



**APPRAISAL OF NIGERIAN FOREIGN POLICY UNDER PRESIDENT  
MUHAMMADU BUHARI (2015 - 2020)**

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**Abstract**

*Over the years Nigeria external relations and foreign policy has been faced by many problems. In spite of the enormous resources and potentials which the country has been blessed with, Nigeria has not on a sustainable basis been able to formulate effective foreign policy expected from a country with its endowments. This paper examines in specific term major challenges facing Nigeria's external relations under president Muhammadu Buhari. The aim is to identify the problems and prospects ahead for the country. The study adopted qualitative methodology that uses consultation with literature as a means of data gathering. It was revealed that more than external factor, it is the internal variables that are dampening Nigeria's attainment of positive international image. For example, the founding fathers and pioneers of the ministry of external affairs, now foreign affairs, worked faithfully and relentlessly in offering honest advice to the successive Head of State/President, based on their professional training to make Nigeria proud in the committee of nations. Unfortunately, it would appear nowadays that the leadership of the ministry succumbs to the whims and caprices of functionaries in the presidency who pretend to know more than the professionals. The paper therefore submitted that for the country to occupy its rightful position in the comity of other nations there is need for a more assertive foreign policy that promotes the National Interest and reverses negative international perceptions on Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Appraisal, Nigeria, foreign policy, external relations

**1. Introduction**

Today's world is characterized by a high degree of interdependence among the various units of the international system. The level of interaction and complexity of the relationship is accentuated by the information and communication technology revolution. However, it is noteworthy that the international system is as old as organized societies. At various times in history, kingdoms and nations engaged in relation on the basis of trade, territorial expansion, war and colonization. In appreciation of the inevitable relationship that takes place between and among states in the international system, Hassan, (1999:122) stated that:



*In an increasingly interdependent world we live in, no state can conceivably attend to all its needs while pursuing a policy of autarky'. In his words, 'state must as a matter of fact, reach out to other nation-states and the best plank it can use is foreign policy'. National deficiencies such as shortage of manpower, insufficient capital, lack of appropriate technology, according to him stand a chance of being attended to through the instrumentality of foreign policy.*

Nation-States all over the world design and implements foreign policies in order to guide their external relations as well as protect, promote and defend their vital national interests in areas such as defense of territorial integrity, the promotion of economic, military, strategies and diplomatic interests and whatever a country might consider as its vital national interest. Nigeria, like many other African states, started formulating and implementing foreign policy in 1960 when the country gained political independence from Britain. This has become imperative in view of the fact that foreign policy itself is said to be a crucial symbol of independence and through it, a nation can seek for membership of international organizations and reap all the benefits that go with it. The goal of Nigerian foreign policy since independence has remained the same and it has always being to protect her national interest. However, what has changed is the strategy for its actualization by different administrations. For instance, former president Olusegun Obasanjo adopted shuttle diplomacy as his foreign policy strategy, by travelling round the world to restore the lost image and glory of the country. Late president Umaru Musa Yar-dua in his own adopted citizen diplomacy as the thrust of Nigeria's foreign policy under his administration. Citizen diplomacy according to Fayomi, Chidozie and Ajayi (2015) is said to be a political concept showing the involvement of average citizens engaging representatives of another country either unintentionally or by design. They emphasized that the concept sometimes refers to "Track Two Diplomacy", which means unofficial contacts between people of different nations, as differentiated from official relations between governmental representatives. They therefore concluded that citizen diplomacy under President Yar'Adua connotes that Nigeria's foreign policy would henceforth be focused on the Nigerian citizens at home and in the Diaspora.

President Goodluck Jonathan who succeeded and completed late Yar'Adua's tenure continued with the strategy of his predecessor and after his re-election in 2011 adopted investment orientation strategy. Under his administration, Nigeria foreign policy focused on investment and economic cooperation within the global community. He directed presidential advisory council on international relations (PACIR) to coordinate the reforming of Nigeria's foreign policy to be investment oriented. Coupled with his interactive forum with Nigerians abroad during his foreign visits, the president asked the nation's foreign policy experts, seasoned diplomats, professionals and intelligentsia to chart a new way for future without discarding the past. Nigeria's foreign policy under his administration focused on the following: improved cooperation with other military forces all over the world to bring about peace globally; improved bilateral and multilateral trade relationship among nations; cooperation and assistance in curbing health challenges all over the world and promoting the welfare of Nigerian's abroad to ensure they are treated with respect and dignity at all circumstances (Boma Lysa, Terfa, & Tseggyu 2015). However, the result of the study conducted by the authors revealed that, Nigerian foreign policy under Goodluck Jonathan's administration has not significantly boosted the



