

## Nigeria's Foreign Policy and Image Crisis

Kunle Ajayi

Department of Political Science, University of Ado-Ekiti,  
PMB 5363, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** A nation's ability to interact with other nations is a reflection of its acceptance internationally and evaluation of its level of civility in terms of behavioral conformity with international legal principles. President Olusegun Obasanjo, has since the inauguration of his administration in May, 1999 been trying hard to resuscitate the nation's battered image abroad. The president's shuttle diplomacy across the globe is yet to achieve a convincing impact on the civilized international community in terms of image-building and respect for the nation and Nigerians abroad. Nigerians are treated with indignity, contempt, impunity and suspect beyond the nation's shores. The problematic challenge of the nation's foreign policy is how to overcome its image crisis and deficiency in integrity and discipline and thereby securing the desired respect for its citizens internationally.

**Key words:** Ethno-religious conflicts, image-building, international insecurity, national interest, shuttle diplomacy

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### INTRODUCTION

Positive image-building and good image-sustenance are among other determinants that dictate the level of influence and relevance of a nation in international politics. Favorable image ensures a level of credibility and respect for a nation in the comity of nations. Contrarily, bad image and suffering of integrity and credibility crisis deny a nation the required respect by other states and portrays the concerned nation as a pariah state, which does not deserve to be respected and honored by other civilized states.

A state with image crisis is difficult to market or advertise in the diplomatic market. Laundering the battered image of such a nation in the international arena is as difficult as trying to engage in image-making for an international terrorist gang such as the Al Qaeda. Nigeria's image crisis has historical foundation and dynamics.

The concern of the study is four-fold. One, to historicize in terms of examining the trends and dynamics of Nigeria's image crisis. Two, is to investigate the effects and implications of the nation's dirty image abroad on the state and its citizens alike in the global system and for its quest for increased foreign investment inflow and aspirational interest in the United Nations Security Council permanent seat. Three, is to evaluate both the dividends and failure of President Olusegun Obasanjo's incessant shuttle diplomacy. Four and lastly, is to strategize a road map for smoothening the contours in the nation's behavioural profile and thereby earn a dignified recognition in its international political and economical

relations. In dealing with these concerns, the study is divided into six sections. The first is the introduction while the second investigates the nation's image-building efforts at take-off as a sovereign state. The third analyses the decline in the nation's international stature and relevance and also examines the emergence of its present image crisis. The fourth investigates President Obasanjo's image-building interventions since the emerging democracy inaugurated in May, 1999 while the fifth section interrogates what can be done to abate the nation's negative image externally. Finally, the sixth part is the concluding remarks.

**Nigeria's foreign policy and image-building:** Foreign policy is an inter-play between a nation and the rest of the world. It borders on interactions and transactions among states and involving high diplomacy with the sole purpose of achieving certain national objectives. It is within this purview of interpretation that Adeniran<sup>(1)</sup> advanced that foreign policy should be perceived from the connection of the motives and benefits that underpin states relations. He further opines that goals and means are basic ingredients of foreign policy. Morgenthau (1973) ties the goals of a nation's foreign policy to what he calls national interest. He believes that the objectives of a foreign policy must be interpreted in terms of the national interest (ibid: 9). He, therefore, submits that no nation can have a true guide as to what it must do and what it needs to do in foreign policy without accepting national interest as a guide (ibid).

Foreign policy can also be evaluated as the attitudinal behavior of a state towards the global

community. How does it perceive and relate to the world? What is the nature of its relationship with other state and non-state actors and conversely, how do the rest of the world perceive and relate with, it? Global perception of another state depends on its behavioral profile either as a conformist or non-conformist. Its image and subsequently, its accommodation to the comity of nations, will be enhanced by a reasonable level of conformity with the international grundnum. This implies that beyond the expected material gains arising from a state's international relations, the psychological benefits in terms of utilizing foreign policy to achieve respect and good image for itself are the other dividends. In addition to achieving good image profile, a conformist nation is tolerated and accepted by other states, while a pariah (non-conformist) is collectively rebuffed and isolated by the civilized world.

