

Musings on Gendered Diplomacy in Nigeria's Foreign Policy: The Representation and Role of Women, 1960-2023

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Abstract

Recently, the role of women in international relations not only erupted like a volcano but has continued to trend and attract global attention. Women's participation in Nigeria's diplomacy has increased in recent years, though there are still significant barriers to their full incursion. By explaining the evolving landscape of Nigerian's foreign policy contests, and analysing the current state of women's participation in diplomacy, this article not only intends to evoke more interest in gendered diplomacy, but is poised to unearth the litany of challenges hindering women's inclusion in diplomatic endeavours. Suffice it to state that this study by succinctly deploying the Feminist International Relations Theory (Feminist IR) towards dissecting and understanding the condiments of gendered diplomacy, the need for both role and increased representation by women became bare. By emphasizing on intersectionality of the human vis a vis roles and capabilities, when exposed to governance and leadership performance, this study was able to identify the many obstacles and opportunities hindering and equally prospectively promoting gendered diplomacy within Nigeria's diplomatic arena. Towards ensuring certain degree of thoroughness and objectivity, the research meandered and ripped relevant information from several primary and secondary sources, though overriding evidence still portrayed the paucity of designate awareness. Along this pedestal, the Feminist International Relations Theory (Feminist IR) provided a robust compass towards identifying obstacles and apparent opportunities for promoting gendered diplomacy within Nigeria's diplomatic framework and concludes with guided recommendations aimed at fostering gender equality and empowerment in the country's international relations efforts. The study is convinced that integrating gender perspectives into diplomacy would enrich international relations, create equitable gender domestic opportunities, national growth and transformation, hence fostering an effective, broader and more inclusive diplomatic culture. The idea is not to spur or support gender competition, but to encourage complementary expertise and productivity uninfluenced by gender.

Keywords: Gendered diplomacy, inclusivity, foreign policy, Equality, intersectionality

Introduction

The beauty of the human society lies in its versatile ability to evolve towards providing solvents in response to the litany of life's nagging challenges and problems. Diplomacy resulted when it became obvious that there is always a further need for variegated dialogue, understanding and manoeuvring mostly in affairs concerning sovereignties within the continental system, at least to defer or prevent war. Historical context has shown diplomacy to be male-centric, revealing a tradition of female exclusion and marginalisation, hence accounts have it that only a handful of women participated only as unofficial delegates during the 1815 Congress of Vienna, hence were not officially recognized in their country's status (Ide *et al.*, 2021). Gender diplomacy, an evolving landscape, provides an ambit "specifically focusing on female roles in key diplomatic positions such as ambassadors, foreign ministers and heads of international organizations" (Hashmi S. *et al.*, 2023). Nigeria's chequered history is all made more complex by its cultural diversity, conventionally anti-thecal socio-political brand, hence growth and transformation which may be classified as ominous. From the Nigerian foreign affairs department up to the crafting and implementation of its foreign policy, serious gender disparities persist, cumulatively influencing the nation's diplomatic landscape. Over the years, within the many disparate culture groups on which the enclave Nigeria rests, several norms and stereotypes have helped to perpetuate gender inequalities, more so in political roles, whether as consultant think-tanks or as bureaucratic crafters or innovators, hence deeply ingrained gender norms, societal expectations and cultural traditions have shaped and, at times constrained women's role (Uche Mike, 2018). The need to scratch on Nigeria's gendered diplomacy beckons, considering the weighty gender disparities persistent and evident within the national landscape, by implication, dictating the country's external engagements.

The Nigerian country has operated through varied civilian and military dispensation, though in neither, one may not be wrong to conclude that women and their role has largely been relegated to the background, if the intricacies of gender dynamics are intentionally triggered. That Nigeria has either gotten it wrong in its march towards national cohesion and development *vis a vis* its relations with other sovereignties, contextual evidential history

would always exonerate women sequel to near-absence in the corridors of foreign policy decision making. Undoubtedly a male dominated platform, diplomacy in Nigeria has a wonderful rich history of pioneer women game changers and trail blazers, who regardless of the deluge of challenges inhibiting their gait, played and still play exceptional roles in shaping and piloting Nigeria's Foreign policies and relations. Navigating Nigeria's Foreign policy landscape has continued to pose a hard nut to crack for the operative team that has stared mostly male. However, history cannot fail to reckon the several delicate remarkable feats showcasing effectiveness, traced to exceptional few Nigerian women, who in one way or the other were opportuned to have operated as diplomats. The peculiarity of Nigeria's gender quagmire lies not only in its mere discrimination and exclusion but deeply in the convoluted contours of its ethnicity and celebration of mediocrity over meritocracy and ability.

