

## **HISTORICAL REVIEW OF MODERN DIPLOMACY AND THE ISSUES OF CAREERISM IN THE EARLY STAGE OF NIGERIAN FOREIGN SERVICE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper titled "historical review of modern diplomacy and traces of careerism in early Nigerian Foreign Service" was an analysis of scholarly discourse on modern diplomacy. It was based upon secondary analysis of data with the sole aim of underscoring transitions in diplomatic practice, which has evolved into careerism among Foreign Service personnel. In the course of the review, various conceptual definitions of diplomacy were outlined. However, the paper revealed that the introduction of permanent diplomatic post and specific department for diplomacy as well as training for diplomats, created the much-adored careerism in the service. Nonetheless, the paper further revealed that two major factors shaped the appointment of heads of Nigerian missions in the early times; which include the prerogative constitutional power of the head of government to appoint; and the various reforms in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that installed administrative hierarchies within the service. The paper on this note concluded that the principles of careerism must not discard the relevance of professionalism from other disciplines, at the same time skills and abilities should not be disregarded due to political consideration in appointment of head of missions.*

**Keywords: modern diplomacy; careerism, Nigerian Foreign Service**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The scarcity of global resources, which is largely expressed in the concept of "comparative advantages" have over the ages propelled nation-states to interact, both bilaterally and multilaterally. Such interactions summated into what became known as "diplomacy". Nigeria like every other nation-state at its birth in 1960, joined in the world of diplomatic circle, and ever since then has hovered with her "diplomats" trying to make sense of her interest among comity of nations. However, over a period of time, the notions of career and non-career diplomats have saturated Nigeria's diplomatic development. This historically is part of the new phenomenon that accompanied global logic for regular diplomatic importance. Ever since the upsurge of training for diplomats and subsequent emergence of foreign service ministry or department, the idea of "career and non-career diplomats" have characterized the appointments and activities of personnel for foreign missions. Nigeria is not an exception.

There is an obvious discrepancy, in the appointment of heads of Nigerian foreign missions. Those not directly employed under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) are sort out as "non-career diplomats," irrespective of their achievements in the public and private sectors. This indeed have encouraged dichotomies in the ratio of appointments, posting and general administrative treatments between designated career and non-career diplomats in Nigeria's diplomatic missions. But in the early stage of Nigerian Foreign Service these discrepancies were silent and inconsequential to the service.

On this note, this paper historically reviewed scholarly suppositions on modern diplomacy. The aim of this discourse is to extricate the idea of careerism among diplomats, and its manifestation in once colonial country like Nigeria.

### **Scholarly Review on the Concept and Practice of Modern Diplomacy**

Several scholars in their various rights have historically traced the emergence of modern diplomacy. However, one major sum up of all the analogies is the over dependence on western scenarios for general description of origin and practice of modern diplomacy. This tends to suggest

that other parts of the world had little or no contribution to diplomatic development. In reality every clime had its own fair understanding of the concept of diplomacy and practically get involved in its with the help of handy worldviews.

Jeremy Black in his work titled "*A History of Diplomacy*" (2010), put forward a historical analogy on diplomacy. From the content of this book it was sets out to change the way in which the history of diplomacy is discussed. Starting from 1450 Jeremy Black gave a good account of the principles of diplomacy. European-based continuum of diplomatic development has largely encompassed the globe ideas of diplomacy during the twentieth century. This is believed not to be holistic opinion for analyzing diplomacy. Thus, according to Black (2010), it is imperative to change this narrowed approach, so that the underplaying of the contributions of 'non-West' climes to the development of diplomacy will be faced out, in all ramifications, including the way diplomacy is thought about and approached by practitioners<sup>1</sup>. On this note, Jeremy Black juxtaposed the fact that the general challenge to developing modern diplomacy, includes not only the need to discuss non-Western notions of diplomacy, but also to consider happenstances with Western and non-Western concepts in principles and practice.

In general, Black (2010), provided dictum on diplomacy which is apparently dissuade absolute stress on synoptical models instead of evolving trends. Jeremy Black therefore noted that;

diplomacy is an aspect of information-gathering, as also of representation and of negotiation, it is by no means the sole means for any of these. Indeed, part of the history of diplomacy is the account of how far these processes have been conducted through, or under the control of, the formal mechanisms of diplomacy. In practice, this has always been the case only to a limited extent<sup>2</sup>.