global image of Nigeria. Premised on this the main thrust of this paper, however, is an examination of Nigerian foreign policy with particular reference to President Muhammadu Buhari (2015 - 2020). The aim is to identify the problems and prospects ahead for the Nigerian state under his leadership. In realizing this objective, the paper is divided into eight sections. Section one introduces and gives the background information. Section two discusses the methodology adopted for the research work while section three reviews the works of previous scholars in the study area. Section four addresses the historical development of Nigeria foreign policy while section five discusses the challenges of Nigeria foreign policy under President Muhammadu Buhari. Summary, conclusion and recommendations is contained in section six of the study while limitations of the study as well as suggestions for future studies are contained in sections seven and eight respectively.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *Conceptual Clarification*

*Foreign Policy* - The concept of foreign policy has received considerable attention in literature. While Scholars have made series of attempts to come up with a generally acceptable definition of the concept, Olajide (1981) remarked that nobody has really formulated a universally acceptable definition of the concept and probably nobody will ever succeed in doing so. In spite of the apparent lack of a generally acceptable definition of foreign policy, an important thing to note is that many of the scholars and analysts keep on discussing the same thing from different perspectives. This is true of the fact that almost all the definitions, conceived of foreign policy as an aspect of a state policy that focuses mainly not on the domestic environment of the state but external. The ultimate goal however is to protect the national interest of the state. Therefore, a review of some of these definitions as given by scholars in the field of international relations has been considered necessary for our own purpose.

In his own contribution, James (2009) described foreign policy as a course of action or set of principles adopted by a nation's government to define its relations with other countries or groups of countries. He further posited that foreign policy of a country, sets forth its positions on a wide range of international issues. This, he said, may reflect broad national objectives or represent a narrow and specific response to a particular situation. According to Marshall in Ojo (1999), "foreign policies of states take form in the course of actions undertaken by authority of state which are intended to affect situations beyond the span of their jurisdictions". In line with this definition, the Encyclopedia Britannica (2010) describes foreign policy as all the complex devices and attitudes that a nation develops, to use in its interactions with other nations. The making of foreign policy according to this source is the responsibility of specific government agencies.

*An international Relations Encyclopedia conceptualizes foreign policy in two complementary ways; as (1) the web of official decisions, actions, and principles taken by a state concerning its positions and interests in world affairs, especially those actions and positions governing relations with other states and international personalities, and (2) any stable goal, and strategy to achieve it followed by a state in the conduct of its diplomacy (The*



*Greenwood Encyclopedia of International Relations; 2002 cited in Oluwashakin & Michael; 2014).*

Foreign policy comprises the totality of a country's perceptions, attitudes and behaviour on issues and towards other States in the international system at any given time. It is also a reflection of the country's past and immediate political, economic, social and cultural circumstances at the domestic level. In other words, what may be defined as the foreign policy of any country at any given time, is the expression of its domestic policies in the international system (Sule; 2012).

In his own view, Crabb (1972) in Basir (2010) observed that "foreign policy consists of two elements: national objectives to be achieved and the means for achieving them". Similarly Adeniran in Ojo (1999) sees foreign policy as consisting of the overall orientation and policy intentions of a particular country which it seeks to achieve in her relations or dealings with other countries and the means for achieving that particular goal or objective. This he said is reflected in the mode of interaction of nation-states within the international system. The focus of these definitions, however, is that the pursuance of goals or objectives by states in the international system and the method or strategy adopted, are the component of foreign policy.

More importantly, foreign policy has often been confused with diplomacy, but the terms are not synonymous. The foreign policy of a country, as noted earlier, comprises the goals it seeks to achieve in its relation with other countries, together with strategies for achieving them. Diplomacy on the other hand is the primary, but not the only, means of carrying out a country's foreign policy. Other means include the use of secrete agents, subversion, and war. Osita, (1999) sees foreign policy as "the pursuit of national interests utilizing all means available to state actors as they engage in relations with one another". Northedge (1968:15) conceptualizes foreign policy as "an interplay between the outside and the inside". A critical look at this definition reveals that it is founded on the idea of linkage theory of international relations that believes in mutual inclusiveness of both domestic and external environments of states while formulating and implementing foreign policy.