Attempts at solving certain problems and challenges may never be initiated without first diagnosing and identifying those issues specifically. Granted there was, and still to some extent are existing prejudice against women, most especially in peace making processes, politics and leadership, hence the (2015) goal 5 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) set to be accomplished by the United Nations member states by year 2030 – “Gender Equality” appears to focus on putting an end to all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership; adopting and strengthening sensible laws and policies to advance gender (Kartsson, 2022). Agreed that the sectional histories of what finally presented as the amalgam of the Nigerian background present strong punctuations of accounts of popular women who not only excelled, but steered and led their communities through thick and thin, the need for further awareness, encouragement through national laws and societal edification is not in doubt, at least to cumulatively attract national equitability and gender representation, but cohesive contributions from the best regardless of gender.

Aims and Objectives

Aggregatively, quite aware that Nigeria's growth and development is fundamentally and seriously retarded by its apparent stereotypic blindness as regards the gains in gendered diplomacy, while benchmarking complementary gender involvement and engagement, this study chose to soberly ponder along these goals:

- Discussing and analysing most especially the various notable Nigerian post-colonial women, who in one way or another have taken Nigerian foreign policy and diplomatic engagements positively to another level;
- Examining and identifying the place of gender in diplomacy, with greater emphasis on the many tactile tangles that appear to hinder such within Nigeria's domestic scene;
- Proffering certain suggestions *vis a vis* notable dark spots;
- Advocating gender egalitarianism guided by ability and gender entrepreneurship;
- All in all, attracting more awareness and national opportunities for better and smoother diplomatic engagement for the country.

Conceptual Base

The concepts of foreign policy, diplomacy and gendered diplomacy presents themselves as oil with which to eat and savour the contents and delicacies of national relationships on the continental system. However, these concepts cannot easily function in their capacities devoid of an equitable domestic policy or environment, from which it grows and rests. When national goals are set towards achieving certain interests, security and prosperity, designate strategies are fashioned and phantomed towards subtly negotiating and dexterously achieving these, through international deals and compromises embroidered sometimes in intricate web, hence very much in need of versed minds with vast ideas as is presupposed in a diplomat. While emphasising negotiation, dialogue and the furthering of relationships, much is done to avoid conflictual tendencies, hence a good stock of knowledgeable background information by all concerned and for all involved ensures smooth and skilful information and communication, hence enables international cooperation in so far as complex differing interests are successfully navigated.

Regardless of the fact that the foreign polices of certain countries appear definite and identifiably unambiguous, most especially on stated issues others may appear vague. It may be observed that at any given time, the president or the head of government within a dispensation redirects and accords a pointer to the foreign policy of any sovereignty.

Global changing gender norms has brought in a diversity in diplomacy and the shaping of foreign policy. Trying and enabling girls and women in the many various other fields so to say, in bringing enormous positive results, appear to have encouraged and smoothened the many male-chauvinistic boundaries to at least explore, exploit and enjoy from the alternative, all to the benefit of mankind. Even as women's workforce increased in the workforce of advanced countries, they continued to be underrepresented in diplomacy;

In 1971, only 4% of US foreign service officers were women. It wasn't until the 1990s that the number of women in the foreign service began to increase significantly... In 2021, women held only 25% of the world's parliamentary seats and only 26% of ministerial prestigious. In the United Nations, women hold only 37% of under Secretary General and Assistant Secretary General positions (Dasanayaka, 2023).

Even as the global awareness and encouragement have kept prompting the human society to do more to offset gender imbalance, advancement in the area of gender equity and most importantly operating from the diplomatic level, remain a far cry. When Ruth Bryan Owen was appointed as the first American female ambassador and posted to Denmark in 1993, it was a significant step forward for women's rights (Anderson, 2022), as quoted in (Sumaira Hashmi *et al.*, 2023).