In other words, the history of diplomacy is about the extent to which global changes have influenced the actors in the general conduct of diplomacy. Thus, to Jeremy, as far as this changing character is concerned, the intention of his book is not to provide the standard account of the development of permanent representations via embassies, but rather to see "diplomacy as a privileged aspect of general systems of information- gathering, of representation, and of negotiation"<sup>3</sup>. As such, the place of sport, business, entertainment and cultural activities in diplomacy were underscored by this book.

Ikedinma H.A. in a handbook titled "*History and Practice of Diplomacy*" (2009) introduces the reader to the Practice and historical development of diplomatic relations. The book x-rays the pattern of changes that have been taking place in the practice of diplomacy over the years. The book contained a comprehensive knowledge of the historical development, achievements and changes in the practice of diplomacy. Thus, the book appraises and analyzes the patterns of the practice of diplomacy by independent nations and other independent non-state actors in international politics.

More so, the book elucidated the contributions of diplomacy in ensuring international peace and security in the present nuclear age and period of weapons of mass destruction. The book also explicated the requirements of becoming a good diplomat and functions of diplomatic missions. The author on this note observed that "some people are born diplomats, while others just acquire the status"<sup>4</sup>as such,

the level of success of the diplomacy of any nation-states depends heavily upon the nature and qualities of diplomats chosen. In other words, most of the breach of diplomatic relations is caused by the attitudes of the diplomatic envoys. For that reason, a diplomat is required to have a balanced mind, amicable disposition, ability to withstand stress, reasonable tact and skill to assess and deal with a number of issues and problems<sup>5</sup>.

Nevertheless, Ikedinma's works concentrated much on the generally development of diplomacy without emphasis on the Nigeria's diplomatic history and practice. However, it was relevant to this

study, because it provided a good insight to the historical posture of diplomacy in the world from early human society to the contemporary time. In addition, the work highlighted the onerous task of diplomats in the era of multilateral diplomacy, thus, suggested necessary skills for present day diplomats, irrespective of careerism or not.

Transformational nature of the international environment has indeed influenced the practice of diplomacy. Brian Hocking, Jan Melissen, Shaun Riordan and Paul Sharp (et al), in the book titled "*Futures for Diplomacy: Integrative Diplomacy in the 21st Century*," (2012) clearly explored the puzzles surrounding, and challenges confronting contemporary diplomacy. This book draws on evidence from decision makers. This included not only professional diplomats but actors various involved in international decision making. The report poses a set of interrelated questions on diplomacy, as the authors noted that;

clearly, fundamental questions regarding the purposes of diplomacy, who is – or should be – involved in it and what forms and practices it should assume to deal with new policy challenges need to be urgently addressed. This applies to international organizations as well as the institutions of national diplomacy and offers a fundamentally different perspective from that based on the familiar claim that diplomacy is irrelevant to contemporary global needs. Rather, diplomacy has a central role but needs to adapt to the demands of a rapidly changing environment<sup>6</sup>.

By the submission of Hocking, Melissen, Riordan and Sharp (2012) the concept of "integrative diplomacy"<sup>7</sup> is the sure way to approach modern diplomacy. According to them, the most significant concern of the integrative framework of diplomacy is to address scope of what amount to diplomacy. The grand challenge to this effect is therefore, what and what could be regarded as 'diplomacy'? This to a large extent constitutes the bulk of the "mystery" surrounding the changing nature and status of diplomacy with regards to world politics. In this existing order the place of traditional diplomats have be subjected to constant interferences by numerous actors of importance in the practice of modern diplomacy.

Meanwhile, Henry Kissinger's work titled, "*Diplomacy*" (1994), gave a good insight on modern diplomacy. In his 877 pages book, Henry Kissinger explicitly conceived diplomacy as more of operational endgame rather than a fancy thrust of statesmanship. This could be seen from an overview of his own analogy of historical trends, to personal experiences he had in the course of diplomatic engagement with world leaders during his years in service. All in all, Kissinger (1994) created a clear picture of how diplomacy and balance of power shaped the contemporary world order. Based on Kissinger's assertions it is obvious that the United States of America used her strength in size, as well as her foreign policy of isolation, principles of idealism, to change the world order, suit their desires against the old order dominated by Europe. Kissinger's book was a long historical journey of three centuries, cutting across the era of Cardinal Richelieu (described as the father of the modern diplomatic order), to the current "New World Order" championed by Americans dictates.