Foreign policy has been described as that type of action a state embarks upon in its interactions with other member states in the international environment, in the process of striving to attain its goals and objectives. A set of principles that define the objective a given state pursues in the process of its interactions with other international actors. It is said to connote the strategy or planned course of action, related to external relations developed by decision makers aimed at achieving specific goals. Safeguarding a nation's national interest is said to be the basic aim of its foreign policy (Idahosa and kafilat, 2017). Summarily, foreign policy is basically the instrumentality by which states influence or seek to influence the external world, either through their actions or inactions, and to realize objectives that are in agreement with their perceived national interest. Foreign policy as a major aspect of international relations is an activity which is associated with independent countries and is the totality of actions or inactions on the part of a state in coping with its external environment. Therefore, Nigeria's foreign policy can be defined as the goals which Nigeria intends to realize in her external relations and the strategies for achieving it.



### *Historical Development of Nigerian Foreign Policy*

An in-depth analysis of the historical origin of Nigeria's foreign policy would not be complete without looking at the genesis of the geo-political entity now known as Nigeria. The area that is now Nigeria was home to ethnically based kingdoms and tribal communities before it became a European Colony. As cited in Rotimi and Joseph (2014), Ekeh (1983), posited that:

*prior to the force amalgamation of the disparate groups in 1914, most groups had existed as distinct autonomous political communities or units". However, on January 1, 1914, Lord Lugard amalgamated the protectorate of Northern Nigeria and the Colony and protectorate of Southern Nigeria.*

Following from the above, the geo- political entity called Nigeria came into existence in 1914, however, it did not emerged as a sovereign state but as a colony under British colonial administration. This was sequel to the decision to partition Africa by European nations who held a conference in Berlin in 1885. Consequently, Nigeria was nurtured and controlled by Britain as one of her colonies in Africa until 1960 when she gained political independence. Between 1914 and 1960, Nigeria was administered by different colonial administrators with different constitutions. However, it had become clear by 1954 that the country was already at mood of attaining her independence. As observed by Crowder in Okajare (2003: 167- 168),

*the 1954 constitution marked the end of the nationalist struggle with Britain. It was hardly surprising therefore, that the year after the new constitution came into effect was a quiet one with ministers taking over departments and learning the basic mechanics of the services for which they were now fully responsible.*

It was under this arrangement that Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa became prime minister. In this mood, the prime minister made his first official foreign policy statement on 20<sup>th</sup> of August, 1960 (before independence) in the federal House of Representatives (but Nigeria foreign policy officially commenced on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1960, following the country's independence, under Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa who was the 1<sup>st</sup> prime minister). In the speech described as "a brief but strongly worded policy statement". Balewa tried to state the major elements of the general principles that would guide the conduct of Nigeria's foreign relations. One of such principles was an independent policy which would be founded on Nigeria's interest and consistent with the moral and democratic principles on which our constitution is based (Okajare).

However, six days after the attainment of independence (1960), Sir Abubakar further expounded on the aims and principles of his government foreign policy. The occasion was the meeting of the United Nations General Assembly where Nigeria was admitted as the ninety-ninth member of the U. N. O. The ministry in charge of external relations was known as ministry of Foreign Affairs and Common Wealth Relations. Between Oct 1960 and July 1961, Balewa was personally in charge of the external affairs portfolio, apparently to integrate Nigeria permanently to the orbit of the British Empire. Jaja Wachukwu became the first appointed Minister of External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations in July, 1961, (Okajare).



*Challenges of Nigerian foreign policy under President Buhari*

Since Nigeria became independent in 1960 its foreign policy, like that of most other countries, has witnessed successes and failures. Specifically, in discussing the challenges of foreign policy making and implementation in Nigeria, it is therefore important to bear in mind that the domestic affairs defines and concretizes the sort of challenges that have to be confronted in the making and implementation of a country's foreign policy. It is observed that domestic issues define and shape not only the articulation of foreign policy within the international space, but also how we go about pursuing the objectives of this policy. The domestic space also determines to a large extent the results that could accrue from the implementation of the foreign policy. The following however represent some of the challenges of Nigeria foreign policy under President Muhammadu Buhari.