According to recent figures from 2021, women held only 26% of cabinet positions and only 25% of parliamentary seats internationally. A meagre 37% under the Secretary General and Assistant-Secretary General positions at the UN are held by women. These statistics underscore the continuous difficulties (Niklasson and Towns, 2022) apparent, and even more entrenched in developing climes like Nigeria still struggling with a litany of gender-inhibitory social religious/cultural norms.

One may not successfully unearth and expose the place of gendered diplomacy in the Nigerian project without critically analysing women's role and representation in Nigeria's Foreign policy crafting and practice.

The Feminist International Relations Theory (Feminist IR) which challenges the androcentric nature of international politics, by asserting that gender is a fundamental organizing principle in global affairs (Sarina, 2017) appears more suitably handy to be deployed to assist in this study. Women and men experience conflict and war differently; because of their current role and position in the society, they face different consequences from conflict and also contribute differently to peace and nation building (Adebahr *et al.*, 2020). While arguing that understanding diplomacy properly through a feminist lens is not only most times essentially proper, sequel to its ability towards uncovering hidden power structures, exposing gender-based hierarchies, and equally promoting inclusivity in international relations, one may not equally forget that such exquisitely exposes and examines the dynamics of Power and Representation. The beauty of unleashing the Feminist IR Theory in the Nigerian gender studies is made more appropriate, since enabled succinct attention is spent on gender, race, class and ethnicity, which are the very condiments that steer identity intersectionality and representation roles in diplomacy. As passive recipient of their status within a patriarchal inequality structure, Feminist IR advocates for gender mainstreaming and the integration of the local/global contexts into a viable nexus that would continue to spur, encourage and empower women to reach out beyond all that may appear or prove inhibitory, exploring and savouring the boundless limits of international relations with the alluring talent and touch that the versatility of gendered diplomacy portends.

Traditionally, men have occupied commanding heights of diplomacy, hence inundated that faculty with male perspectives. Masculine character, have contributed to a shortage of women diplomats throughout time, despite its association with Self-Power Skill (Anderson, 2022). Along the line of global peace and security are the crucibles of power dynamics and decision making, which accord broadening scope and enabling improved outcome. Gender inclusivity and equality enhances the advantage of diversity and extensive diplomatic solutions. 'Data has it that when women seat at table, the odds of reducing instability and conflict improve significantly and peace agreement last longer' (Breaking Barriers; <https://www.undp.org>). Feminist theories in international relations not only expands the horizon, but ensures that everyone's voices are heard. Gender mainstreaming goes beyond integrating policy processes into collaborating with civil society organisations focused on women's rights, gender-based violence and economic disparities.

Whereas gender inclusion has played a pivotal role in Nigeria's foreign relations, particularly in peace-support operations, there comes the need for gender-equality policies to pivot female peace personnel to wholistically impact on the country's international image through enunciating trust and conflict resolution. Breaking male monopoly and dominance of Nigeria's diplomatic arena creates vent for new ideas, approach and alternative avenue to issues that have either stalled or become redundant.

Brief Overview of Nigeria's Foreign Policy

Regional and global realities have transformed Nigeria through notable shifts and major principles all along the international landscape post 1960. From the early 1960s up till the early 1970s, Nigeria's foreign policy was characterised by a commitment to anti-colonialism, non-alignment, and the promotion of African unity. Making Africa the centrepiece of its foreign policy, Nigeria emphasised solidarity with other African nations, playing vital roles in the decolonization of the rest of the continent. A key player in the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 now African Union (AU), it reflected its dedication to fostering cooperation among African nations (Herskovits, 1978). Within this interregnum, the Nigeria/Biafra war and the penultimate oil boom came

with profound foreign policy crafting and manoeuvres. The war years saw Nigeria's war economy and diplomatic reach forcibly extending beyond the African shores to secure its existentiality and in the after years, to harness fully the potentials of operating as a major oil exporter. Unfortunately, so to say, poorly managed and highly fissured, these boom years cumulatively dawned on the country as a period of doom and missed opportunity. Irked to embark on a rescue mission, Nigeria from the 1980's to 1990s prioritized economic diplomacy. In doing so, it sought foreign investment, diversified trade partnership and engaged in negotiations with international financial institutions. Apparently descending deeper into national economic quagmire, steered by inept leadership and anarchic political class, Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999 marked a shift in its foreign policy priorities. Emphasis was placed on human rights, good governance and democratic principles (Ajodele Ikedinachi, 2015); a movement meant to not only appease the international community, but to formally launch Nigeria out from pariah status. This period saw Nigeria participate actively in peace keeping missions, conflict resolution and promoting stability within the West African region through ECOMOG. It's peace efforts in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire not only attracted global accolades and consternation, but gave a far reach and respect to Nigeria's foreign policy gait.

