low places, all of which combined to undermine the influence and respectability accruable to Nigeria foreign policy undertakings.

Fourth is the integrative impact of globalization which Nigeria has difficulty to catch up with due to poor indigenous technological architecture and lack of social infrastructures;

Fifth is the suspicion by Nigeria's sub-regional neighbours which have manifested in belligerent acrimonies, half-hearted or even total lack of cooperation, and delay in decision making on matters requiring timeous attention. The outcome is the fact that these equally impede regional growth and development particularly across West African sub-region and Africa in general.

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