*The Economy*

A country's foreign rating and influence is basically a reflection of the health and size of its economy. While Nigeria has a large economy but it is characterized by mismanagement, neglect and corrupt practices. This was and to this day, still remains a major challenge to our foreign policy. We could not, on a sustainable basis, provide assistance to sister countries if the economy is in poor shape. Citizens themselves needed to see the practical results of the foreign trips and diplomacy in the material improvement of their lives otherwise they will see no justification for the money spent on these foreign trips. Similarly, Olusanya (1988), emphasized that "a strong economic foundation and a happy and contented people provide a sound basis for effective pursuit of foreign policy" (cited in Bariledum, Tambari and Peter, 2016:39). This point was buttressed by a former minister of foreign affairs, when he posited thus:

*You cannot carry on board people who are all diseased, hungry and illiterate. You cannot mobilize this kind of citizenry for any useful foreign policy. So there has to be a change. There has to be a caring government in Nigeria and that is why we have to be frank about paying our debts (Sule;2012:8).*

More importantly, it is the realization of the domestic economic challenges that informed president Buhari's statement during his address to the European parliament on 3rd February 2016 where he stated as follows:

*Our attempt to restore security, curb corruption and fight crime will result not only in improving social stability in Nigeria but will re-open the doors for full economic relations with Europe and the outside world. Those who wish to invest in our country have vast opportunity and we intend to guarantee the security of people and investments brought to Nigeria (Buhari, 2016).*

The condition of the economy is still worrisome. Although, the regime is in a way strategically placed to attract better dealings from the international community but that is to the extent that the economy is reacting to reform measures. As a monocultural economy, the fate of economic reform is precariously hinged on the oil sector. However, the sector as it is, lies outside the effective control of the regime. With this situation the government may not have the luxury of devoting more money to the exertion of Nigeria foreign policy.



It is however important to note here that the Buhari led administration has made frantic efforts at diversifying the Nigerian economy so as to change the status quo and these have yielded positive outcome. For instance, the president listed his achievement in this regard when he met with the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson in London at the United Kingdom Africa investment summit 2020. As contained in Nwafor, (2020), the president was quoted to have listed his achievements since he assumed office in 2015. He briefed the British prime minister the gains he has made on different fronts in his administration. He mentioned his achievement on the economy that particularly in the area of agriculture. The president said that he is leading the country to self-sufficiency in rice and other grains by saving the country billions in foreign exchange, which are now deployed to other areas of development. The following represent other areas of successes in this direction:

Under the Buhari-led administration, the following was achieved: Nigeria has benefitted from 13.1billion Euros honeybee project; the administration has commenced steps improving the standards of Nigeria's agricultural exports to align with global standards due to the rejection of our produce at the EU Border Controls; at the end of 2016, agricultural goods as share of total trade got N212.73bn and 4.02 per cent and Agricultural goods exports were 2.7 per cent higher in Q4 2016 than Q3 2016; Sesame seeds contributed N6.46billion to Agricultural product exports in the fourth quarter of 2016; in the fourth quarter of 2016, Frozen shrimps and prawns chipped in N4.4billion to Agricultural product exports under PMB's administration; also, flour and meals of soya beans contributed N2.59billion to agricultural product exports; likewise in the fourth quarter of 2016, cashew nuts in shell contributed N0.95billion to Agricultural product exports; as well as crude palm kernel accounted for N0.62 billion of the total Agricultural exports under the President Buhari administration in the fourth quarter of 2016.

The outbreak of Corona Virus (COVID- 19 Pandemic) in the world has however complicated the problem. The pandemic has impacted on the world economy not leaving its negative effect on other spheres of human life. Nigeria as a member of the international community is not left out. It must be noted here that it is hard for one to accurately capture the impact on Nigeria economy, but considering the uncertainties, such as how long the outbreak will last, the effectiveness of current policy measures, and how people and businesses will respond to these measures, there are certain impacts we should understand. Nigeria like most countries will be hit on two fronts. Directly as a result of cases in the country and indirectly due to our closeness with – badly hit China, our number one infrastructure financier and trading partner, plus our reliance on global oil prices. The price of oil hit its lowest level in 17 years, declining from \$59 to \$28 barrel within a month as a result of low demand and a lack of coordination between OPEC and Russia to reduce supply. For Nigeria, where revenue from oil production is 31% of the 2020 budget revenue and oil accounts for 90% of foreign exchange – the effect of the sharp and persistence fall in oil price will lead to cuts in government spending and net exports, two critical components of economic output.