The years heralding the turn of the millennium (2000) saw Nigeria involved and embroidered in solving domestic cum regional terrorism and insecurity, through its involvement with the multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF). Amidst the nagging metastatic tumour that has been Nigeria's domestic insecurity, the pervasive dwindling global economic challenges post-COVID 19 pandemic, coupled with the largely import - dependent mono-economy of oil, though the country appears to lack the attraction of serious international investors; it remains a crucial player regionally and globally sequel to its large consumer population and resource potentials. Neither here nor there, lacking a blueprint of the way forward, Nigeria has for now found it worthy to cling and explore trending and technological opportunities with big players like China and India.

Women Representation in Nigeria's Foreign Policy/Diplomatic Missions

Largely patriarchal as the case maybe, Nigeria's diplomacy has been dominated by men, relegating women to domestic roles. Denied opportunities, excluded and marginalized through stereotypic traditional societal structures which hinged on archaic figments and value orientation, the annals of the variegated details of what serve as the past of the many culture groups inhabiting the Nigerian environment, are dotted with strong emphasis of feminine personalities who travelled, traversed, engaged and piloted their people through remarkable intergroup relations and conflict resolution.

The year 1960 not only legalized Nigeria as an independent entity, but successfully attempted to usher in certain rudiments of ordered etiquette and political decorum showcasing Western imprint, with figments of broader societal freedom and engagements, regardless of gender. Post-independence, in trickles, traditional gender norms gave way to an interesting landscape of women who took up positions in Nigeria's foreign service as embassy staff. They wasted no time in meandering into multilateral forms and international organisations in the representation of Nigeria. What a way of learning the subtle rope of diplomacy. Many women, documented and undocumented, not only acted in this respect, but today are projected as trail blazers in Nigeria's foreign affairs. Ruda T. Muhammed, an inductee into the Nigerian Women Hall of Fame occupies the enviable position of the first female ambassador. Ambassador Elizabeth Ogbo, by early 1981 was appointed Consul-General to Hamburg, West Germany and onwards to Philippines where she served till the demise of the Second Republic in 1983 (<https://www.etesisonline.com>). Her effort was never in vain, in that it not only became an eye opener to many, how diligently efficient women could operate within the diplomatic arena, but interestingly posed a silent alternative adorned with unique peculiarities that surprisingly remarkably achieved. The turn of the millennium saw Joy Ogwu serve as Nigeria's permanent representative to the United Nations, from 2008 to 2015. Versatile, focused and proactive, she leveraged her diplomatic skills in security management, national transformation and peace support operations. Her tenure at the United Nation serves as a period when a great searchlight was beamed on the national need to promote gender empowerment and awareness, hence such perspectives ignited the interest of many females in Nigeria. This spurred diplomatic technocrats to see the importance of integrating women in the areas of complex geopolitical issues, human rights challenges and the crafting of Nigeria's foreign policy agenda.

Dr. (Mrs.) Uzoma Emenike surfaced as one of a kind on Nigeria's diplomatic scene. After joining the Nigerian foreign service in January 1987, she went through ranks and in 1992 was posted to the Nigerian embassy in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. Redeployed back in 1998, she held several positions within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which enabled her accomplish much in economic diplomacy, cultural exchange and strategic partnerships with special emphasis on African development. Such not only saw her churning out many articles and books, but endeared her to many, especially younger female Nigerians, whose flare for the field proved undying. As Nigeria's ambassador to the United States, Emenike's strides in international relations saw her fostering and strengthening

bilateral relations between Nigeria and the United States in all spheres of interests, including facilitating business linkages, investment flows that benefited both nations' economies (<https://www.nigeriaembassyUSA>).

It must be observed that apart from her proactive bilateral diplomatic achievements, added with her daring involvement and participation in different United Nations multilateral forums advocating Nigeria's positions on varied global issues, she immensely and ingeniously crafted international discourse and policymaking which extended beyond traditional to Innovative digital diplomacy (<https://www.nigeriaunmission.org>), exemplifying her dedication to utilising digital tools towards reaching new audiences, fostering dialogue and promoting an interconnected world (Emenike U., 2020).