Nigeria's image crisis is ahistorical as it is a recent phenomenon. Nigeria, at independence, made it very clear in its foreign policy objectives, the expected role it envisaged for itself in international politics. Expressly, the nation's foreign policy states out its broad objectives as:

- Promotion and protection of the national interest
- Promotion of the total liberation of Africa and support of African unity.
- Promotion of international cooperation for mutual respect among all nations and elimination of racial discrimination in all its manifestations
- Respect for international law and treaty obligations as well as the seeking of settlement of international disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication.
- Promotion of a just world economic order<sup>[2]</sup>

A critical observation of these objectives show that of the five foreign policy objectives advanced by the country, only the first objective was basically internally directed. The rest were externally directed in terms of targets and beneficiaries. The second and third objectives focused on the African continent where the forces of colonialism and apartheid were still very strong at the time.

Nigeria, under the Balewa regime, was obsessed with the eradication of colonialism and racism from the African continent. This attitude can be perceived from the regime's declared support for freedom fighters with both military and financial assistance<sup>[3]</sup>. Besides, it prohibited any forms of relations, either political or economic, with apartheid South Africa (ibid) And in addition, the nation sought and secured the expulsion of apartheid South Africa from the Commonwealth of Nations in 1961

(Ogunbanjo<sup>[4]</sup>. Balewa's pioneering efforts at foreign policy-making and implementation laid the foundation of Nigeria's roles and influence in international politics and advertently, in casting a niche and credible image for the country in the comity of nations.

The Gowon regime consolidated the nation's anti-colonial, anti-racial policies. The regime strongly condemned apartheid as a crime against humanity and therefore, made available to the anti-colonial freedom fighters and anti-racial movements in Southern Africa, aid in varied forms. The regime equally objected to any form of appeasement and accommodation with the racist South Africa<sup>[5]</sup>. Nigeria, as the chairman of OAU under Gowon's regime, led the organization's Middle East peace efforts and midwived the birth of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975.

The nation's commitment and support for the anti-colonial, anti-racial policies in Africa became louder and more forceful under the Murtala/Obasanjo regime. The regime assumed a much more radical and uncompromising posturing in the country's approach to eradicating colonialism and racism from Africa. The regime was more alerted to the issues of injustice, particularly in Africa. Consequently, the regime heavily funded the freedom fighters, for instance, in 1975; it gave the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), a grant of \$13.5 million<sup>[6]</sup>.

It also accorded the freedom and anti-racial movements diplomatic status by allowing them to set up diplomatic missions in Nigeria, which afforded them to mobilize externally against the colonial and racist administrations in Southern Africa. For its radical commitment to anti-racist movements in apartheid South Africa, Nigeria was contrived to become one of the frontline states in Southern African.

The rejection and opposition to the colonial and racial injustices in Africa were sustained by the respective regimes until both Southern (Zimbabwe) and Northern Rhodesia (Namibia) attained independence in 1980, respectively and South Africa became non-racial in 1994.

Besides the struggle against colonialism and racism, Nigeria was able to make itself a force to be reckoned with in the formation of the Organisation of African (OAU) (1963) and ECOWAS (1975). Nigeria, in collaboration with Togo, spear-headed the formation of ECOWAS. Nigeria, under the Gowon regime, donated a Secretariat to ECOWAS and regularly paid its annual contributions of 32.5% of the Community's budget. The country remained unrelenting in its support for ECOWAS under the succeeding governments. For instance, the Babangida regime in 1991 paid the sum of N80 million outstanding rents for ECOWAS technocrats<sup>[7]</sup>. Nigeria's annual

contribution to the organization was also reviewed upward from 32.5% to 40% by the regime (ibid).

Nigeria's role in the maintenance of global peace and security, in addition to its earlier enumerated roles in international politics, indeed, enhanced its image and influence in global politics. The nation, more than any other developing world, has contributed significantly to international peace-keeping and trouble-shooting in the conflict zones across the globe. Nigeria has contributed more than 200,000 troops to the United Nations (UN) peace-keeping force<sup>[8]</sup>, thereby depicting the nation as a traditional and leading peace-keeping nation in the world. Beyond the UN arrangements, Nigeria single-handedly spear-headed the formation and funding of the sub-regional peace-keeping force, the ECOWAS Peace-Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the first sub-regional arrangement in the history of trouble-shooting all over the world, to arrest the carnage which accompanied the Liberian civil war and later, to manage the civil conflicts in Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea Bissau in the West African sub-region. The Liberian operations alone cost the nation more than \$8 billion<sup>[9]</sup>.