Kissinger (1994) shows how modern diplomacy emerged from the weaknesses and efficacies of the balance of power in warfare and peacemaking. In this light, ingenuities of European diplomatic icons appraised by Kissinger, showcasing how experience and skills can determine the fate of diplomacy as an instrument of peaceful negotiations for the avoidance of total war. As such, Kissinger idolized diplomatic maneuvers of personalities such as Otto Von Bismarck; who engaged in three carefully articulated unification wars without uttering the European balance of power. On the other hand, Kissinger bemoaned the attitude of some of the European diplomatic leaders who failed to manage the international system as Bismarck did before 1890, which snowballed into the 1914 First World War. On this note, Kissinger explicitly juxtaposed the importance of experience and skills of diplomats in the management of international relations.

In order to recast this phenomenon in recent times, Kissinger applauded the diplomatic thrives of President Nixon of United States. According to Kissinger;

no American President possessed a greater knowledge of international affairs. None except Theodore Roosevelt had traveled as much abroad, or attempted with such genuine interest to understand the views of other leaders. Nixon was not a student of history in the same way that Churchill or de Gaulle had been. He generally learned just enough about a country's past to absorb the rudiments of the facts pertaining to its circumstances-and often not even that much. Yet he had an uncanny ability to grasp the political dynamics of any country that had seized his attention. And his understanding of the geopolitical realities was truly remarkable... when it came to foreign policy, his powerful analytical skills and extraordinary geopolitical intuition were always crisply focused on the American interest<sup>8</sup>.

From the foregoing, although Kissinger never used the term career or non-career diplomats to distinguish efficiencies of diplomatic leaders, his presuppositions in the book clearly pervaded on the usefulness of experiences and skills in the conduct of modern diplomacy.

### **Modern Diplomats and Careerism**

From the above review, diplomacy as an age-old practice has passed through series of transitions. By all standard one significant brim of these changeovers is eminent on the status and profile of the practitioners of diplomacy, otherwise known as "diplomats". In a common sense, diplomats are generally referred to as individuals who represent their countries in external affairs. Just like the functions of the eyes, ears, and the mouth on the human body, diplomats are the interjectors and transmitters of a country's goals and objectives, through the global looking glasses. By implication, diplomats are the embodiment of state as an institution in a foreign country.

As such, from time immemorial, the job of diplomacy has been evidently left in the hands of "skilled" men, specifically designated to perform such functions. Monarchies, nobles, clergies, courtiers and the gentries as a whole, have at one era or the other manned the external affairs of their states. As a matter of fact, diplomacy during the Medieval Age was conducted by members of the royal family, or people believed to be with the "blue blood". Ambassadors in those days were mainly enlisted from noble families, "not only because the monarch at home knew them as members of his own court or aristocracy, but also because they were qualified for their diplomatic task by virtue of being courtiers"<sup>9</sup>. The rationale behind the selection of these royalties for special and specific diplomatic missions is often associated with the formal and informal trainings they received in the processes of staying closer to the King's or Queen's court. This training could be seen in the areas of court manners, acts of negotiations, and general royal courtesies.

However, after the collapse of the Roman Empire in 410 A.D, the Byzantine Empire that came after the Romans provided official training for negotiators, thereby establishing the first department of foreign affairs. This trend was further solidified with the introduction of resident embassies. For instance, it is note worthy that English diplomacy in the 15<sup>th</sup> century had revolved around a series of special embassies and ambassadors deployed for clear-cut missions. But in 1505, Henry VII introduced a resident ambassador, John Stile, to Spain, and this later became a diplomatic tradition. Thus, by the end of the 1520s<sup>10</sup>, England's diplomatic network of residents was extended to include Venice, France and other relevant Empires around Europe. With this shift to permanent diplomacy, personal closeness to the monarch or high social status was no longer sufficient to qualify someone for diplomatic service, instead, skills in languages, eloquence, administration and a humanistic education, became essential ingredients for recruitment of diplomatic corps. Against this backdrop, widely traveled individuals, who were knowledgeable in terms of geographies and traditions of nations, were hired for diplomatic jobs<sup>11</sup>.