Amina Mohammed's remarkable diplomatic prowess exemplified her tenure as Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations. Appointed as a former Minister of Environment, she broke bounds in the foreign service by impacting heavily in the areas of sustainable development, gender equality and multilateralism. Her notable diplomatic achievements is in her instrumental shaping of 2030 agenda for sustainable development, through forging and enabling consensus on the SDG's, hence ensuring a universally acceptable framework to addressing pressing global challenges like poverty, inequality and environmental degradation (<https://www.un.org/sg/en>). She also chaired the Advisory Board of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Global Monitoring Report on Education (GME) (<https://www.un.org>). It may be observed that beyond the realms of Nigeria's foreign services, Amina tapped on the wider field of international relations to reach out and address global challenges such as climate change and humanitarian crisis. Her advocacy initiatives and mitigatory awareness campaigns has helped towards impacting on vulnerable communities.

Though this study is not poised to have all women who have at one time at the other served in Nigeria's foreign service, the idea of mentioning some selected few is aimed at not only informing with evidence-based information, but equally aiding the reconstruction, sensationalization and encouragement of gender enablement and interests. In the light of this, one cannot forget the likes of Professor Monique Oshame Ekpong who served as Ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary, representing Nigeria to the Republic of Angola, and as chairman of the Committee of Ambassadors of member states of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, engaged her with Angola, Cameroon, Congo Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe. Commanding landmark achievements, on 9th December, 2021, she was conferred with the 'Diplomat of the Year Award', by the Africa Illustrious Award Group. One may not forget that Mrs Bianca Ojukwu, served as Nigeria's ambassador to Ghana and Spain, while her sister, Lilian Onoh, at one time served as Nigeria's ambassador to the Republic of Namibia. Mrs. Obiageli Ezekwesili, a co-founder of Transparency International, amongst the several international organisations she operated from, was famed through the "Bring back our Girls (BBOG)" advocacy group, leading to her being amongst Forbes Women, Africa Social Influencer Award in March, 2019. Ambassador Judith Attah served in Italy, with additional responsibility to oversee Greece and Cyprus. Ambassador Nimota Akanbi as the first president of the Diplomatic Council for Africa under the aegis of the Diplomatic Council International, represented Nigeria in the Royal Kingdom of the Netherlands.

However, one may not be wrong to observe that so far, the highest point of Nigeria's presentation and performance in the parlance of Gender Diplomacy manifested in the 21st century, in the person of Dr. Okonjo Iweala. Stepping in as finance minister and Foreign minister subsequently from 2003 to 2006, she led the Nigerian team in reaching negotiations with the Paris Club and other established creditor nations to Nigeria's advantage.

Being the first African, and a woman to lead the World Trade Organization, her humble mien may appear to under-represent her versatile mastery of fiscal management, inclusivity and transparency, hence one of the world's most powerful women. Her gait in global governance saw to the breakthrough in the long-stalled Doha Development Agenda negotiations, hence the Economist observed that her leadership injected fresh momentum into negotiations, facilitating dialogue and consensus-building among diverse stakeholders (The Economist, 2021). Her fundamental style of diplomatic approach has endeared the current WTO in harmonizing better understanding among member states, civil societies and the private sector, bolstering trust. Towards promoting multilateralism and collaborative leadership, Okonjo Iweala's towering diplomatic figure has holistically created palpable strong domestic platform for gender rights, capabilities and prospects.

Reflections

Quite aware of the many trending contestations and controversies driving the 21st century gender issues, this study in opting for a unique position, advocates a little leaning of the platform's isles on one side to encourage and motivate women with passion and penchant for diplomacy, though cautions not to abuse or lower standards. Competing with males may not be encouraging, neither advocating and upholding a level-playing ground that abhors favouritism and mediocrity in favour of merit. Nigeria's strides in the promotion of gender understanding remain manifestingly poignant through visible polices and initiatives, like the 2006 formulated National Gender

Policy. Granted that this comprehensive framework ventured towards addressing gender disparities in the health, education, political and economic participation and empowerment sectors, this National Gender Policy was to “provide strategic policy guidance for mainstreaming gender at all levels as well as address the inequalities that exist in the socioeconomic sphere” (<https://www.wrapa.nigeria.org>). Definitely, Nigeria's deeper commitment and conviction saw it step up with the 2021-2026 revised gender policy. Apparently bolder and more ambitious, this latest agenda portrayed a comfortable vision for the girl child, adolescents and women.