With all these involvements in international politics, Nigeria became a regional power and centre of influence, particularly in Africa. This combined with a viable economy until the mid-1980s, Nigeria was a toast of many states seeking either its influence or support on global issues or financial assistance. Concomitantly, Nigerians were respected abroad, while the tendency to emigrate abroad was not popular. Fraudulent tendencies on the part of Nigerians abroad were at the lowest ebb.

#### **Decline in international stature and emergence of image crisis:**

The post-Shagari administration's military regimes played deciding roles in the image-destruction of the Nigerian state in foreign affairs. First, was the Buhari/Idiagbon regime (1983-1985), which facilitated the nation's crisis through its draconian anti-human rights decrees and policies. The regime gagged the mass media through its Decree No.4 of 1984, which prohibited any publications on public officials, including corrupt and fraudulent behaviors. This marked a declining departure in Nigeria's image in international relations. This was consolidated by the regime's policy of indiscriminate detention and imprisonment of journalists, human rights activists, ordinary Nigerians and politicians who served in the previous regime, which peaked with the failed bid to kidnap Umaru Dikko, a prominent minister in Shagari regime's cabinet, from Britain. A situation that could be considered as a serious diplomatic embarrassment for Britain and indeed, a homeland security breach by a non-democratic, third world regime. From this event, Nigeria

increasingly started wearing the toga of a pariah state and a potential state terrorist.

The over-throw of the regime in a counter-coup in August, 1985, did not provide the needed image laundering for the nation. The nation's emerging image crisis became deepened under the Babangida military rule which succeeded the regime. The Babangida regime advanced corruption and bribery to a level of state policy and thereby compounding the moral image of the nation as a very corrupt country. Prospective foreign investors increasingly found it difficult to do business in Nigeria as much was spent on fringe, not appropriated items such as kickbacks and bribes to bureaucrats.

The lack of credibility of the regime's transition program and the eventual annulment of the 1993 presidential election presumably won by M.K.O Abiola, a renowned international businessman, increased the tempo of the decline in the nation's credibility and image abroad. The whole transition program, which had gulped about N40 billion<sup>[10]</sup> became aborted as a result of the annulment.

General Sani Abacha, who succeeded the General Babangida-installed Interim Head of State, Chief Ernest Shonekan, became the most enfant terrible for his very poor human rights records, which climaxed with the judicial murder of the nine Ogoni minority environmental activists, including Ken Saro Wiwa, in 1995 and the indefinite detention without trial of M.K.O. Abiola for declaring himself winner of the 1993 presidential election. World leaders, individuals and the Commonwealth of Nations had mounted an international campaign for clemency for the Ogoni activists (Omotoso, op. cit: 151) but without reprieve by Abacha. The execution of the activists exhibited the lack of respect and insensitivity for the international community. The outcome of this behavioral attitude towards the international system was the unprecedented global outrage on Nigeria and the subsequent isolation of the country in the international system notably by the Commonwealth, European Union (EU) and the United States. They, in addition, recalled their ambassadors and High Commissioners from Nigeria<sup>[7]</sup>. The junta's regime of human rights abuses include the conviction of some retired and serving soldiers for fathom coups against the administration in 1995 including a former Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo, who was an unrepentant critic of the regime for its human rights violations. Indeed, it was under the Abacha regime that the nation's image reached zero level and the character of the state as a pariah became much more pronounced. The nation and Nigerians lost respect and prestige internationally.

**Obasanjo administration's image-building interventions:**

President Olusegun Obasanjo, at inauguration in May, 1999, inherited a nation with a battered image and without credibility externally. In his determination to regain Nigeria's lost glory and re-integrate it to the civilized world, he engaged in a deft shuttle diplomacy across the major capitals of the globe. The president, during his extensive foreign trips, have addressed the UN, ECOWAS, the Group of 8 (G-8), Group 77 (G-77), the Commonwealth, African Union (AU) and EU.

The nation has achieved significant gains through the regime's shuttle diplomacy. Apart from the psychological relief following its re-integration and accommodations into the world affairs, Nigeria had assumed the leadership of several international organizations notably the ECOWAS, AU and G-77. It had hosted very important international summits including those of the Commonwealth Heads of State and Government and the AU in 2004, the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) in 2005 and severally, the ECOWAS since 1999. The nation had also hosted the All Africa Games in 2004. Obasanjo had been the guest of honour to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in May 2004 (the Editor, 2005a: 3). All these imply that the international system has restored its confidence in Nigeria. The regime's economic diplomacy also has yielded economic dividends for the nation. In addition to increased Development Finance Inflow (DFI) and foreign investments<sup>[11]</sup>, the Paris Club had cancelled \$18 billion (60%) of the nation's over \$30 billion external debt<sup>[12]</sup>. A gesture, which signifies the Club's confidence in the nation's economy and credibility as an external debtor. Generally, Nigeria's increasing profile in its foreign relations implies that the nation has regained its role as a leading player in multilateral politics and diplomacy.