In their own contribution to the world of knowledge, Lateef & Samuel (2020) posited that the United Nations Trade and Development Agency (UNCTAD) put the cost of the outbreak at about US \$2 trillion in 2020. They further emphasized that the Nigerian federal budget for the 2020 fiscal year was prepared with significant revenue expectations but with contestable realizations. According to them, the approved budget had projected revenue collections at #8.24



trillion, an increase of about 20% from 2019 figure. The revenue assumptions were said to be premised on increased global oil demand and stable market with oil price benchmark and oil output respectively at \$57 per barrel and 2.18 million barrels per day. However, the emergence of Covid-19 and its increasing incidence in Nigeria has called for drastic review and changes in the earlier revenue expectations and fiscal projection, thus posing more difficulties to the economy (cseaafrica.org). Emergence of a virile economic environment therefore remains the major challenge facing the Buhari government in the conduct of Nigeria's external relations.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This study adopted qualitative methodology that uses consultation with literature as a means of data gathering. Data were collected from secondary sources through data retrieval techniques from textbooks, journals, and official publications, monographs series, news magazines, the dailies and the internet.

### **4. The Dynamics of a Peculiar Federal System**

The guiding principle of Nigeria's foreign policy, just like other nations of the world is that foreign policy should be used to enhance the condition of the citizens i.e. national interest. Sometime such direct benefits for citizens are found within bilateral or regional-based platforms. Sometimes these bilateral and or regional platforms might have some coloration such as religion as is the case with any relationship with the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) and the Vatican. Given our peculiar federalism, relationships like these are often generally viewed with suspicion of some sort of hidden agenda by the other side and most often result in unnecessary and unhealthy controversy in the country. This sort of suspicion has not allowed the country to benefit from the potential of such relationships. The latest in this regard is the issue of Sukuk, when the federal government issued a seven year #100 billion Sukuk bond towards the tail end of year 2018. The proceeds are expected to be used to finance the construction of roads across the six geo political zones in the country. Nigerians were still trying to study and understand the concept when the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) announced its opposition to it. The religious pressure group said the introduction of the bond was 'a violation of the constitution' and likened it with an attempt to Islamize the country. However, the Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC) accused CAN of playing up sentiments, saying Sukuk is purely for business purposes. The Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) also faulted the claims made by CAN (Chinedu, 2019). It is however informative to note that Sukuk is an Islamic financial certificate, similar to a bond in western finance, that complies with Sharia principles. The bond is actually yielding positive results going by the road construction going on across the country through the use of Sukuk. This peculiarity that is the result of our great diversity needs a policy making framework that will allow for identification and ownership of its initiatives by the different interest groups in the Nigeria project. Developing such a participatory inclusive and accessible policy making framework remains a key challenge in the foreign policy making and implementation in Nigeria. While developing the framework is a big challenge, even more, its implementation could be a major challenge. This is because, such a framework would be consultative and in the context of the fast and dynamic world of diplomacy it will slow down the conduct of foreign policy activities. But it is a challenge that the Buhari led executive needs to rise up to.