Meanwhile, by 15<sup>th</sup> century also, the Italian city states organized diplomatic summits that fashioned ways of maximizing their diplomatic gains, and led to the introduction of diplomatic artifice, which

diplomats like Niccolo Machiavelli personified. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Cardinal Richelieu who was then the Chief Minister to King Louis XIII, modified diplomacy in France - all the diplomatic activities became highly professionalized and harmonized into one department, creating room for career diplomats. Thus, by 1716 Francois de Callierres published the first official diplomatic handbook titled "*De la Maniere de Negocier avec les Sourverains*" which laterally means "On the Manner of Negotiating with Sovereigns"<sup>12</sup>. Callierres in the book argued that, if it were "a firm and lasting maxim in France, not to employ any persons in public negotiations, except those that have gone through this kind of apprenticeship and these sorts of studies... the king would be better served in his negotiations"<sup>13</sup>. This declaration apparently was the first scholarly call for professionalism in diplomatic service in the modern time, which as a matter of fact has influenced the perception of diplomats, based on careerism or non-careerism today.

Nonetheless, contemporary events seem to have put a challenge to Callierres's assertions on diplomatic careerism. The major argument for this has been rested on the rapid development of events in the circumstances of globalization, as well as the fact that contemporary international relations include many new important actors and a vast array of new issues, which traditional diplomats cannot handle singly<sup>14</sup>. At the moment, numerous actors are now involved in diplomacy with many multidimensional tasking for traditional diplomats to cope with, which make diplomacy a versatile career.

### **Transitions in Defining Diplomatic Careerism in Post-Colonial Nigeria**

The ingredients for the definition of careerism or non-careerism in diplomacy in most post-colonial countries like Nigeria seem to be fluid; because before her independence, foreign affairs were solely British affairs. Thus, there was no official diplomatic service department or training institute not until 1961 when the Nigerian Society and Nigerian Institute of International Affairs emerged<sup>15</sup>. As such, appointments of heads of Nigerian foreign mission were left totally at the discretion of the head of government, prior to the rise of certain core staff of the Ministry of External Affairs. On this basis, definition of careerism in the Foreign Service of Nigeria in respect to appointment of heads of missions has been transitional. Two major factors that have shaped appointment of heads of Nigerian missions could therefore be discerned from this; first, the discretionary constitutional power of the head of government to appoint; and secondly, the various reforms that have taken place in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that have installed administrative hierarchies and professionalism within the service. It is in this light that the categorization of diplomats for foreign missions of Nigeria has emerged.

Through reforms, members of the Nigerian Foreign Service are categorized into four branches. In the course of the operations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs headquarters and Nigerian foreign missions, each of these branches perform distinguished functions, with very little or no overlap, but with extreme coordination<sup>16</sup>. The branches are;

- a. Branch A: whose members are the core career diplomats who were initially known as External Affairs Officers (EAOs) but are now known as Foreign Service Officers (FSOs). These are Ambassadors and others, holding diplomatic posts.
- b. Branch B: these are the members of the Executive cadre that perform administrative and accounting functions. The most efficient and most senior members of this branch can be absorbed into Branch A. In the 60s and 70s this was swiftly done<sup>17</sup>. However, by the provisions of the 1981 reforms, they are to pass through the Foreign Service Academy to be certified as FSOs<sup>17</sup>.
- c. Branch C: consists of the clerical staff, mainly secretaries and typists;
- d. Branch D: is made up courier grades, chancery guards, laborers and drivers.

Besides functional designations, each of these branches has its own hierarchical structure, in terms of grades. Branch A is made up of nine grades, Branch B has seven grades, Branch C has six grades, while Branch D has three. In theory, any of these branches could be posted to foreign

missions, but in recent times the Branch C and D are hardly posted abroad, considering the fact that their responsibilities can easily be filled in by local staff in the host countries<sup>18</sup>.