**Foreign policy failure:** Nigeria's resumption at the centre stage of relevance in global relations through President Obasanjo's shuttle diplomacy since 1999 and the accompanied material and diplomatic gains, ordinarily look laudable. The truth of the matter, however, is that, as a state entity, it might look as if it has overcome the contradictions in its external image. This is far from been valid.

The nation, as a state entity and Nigerians, is still neck deep in image and moral crisis. The nation and its leadership may enjoy accommodation and tolerance by the international community but the ordinary citizens are often made to suffer personality deprecation, inhumane treatments and abuse of fundamental human rights at embassies and off-shore. Nigerian visa applicants are

treated by most embassies as animals and refugees who do not deserve any respect<sup>[13]</sup>. The embassies often imposed very strict requirements on the applicants probably to check influx of Nigerians at the embassies. The British High Commission had imposed visa ban on Nigerians within the 18-30 years age set<sup>[14]</sup>. Government should be blamed for the thousands of Nigerians fleeing the country as it has failed to provide jobs and suitable living conditions for its citizens. As much as 36 million youths were declared as jobless in the economy<sup>[15]</sup>. This statistics is constantly appreciating rather than depreciating. Professionals and specialists in critical trades such as medicine, engineering, technology and education are fleeing the country. This is because they are not induced by government by way of giving them jobs so as to make home attractive to them. For instance, as at 1993, the Nigerian trained medical doctors brain-drained to the United States alone were more than 20,000 (Jimoh<sup>[16]</sup>). The figure is geometrically progressing.

Beyond the shores of Nigeria, carriers of the green passport are treated with disdain at airports. The green passport is taken as synonymous to evil and crime. Nigerians are, therefore, at sight presumed to be criminals, fraudsters and drug peddlers. Ironically, there are worst foreign nationals than Nigerians. These include, for instance, the Lebanese, Arab militants and the nuclear-parts peddlers from the former Soviet Union. Yet, it is scarce to observe indecent treatments being meted to these nationals at airports.

The pitiable aspect of the Nigerian case is that fellow African states partake in inflicting insults on Nigerian travellers. Particularly culpable of this, is South Africa. However, what is the South African problem with Nigeria? The incessant ill-treatment of Nigerians by the South African authorities and the dislike for them by the nationals are pathetic and unfortunate. Ordinarily, this should not be so considering the giant role Nigeria played in liberating the country from apartheid. Needless to say that Nigeria expended much of its wealth and time on waging diplomatic war on the racial system. Since the overthrow of racism, South Africans seem to feel that the best way to appreciate and compensate Nigerian efforts is to be hostile to Nigerians. The most recent occurrence was the unwarranted derogatory treatment meted to and detention of, Professor Wole Soyinka, a Nobel Laureate, by the country's Immigration officials. Soyinka was officially invited to the country and possessed valid traveling papers and visa<sup>[16]</sup>. Nigerian leaders, scholars and musicians who fought relentlessly against racism have not been accorded any place of pride or relevance in the South African history or literature unlike other anti-racist agitators from other countries, whose pictures adore

the International Conference Center in Durban and the Johannesburg Airport. Can the problem with South Africa be the rivalry for regional leadership between it and Nigeria? Or, is it because of Nigeria's claim to leadership in Africa?

Nigeria's image crisis at the level of individual Nigerians, rather than the state, is yet to be resolved despite the president's shuttle diplomacy. Other issue areas which engender and sustain such image problem externally include internal insecurity, poor infrastructural base, perpetration of financial crimes and lack of organization and discipline. All these may be perceived as internal problems.

It will be erroneous, however, to believe that foreign policy is independent of the internal environment. What is valid is the fact that foreign policy is an extension of domestic policy. Actually, foreign policy takes off where domestic policy stops. By implication, the two do not exist in isolation of each other. Therefore, domestic stability and comforts of the citizenry are hallmarks of a viable foreign policy and yardsticks for gauging the image of a nation externally.