Be that as it may, a signatory to many international agreements including the Convention in the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Nigeria has really gone a long way towards concreting women empowerment and rights, including addressing gender-based violence. Granted and acknowledged that the Nigerian society is predominantly patriarchal, hence many institutional barrier stubbornly present as disturbing hurdles to promoting gender equality and leadership roles. Undoubtedly careers in diplomacy and international relations very much appear to demand the application and deployment of natural endowments and variables, including the ingenuity of tacit persistence and adjustments, as issues demand. Women, provenly known to be imbued with subtle dexterity, and dedicatedly focused towards mission accomplishment appear to have comparatively proved their mettle in the Nigerian story, even with their limited access to education, persistent gender stereotypes and biases, entrenched limited traditional women's roles exaggerated by a litany of fulminating cultural, societal norms and religious justifications.

Women's engagement and operations within international organisations may not be more demanding than in Foreign Service jobs and platforms. Priorities like nuclear family roles and responsibilities, spousal limitations and religio-value inhibitions overtly present themselves as diplomatic career extinguishers. Undoubtedly, the social status elevating women as mothers and spouses is not without its accompanying implications on gender diplomacy. Suffice it to admit that societal values and roles cannot be utterly jettisoned and discarded whimsically, though in digesting and absorbing the needful modernity in evolution, selective caution remains the guide.

Gender issues cannot be properly handled without due reference to human rights, hence the inalienable rights which male and female possess. Quite aware of the legal implications of what such rights bequeath to humans and very much in tune with the dualism of ideal and reality, completely eradicating all taints of gender roles in the diplomatic circles, especially in Nigeria, may appear a mirage. Consolidating and proving Nigeria's evolving progress and prospects on gender diplomacy may not be wholistically achieved by side-lining and mentoring women diplomats all alone, but by instituting a complementary regimen for both genders.

Recommendations

Efforts at promoting gendered diplomacy in Nigeria cannot be the showpiece of an hour, but rather a systematically engineered project propelled by not only vision and mission, but a convincing physiological need, ably bolstered by the unfolding national catharsis.

Capitalising on certain aspects of progress made in the realm, undoubtedly, an area that demand more attention is that of female political representation, hence it was observed that in 2023 index, Nigeria ranked 162 out of 177 countries in terms of women inclusion, justice and security; a decline from the 2021/22 edition, where Nigeria ranked 130 of 170 countries (Orisafemi, 2022). Duly convinced on the need to realistically divert extra attention and effort towards encouraging and aiding women's representation in decision making bodies, proactive affirmative polices should drive and streamline government actions and mainstreaming.

Moreover, much boost could come into the domestic gender diplomacy arena if aggregate concrete efforts are deployed towards confronting and containing the pervasive gender-based evidence bedevilling the country. Putting definite checks on a litany of detrimental norms, would psychologically irk women into attempting to step over lots of their perceived limitations and hindrances. Smooth inter-gender relationships breed equitable gender participation.

Granted that Nigeria presently may not be classed doing badly in encouraging female education and economic entrepreneurship, more effort should be placed in this direction to positively move further. One may not completely rule out the government encouraging and facilitating capacity building programs and network support systems, amongst female diplomats towards mentorship and experience sharing within the foreign service and diplomatic circles. Already, Nigeria is not experiencing the paucity of high-flying female diplomats, who continue to remain as beacons of inspiration, and palpable testimonies enamoured with viable propensities to serve as edifying success routes.

Feminism is never perfect, and the virtue requiring women to follow certain laid down tenets insisting on their keeping their major aspects of their lives conservatively quiet should not be altered, more so in a world where conflicting trending issues relating to sexism, gender rights, gender change and responsibility appear not only on the contentious angle, but outrightly create disarray, irresponsibility and anarchy. Contesting every space with men may not be the best approach, rather an inhibitory uncomplimentary resort which would always unnecessarily sharpen opposing gender edges. The recognition of abilities, professionalism and exceptionalities in Nigerians, regardless of gender, ethnicity and religious inclination would only help to discourage mediocrity, especially in the area of foreign service and international relation; since it may not outrightly be in national interest for Nigeria to deliberately wash her dirty linens in the public.

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