*The Regime of Negative Image:*

Some citizens have refused to be persuaded by the existence of a new democratic government on the need to abandon their sharp financial practices perpetrated here at home and abroad. The cumulative effects of advance fee fraud, drug trafficking, money laundering and others is that the Buhari led government has to do more to repair the damage already done to Nigerian image through these vices. This became necessary because a bad external image has negative correlation on development aspirations of any country. The execution of Mrs. Kudirat Adesola Afolabi in Saudi Arabia in 2019 for drug trafficking offences is a point of reference. The Nigerian woman was executed by Saudi authority on Monday, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019, alongside two Pakistani men and one Yemeni man, bringing the total number of people killed by the state in 2019 to 53 ([www.pulse.ng/news](http://www.pulse.ng/news)). Abike Dabiri further disclosed that another Nigerian Waid Somade, was arrested at Jeddah airport with about 1,138g of Cocaine on Thursday April 4 2019. She revealed that eight Nigerians have been killed in the past few years after drug trafficking convictions in Saudi Arabia and no fewer than 20 Nigerians are currently on death row in the ultra-conservative state ([www.pulse.ng/news](http://www.pulse.ng/news)). However, the federal government has expressed displeasure over her execution by summoning the Saudi Arabia Ambassador to Nigeria, Adnan Bostaji, through the ministry of foreign affairs in Abuja. Bostaji said the Saudi government found the Nigeria lady guilty and the execution was in compliance with its laws. The Saudi authority further added that due process was followed before executing Nigerian woman and that everyone knows the penalty for drugs is death. The latest in this regard is the case of a Nigerian - Ramoni Olorunwa Abbas alias Hushpuppy, a fraudster who has been declared as a cyber criminal by the Federal Bureau of investigation FBI in the United States of America. He was arrested in the United Arab Emirate in June 2020, extradited to the US and currently standing trial. Although the regime is not relenting on its anticorruption war and this is buttressed by the statement credited to president Buhari when he briefed the British prime minister on his achievement in the fight against corrupt practices and related offence. On the anticorruption war, the president said though it was slow but painstaking, the cooperation of the National Crime Agency of UK was still needed, particularly in the investigation of fugitives from Nigeria finding accommodation in the United Kingdom. However, while the Government of Nigeria may be happy that the GDP grew by 1.95% in the first quarter of 2018 in real terms; that its amount of foreign reserves increases, during the period, that it is declaring an effective war on corruption, and that the polity is relatively stable, what PMB should first ask is how Nigeria is perceived as at today compared with how she was in 2015.

*Inadequate Funding of the Foreign Service*

Dapo (2017) reveals that Foreign Service is facing very severe financial constraints. It is not being well funded. Both the Ministry and our foreign missions are desperately in need of more funds. The senior diplomatic staff is demoralized and needs to be encouraged regarding their future career prospects. Rather than engaging himself in an unnecessary vibrant diplomatic foray in foreign policy that offers little or no reward, the focus of the Foreign Minister should be more on the much needed funding and restructuring of the Foreign Service. After all, no matter the merit of a foreign policy initiative or idea, it can only be effectively promoted by a dedicated, efficient and committed Foreign Service. Foreign policy is expensive the word over but it is always poorly funded in Nigeria. In this regard, who is to be blame for non-performance



in the absence of adequate funding? This no doubt remains a great challenge to President Buhari.

#### *Lack of Research and Intellectual Input*

Foreign policy making suffers considerably from lack of research and intellectual input in Nigeria. Many foreign policy decisions are taken as a result of lack of knowledge. Nigeria's attitude towards Morocco's quest for membership of the ECOWAS is a reference point. Government adopted a policy in support of Morocco under the considerations of potential economic gains, however, the foreign policy elite in Nigeria was vehemently opposed to it, rejecting the myopic interpretation and view of the national interest by insisting on the need to consider the long term implications for Nigeria's economic growth, development, and survival beyond the ECOWAS region. Powerful individuals simply come into the policy-making processes to direct on what to do and the Foreign Ministry is set aside. No serious country allows that type of situation to happen. In Nigeria, individuals are more powerful than institutions, even more than Nigeria (Bola, 2019). Good foreign policy or decision cannot be articulated when some people are thinking while some others are militating against them. This point to the fact that high level professionalism and wide consultation of foreign policy elites is necessary if the regime must formulate and implement credible foreign policies.

More importantly, the refusal of President Muhammadu Buhari to take part in the signing ceremony of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) in Kigali, Rwanda on Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> march, 2018 despite the fact that the country took active part in the making of the agreement since 2012. The major reason advanced by Mr. President was domestic challenge. As contained in (Bola, 2019) President Buhari was quoted to have said that "we will not agree to anything that will undermine local manufacturers and entrepreneurs, or that may lead to Nigeria becoming a dumping ground for finished goods". The point here is that rather than the last minute refusal to sign, the Nigeria' negotiators should have investigated into the dynamics and implication of the policy right from conception by consulting the policy elites and interests to be directly affected by the policy. This has to be looked into because it is not ideal and helpful.