Internal insecurity and infrastructural decay are motivating factors for the mass movement of nationals abroad. The nation is not safe for nationals, talk less for foreigners. Danger to lives and property occasioned by unabated armed robbery, violent ethno-religious conflicts and the spread of violent youth culture across the country and particularly, at the Niger Delta zone, coupled with the proliferation of small arms, remain serious challenges to government. The Niger Delta zone alone, according to the Amnesty International<sup>[17]</sup>, has over 70,000 sophisticated weapons circulating in the region among militia groups. This development depicts a situation of a nation-in-arms against itself. The situation continues unresolved because the nation's internal security system has collapsed with the police collaborating with armed robbery gangs to terrorize the nation. Police lend armed robbers their weapons and uniforms and avail them strategic information on police operations<sup>[18]</sup>.

Poor infrastructural environment is a serious problem to comfortable life and industrial performance. The nation has no efficient electricity and water supplies. The roads and rail system are bad. The energy sector, despite being a major oil producer, is unstable and erratic. The organized labour sector, including the civil service and banking, is inefficient due to incessant industrial strikes and corruption. Insecurity at the nation's entry points is more worrisome to foreigners. The airports and seaports are not safe from bandits. Facilities at the airports are very deficient. The runways and navigational facilities at the Lagos and Port Harcourt international airports are not

suitable for safe landing as stray cattle and flooding constantly make landing a risk by aircrafts<sup>[19]</sup>, a development which is seriously affecting the image of the country's aviation sector. A major implication of domestic insecurity and poor infrastructural base is that tourists and foreign investors detest such environments, as both of them place much premium on the efficiency of services and security of their lives, assets and investments. For instance, the Chevron Corporation and Elf Petroleum Company oil multinationals are considering a review of their operations in the Niger Delta region as they are losing about 1,030,000 barrels of crude oil weekly due to shut-in arising from incessant violent communal upheavals<sup>[18]</sup>. These outcomes cannot but give the nation a bad image. Consequently, foreigners cannot but take very seriously, the American Intelligence Report on the poor state of security in Nigeria<sup>[19]</sup>, which is meant to alert the world on the dangers ahead in the country.

Financial crimes and other related frauds by Nigerians constitute other areas of bad credentials for Nigeria. Advanced Fees Fraud (AFF) locally called "419", Internet crimes, money laundering, counterfeiting and forging of traveling documents including passports and visas, credit cards and foreign currencies and cheques. Many foreigners have lost huge sums of money through these dubious means<sup>[20]</sup>. Nigerians abroad also perpetrate a lot of atrocities, which do not augur well for the nation's image. Currently, two of the nation's regional governors are facing money laundering charges in Britain<sup>[21]</sup>, while in Madrid, Spain alone, over 300 Nigerians are detained for drugs trafficking and other crimes including financial scams<sup>[22]</sup>. All these discourage tourists and prospective investors from visiting and investing in Nigeria and consequently, stereotyping the nation as bad and of unsound moral character.

Indiscipline and lack of organization are two other banes on Nigeria's efforts at favorable image-building. Nigerians and the state lack discipline in their daily life. Basic rules and regulations are disobeyed with impunity thereby depicting the country as a lawless state. The most notable of the nation's culture of indiscipline and lack of organization, is attitudinal behavior on the roads. Traffic rules are never obeyed, not even by state officials thereby making the roads very unsafe for motorists and pedestrians. Motorists and motor-cyclists have no respect for lives and this subsequently results in avoidable killings on the roads. All these make road transportation unsafe. Indiscipline in other areas such as arriving at work places late and degrading the environment through indiscriminate burning, littering with refuse and pollution with human wastes are common scenes, which are repulsive to foreigners from

organized cultures with the negative consequences on national profile.

**Image- building: what can be done:** It may be valid to advance that President Obasanjo's high level diplomacy across the globe has re-positioned Nigeria diplomatically in international politics. However, much is still required to really carve a niche for Nigerians abroad. What are, therefore, needed to be done? The following image-building interventions are urgently required as ways of resolving the nation's image and integrity challenge:

**Engaging private public relations firms for image laundering:** Beyond the presidential traditional shuttle diplomacy, the nation urgently desires the services of aggressive global image-makers. The major limitation on the president's shuttle diplomacy is that, it is only confined to the level of state-actors, while the minds of the larger populace within the countries visited are not persuaded in favor of the Nigerian state and the citizens. It is not the duty of the leadership of other countries to advertise Nigeria; it is Nigeria's responsibility to market itself through publicity to the world.