In the 60s and 70s the working relationship between these branches was relatively cordial. However, by early 1980s this relationship severed, due to several reasons. First was the payment of allowances for foreign services based on branch, which reduced the amount of money received by the seconded civil servants (working under branch B), compared to what they get at home<sup>19</sup>. Secondly, many of the branch A officers were recorded to have become very arrogant to officers of the other branches, leading to disaffection among the officers. This apparently is responsible to the postulation that "a career structure with entrance requirements and promotions, breeds an institutional culture where organizational strategies and institutional survival in the face of rivalries assumes an importance of their own beyond the activity of diplomacy"<sup>20</sup>. These were among the petitions received by the 1981 Foreign Service Review Panel, which led to a re-categorization of the four branches into two, of Diplomatic and Non-Diplomatic Officers<sup>21</sup>. The relationship among the branches, especially between branch A and B, was further severed by the Ministry's policy (October 9, 1986) on conversion from Secretarial and Executive corps into the External Affairs Officers cadre, which stated that;

To be considered for such conversion, an officer should have attained salary Grade Level 12 in Branch B. In addition, such an officer must have acquired a degree from a recognized University or relevant cognate diploma and passed the prescribed examination of the approved training course for Mid-Career Officers. No Conversion should be possible beyond G.L 12. <sup>22</sup>

The chances of the Branch B officers getting over to Branch A for its "magnificent" and "audacious" recognition in the service was slimmed down by this policy statement. This as a matter of fact, led to feelings of discontent among the Branch B officers and their sympathizers including the press media.

Instructively, during the First Republic, more than half of the heads of missions (ten out of thirteen) were political appointees<sup>23</sup>. Section 148 of the Republican Constitution vested the power to appoint heads of missions on the President acting on the advice of the Prime Minister<sup>24</sup>. The Prime Minister was required to consult the Federal Public Service Commission, but in practice this protocol was barely followed. However, the Prime Minister who had the plenary powers on foreign affairs appointed heads of missions. As a matter of fact, the first sets of heads of missions appointed to Nigerian Foreign Service were largely experienced civil and public servants with vast knowledge of world affairs, co-opted into the foreign affairs department<sup>25</sup>.

It is therefore obvious that one of the consequences of the hierarchical developments in the Nigeria's Foreign Service is the professionalization of the diplomatic mission; which seems to clandestinely ignore or underplays the efforts of some public servants, politicians, academics, activists and private entrepreneurs, who pioneered and nourished the development of Nigeria's diplomacy. This crop of individuals falls within the orbit of what consist non-career diplomats today. It is therefore an irony that, the same occupational classes that midwife and championed Nigeria's diplomacy at birth, are now being censured, based on some sort of diplomatic careerism.

Indisputably, careerism is often conceived as the bedrock of occupational efficiency, which in most cases recognizes interdependence and synergism. However, professionalization of the diplomatic service in Nigeria appears to have created cadres with some sort of class mentality. These emerged cadres in relation to Max Weber's postulation on organizational studies seem to mainly promote professionalism as a means of job security among Foreign Service Officers (FSOs). This is believed to be responsible for the emergence of the acute dichotomies in the foreign services of Nigeria between career and non-career diplomats; a phenomenon many people hardly believe to be in existence, especially when it is peripherally observed. But inwardly, there appears to be both administrative and professional reservations on continuous appointment of non-career diplomats, as heads of Nigerian foreign missions.

## **CONCLUSION**

The clinch on careerism in modern diplomacy was borne out of professionalism. However, the principles of careerism such as professionalism are byproduct of efficiency. Diplomacy in all intent and purpose is a diverse discipline that requires versatility with efficiency as the keyword. Thus, experience from other professions is as good as other trainings in diplomacy. Following historical trace of modern diplomacy, it is instructive that the departmentalization of Foreign Service was geared towards efficiency in external relations. As such, the principles of careerism must not discard the relevance of professionalism from other disciplines.

Therefore, it is informative to conclude that occupational progressions among original Nigeria FSOs, triggered agitations for special recognition, which by and large prompted dichotomies. This as a matter of curiosity leads to this question, was Nigerian diplomacy badly managed by the first crops of co-opted non-career diplomatic heads of mission as portrayed today? If the answer is on the affirmative, it will perhaps amount to an indictment on the core FSOs, as many of their predecessors were largely under the tutorship of these co-opted non-career diplomatic heads of mission, as part of their early training programme, in missions.

Be that as it maybe, the veritable argument raised in this light is that non-career diplomats should be appointed on the basis of their distinctive skills and abilities instead of mere political connection or considerations. By so doing, the required advantages such personalities bring to the Foreign Service would be eminent and properly harnessed for the advancement of foreign relations.

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