#### *Insecurity*

When Mr. President came to power, the immediate challenge that was faced was very clear and it was those challenges that informed his priorities. It would be recall that at the time the insurgency in the North East was presenting existential challenge to the country. That is, when Boko Haram were defeating the battlefield the Nigerian army and taking territories, there was a risk that it should reach far reaching consequences for this country. We have seen countries like Somalia, Libya etc and at a point there was the possibility this country could be a failed state. That was an immediate challenge. As opined by Bola (2019) the insecurity in the country did not allow for much attention to be given to foreign policy at home and abroad, except in the area of seeking international help. The quest for help is in itself another burden for the Foreign Service Officers, especially in light of the fact of economic insolvency of most of Nigeria's diplomatic missions. Added to this is the issue of internal conflicts in the area of communal, ethnic and religious conflicts across the country. All these put the credibility of the country in question in terms of our weight to intervene successfully to resolve African conflicts when we ourselves are not able to resolve our own internal conflicts. However, one is not unaware of the efforts and strategies put in place by the government in order to arrest the situation. The military



background of the President is said to have helped in forging a common front on how to tackle Boko Haram through a multi-national approach involving all neighbouring countries. These efforts yielded results and led to the resuscitation of the Multi National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) involving all countries of the Lake Chad Region. The force was so portent that it degraded Boko Haram capabilities within the shortest possible time. More is required for successful foreign policy formulation and implementation.

#### *Lack of a Clear Definition of the Country's National Interests*

Lack of a clear definition of the country's National Interests by Successive Government and President Muhammadu Buhari in particular remains a great challenge to Nigeria foreign policy. National interest which is ordinarily supposed to serve as a kind of navigational map enjoys no clarity. If this is lacking, the implication would be that most countries that Nigeria relates with in the global system would lose sight of what constitutes the real interest of Nigeria and how best to assist the country in achieving it. Unclear national interest as well as the ambiguous objectives does not really help Nigeria to know on where she should stand on some international issues, leading ultimately to the characterization of the foreign policy as excessively reactive. Our vital national interests have to be redefined. Does Africa still represent the cornerstone of our foreign policy when we have more respect from other countries than we get from African nations despite our whole-hearted commitment to them? If yes, what are the benefits we get from the choice? If the response is no, then we should reorient our foreign policy towards more profitable ventures like economic, scientific, cultural and technical cooperation with more advanced countries including Asia. The economic development and well-being of Nigeria should henceforth be the mainstay of our foreign policy. Though Africa should not be forgotten, Nigeria's interests should come first in all our foreign policy analysis and decisions.

#### **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

From the foregoing, it has been established that nation-states in the international system cannot exist in complete isolation from each other. They engage in an inevitable relationship with one another and the plank they use is foreign policy. It has also been observed that Nigeria foreign policy under President Muhammadu Buhari has recorded some notable success particularly in the area of diversification of the economy and the general improvement of the state economy, redemption of the country international image through the anticorruption war. The research work has also revealed that Nigeria foreign policy under President Muhammadu Buhari is confronted with many challenges. These among others include; the state of the economy, the dynamics of a peculiar federal system, the regime of negative image, lack of a clear definition of the country's national interest and so on. However, this paper is in no way exhaustive of these challenges as there are others not mentioned here. Therefore, the paper suggests that a commission comprising diplomats, top-level military officers, university professors and politicians should be set-up to review our foreign policy objectives and redefine our vital national interests. Nigeria's foreign policy objectives should henceforth focus on the benefits of such policy for its people. President Buhari's task would be to make the ordinary Nigerian feel the positive effects of the government on his or her life. Not only that, Nigeria's foreign policy can only be meaningfully conducted in a stable political environment, therefore there is need to address the issue of insecurity Religious -intolerance and the daily misconduct of an average Nigerian. The training programme for our diplomats should be reviewed to give them the



necessary knowledge to practice the art and science of diplomacy because they are at the frontline of our foreign policy. It is hoped that the country will take advantage of this democratic dispensation to formulate and implement formidable foreign policies that will conform to the prevailing global trend for democratization and reflect the general interest of Nigerians as we look forward to quick recovery from the disturbing effects of COVID-19.

#### *Limitations of the Study*

This research work like many others is not without its limitations. In the course of this work, some problems were encountered. These ranges from insufficient research materials, shortage of fund, lack of adequate time e.t.c. More importantly, the researchers were unable to use questionnaire and interview as instruments for data collection due to Covid 19 pandemic and the resultant effect of lockdown. This made it difficult for us to move around for the purpose of gathering relevant data. The limitations notwithstanding, efforts were made at minimizing its effects in order to make the research meaningful.

#### *Suggestion for Future Study*

This paper is in no way exhaustive of issues discussed as there are other areas of challenges not mentioned here. Therefore, the paper suggests the need for further research in those equally important areas. Also, it is suggested that further research can be conducted in the same area with the application of primary method of data collection for a more scientific outcome.

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