The nation's diplomatic establishments and propaganda avenues such as the Voice of Nigeria (VON) radio are incompetent and incapable of image-laundering for the nation due to poor funding and personnel shortages. Diplomatic staffs in the nation's Embassies and High Commissions are owed arrears of unpaid salaries<sup>[23]</sup>. This is a major psychological hindrance on diplomats to defend the nation's image. Apart from strengthening the missions abroad financially, emotionally and in terms of logistics, the nation needs the services of private foreign image-makers, which can professionally re-package Nigeria for the world. And this could include the services of Western mass media such as the Cable Net News (CNN), Voice of America (VOA), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Radio France, Newsweek Magazine, Herald Tribune, Washington Post, London Times, BBC Focus on Africa and other reputable global media. These are advanced propaganda outfits for public relations. Feature articles, special editorials and adverts on Nigeria can be strategically placed on these media for the foreign publics to complement official diplomatic efforts at laundering the Nigerian public image and contracting the international blackmail, which basically portrays all Nigerians as nothing more than drug peddlers and fraudsters.

**Changing the color of the passport:** Ordinarily, color should have nothing to do with image. However, the green color of the Nigerian passport has been

personalized, stigmatized and derogated as denoting bad image and that the holder is perceived as a potential criminal, a drug courier, a fraudster and devilish. Consequently, holders of the passport are subjected to embarrassing treatments at foreign airports. There is, therefore, the need to change the colour of the passport with the sole purpose of arresting the at sight negative minds of foreigners about Nigerians, without giving them the benefits of the doubt.

**Resuscitating the nation's airline:** National airline is a means of forging international public relations. For the mere fact that the nation's airline is seen at major airports of the world would put Nigeria into more reckoning internationally. Again, national airlines promote a spirit of nationalism. Nationals would want to fly their national airlines on which they would be given adequate respect. Besides, other foreign airliners would treat Nigerians better as they would know that they have alternative vessels to fly.

**Visa agreement with other countries:** Another serious lapse in Nigeria's foreign policy and Obasanjo's shuttle diplomacy is the inability to tie the nation's economic diplomacy and international economic relations for economic development to accessibility to easy visa procurement by Nigerian business people and scholars in particular and Nigerians in general. In effect, the nation's foreign policy has failed to make visa agreement with other countries a component of the nation's diplomatic relations so as to lessen the pains of Nigerians in securing visas from foreign embassies. For instance, an attributable factor in South Korea's rising economic development profile is the fact that it has visa Exemption Agreement with sixty-two (62) countries and in addition, it signed Principles of Reciprocity and National Interest with forty(40) other countries<sup>[24]</sup>. The vice-visa exemption agreement and principles temporarily permit visitors with valid passports from the 102 countries to enter Korea without a visa. Contracting agreements of these kinds by Nigeria will definitely provide a big relief for Nigerians seeking to travel abroad and reduce their being degraded at embassies.

**Computerizing the economy:** The nation's means of financial and commercial transactions are archaic and out of tune with contemporary globalization trends. Nigeria is a cash-carrying economy, which easily makes financial transactions vulnerable to fraud and robbery. The nation has no system of credit and visa cards, which would have made cash carrying unnecessary and therefore make commerce and financial transactions possible wherever

one is. Apart from the danger involved, paying cash for services and goods abroad makes foreigners to look at visiting Nigerians with scorn, particularly when it involves collecting back balance on cash payments.

Computerizing the nation's economy and providing such facilities as credit, visa and value cards cannot but invoke some respect for Nigerians and check fraudulent behaviors and at the same time make Nigeria attractive to foreign visitors.

**Revamping the economy and socio-industrial infrastructure:** A push for Nigerians to desire traveling out is the prevailing economic down-turn. The parlous condition of the economy negatively affects the state of social and industrial infrastructural facilities. The nation needs a speedy economic recovery that will empower industries to achieve a high production capacity and thereby enable them to generate large quantities of employment for the restive and jobless youths. Generating employment opportunities would mitigate upsurge in population outflow by the citizens as a way of escaping poverty and subsequently curb brain-drain, arrest the prevailing youth violent culture and social crimes.

**Mass re-orientation mobilization:** Nigerians need a re-orientation in terms of nationalism and national values. National loyalty among Nigerians is very low; therefore, the urge to always want to travel out at all costs. Nigerians right from the grassroots need education and enlightenment on the need to embrace national, rather than foreign, values. To imbibe a sense of discipline, honesty, cleanliness and organized personality, individually and as a nation, the leadership needs to play enviable roles in these regards so as to serve as emulative role models. Albeit to say that the moral bankruptcy of Nigerian leaders is a major constraining factor to good attitudinal behavior by the ordinary Nigerian followers. Exhuming sound moral and disciplined character by the leaders would have a positive correlational effect on the attitude of other Nigerians and might consequently change the negative perception of Nigerians by the world.

## CONCLUSION

Nigeria as a nation may have succeeded in navigating itself back to the centre-stage of world politics. Nonetheless, the truth of the matter is that the leadership positions conceded to Nigeria in AU, NEPAD and the Group 77 countries coupled with the respect accorded to President Obasanjo are mere protocols, which had not impacted on, or translated to global respect for, the state

or its citizens. Even, most times, the president seems not to know what befits the nation as demonstrated in the circumstances surrounding the take off of the AU. The president preferred to be made the chairman of the organization, a position he can only occupy for a one-year term, while president Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, in a proactive and focused manner, lobbied for and got the African parliament, a forum where African parliamentarians will sit annually and by extension, boost the South African economy through their spending and possible investments. This is to say that Obasanjo is using the diplomatic opportunities to launder his own image while the Nigerian state's image crisis abroad, particularly for its citizens, remains an embarrassing challenge for the nascent democracy's foreign policy.

The Nigerian state has, no doubt, since independence; involved itself in pursuing international diplomacy aimed at achieving regional and global objectives, yet a serious attention has not been paid to the tangible and psychological benefits accruable to Nigerians in particular. Nigerians are not made to be net beneficiaries of the nation's foreign policy. In terms of who gains, the nation's foreign policy is externally oriented, while Nigerians are not targets of its objectives, implying lack of domestic focus. This failure constitutes a major weakness of the nation's foreign policy. A re-definition of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives has, therefore, become imperative in the contemporary global politics in order to bridge dissonance between foreign policies and expectations. The goal-values of her foreign policy should be re-constructed to include what Nigerians as individuals intend to gain specifically from the nation's enduring strategic, economic and political diplomacy. In other words, what are the tangible gains for Nigerians? Nigerians' welfare and alleviation of mass poverty should be made the nation's foreign policy priority and by implication, Nigerians should be taken as the centre-piece of the nation's foreign policy.

A major substance of the re-definition agenda should be creating a new identity and image for Nigerians. The nation's foreign policy planners and diplomatic missions abroad have a lot to do in forging a new image for Nigerians abroad. Nigerians lack a positive international identity, designing one for them becomes an urgent task for the nation's diplomats. The diplomatic missions should engage in some aggressive image laundry for the nation and its citizens being exposed to ridicule and embarrassment across the globe. The president, as the nation's chief diplomat, needs to go beyond diplomatic appeals for international recognition, foreign investments and debt relief.

International acceptance and returning the nation to the mainstream of global politics should not be the first

and final goal-value of President Obasanjo's shuttle diplomacy. Having achieved the re-admission of Nigeria to the comity of civilized nations, the next important phase of the goals of the president's shuttle diplomacy should be carving a good image for Nigeria and Nigerians traveling abroad. The president and the nation's diplomats should use all diplomatic opportunities at their disposal to campaign for a new vision and perception by the international environment for Nigerians. It is the belief that achieving an enviable image for its nationals abroad would strengthen and embolden the nation to exercise greater influence and relevance in world affairs and equally promote the realization of its aspirational interest of attaining a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

At the individuals' level, Nigerians need to appreciate themselves and be proud to be Nigerians. Similarly, they should be conscious of their image, moral character and behaviour outside the shores of Nigeria. They should overcome the deficiencies in their moral character by being seen as transparently honest in their business dealings with prospective and existing foreign investors. This they can do by eschewing high moral and ethical values and be morally accountable at all times. The country in general lacks national discipline and Nigerians are widely known as lawless. It therefore becomes imperative for the leadership to chart a sustained regime of high discipline and high moral standards for the country through moral and ethical re-orientation programmes and enforcement of legislations. It is when all these are abundantly manifested in Nigerians that they could earn the respect of the international community.

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