

**CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA'S FOREIGN SERVICE: SOME EMPIRICAL
THOUGHTS ON THE CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS**

BELLO BASIRU GWARZO Ph.D

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE,

AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA

bbgwarzo@abu.edu.ng, bbgwarzo@gmail.com, gwarzob@yahoo.com

(0803 585 7581)

Abstract

Discourse on corruption in Nigeria and even in the advanced democracies focus on domestic affairs and domestic agencies. A few have focused on the defense establishment and even fewer on intelligence agencies. This paper therefore, shall examine a 'virgin' area which is the foreign affairs apparatus. A lot is going on unnoticed in that area because it is traditionally a field that is shrouded in secrecy. Yet, no one cares to ask why our embassies are always indebted with some unable to pay rents and school fees of their children although governments have from time to time claimed that one of the records of their achievements was settling the debts incurred by our foreign missions? At the same time our diplomats come back with heavy loads of containers of goods and merchandise, at a point in time making the premises of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a market place. The researcher studied documents in form of quarterly reports of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Annual Reports of the Senate and House Committee on Foreign Affairs and personal observation conducted in one of the Nigerian Embassies in West Africa to collect data. The major finding is that corruption has permeated the foreign service of Nigeria. How and when this rot began is not so much the issue as the magnitude of the problem. Two major recommendations are that the National Assembly should intensify its oversight function over the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Nigerian press should exploit to the fullest the freedom of information law to expose corrupt practices in the diplomatic service.

Introduction

Although corruption is a universal phenomenon it appears to be a pandemic in Africa. Concerns for this cancer have led to serious studies in the attempt to find the causes and the solutions to it. Most studies focus on domestic agencies. This paper marks a deviation from the norm by examining an outland - the Foreign Service. It looks at the manifestation of corruption in our embassies and in the foreign establishment at home. One big problem to be encountered in this task is how to fix those tendencies into the correct definitions and categories of corruption. This is a theoretical problem that is treated in the first section of the paper. The other problem is empirical. How can we get the facts or evidence of corruption in the Foreign Service when it is by tradition an area shrouded in secrecy? In fact, why the diplomatic service ticks is the high level board room politics outside public view. This is treated under separate headings in section three and section four of the paper. Lastly, is the question: of what value is this paper? The answer is treated in the conclusion where the author argues that it is time the search light on corruption focused on that secretive department in order to gauge the level of corruption there and also to find out more causes, cases and forms of corruption that might not have been known. The

topic itself is self-explanatory and at the same time presumptive rather than exploratory. It is presumptive because it has already assumed that there is corruption in the Nigerian Foreign Service and so what is left is to bring out empirical data to establish that assumption. A more objective, or shall we say, scientific approach is to discuss it as "Corruption and the Foreign Service" in which case the researcher will be expected to find out how corruption influences Nigeria's foreign service or the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy. This shall be reserved as a subject for another research.

Theoretical Problems

Corruption has been described aptly by Storry (2008:3) as a disease because it is a departure from "naturally sound condition." Philip (in Storry, 2008:3) described such an unsound condition as "impure, debased, infected, tainted, adulterated, depraved (and) perverted." Again, citing Warren, Storry (2008:4) described corruption as "individual departures from rules and norms of public office for reasons of private gain." According to Storry, many of the definitions of corruption that fit with the modern conception of corruption revolve around two notions - moral deviation and private gain. Nye (in Storry, 2008:4) defines corruption as "behavior which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private regarding (personal, close family, private clique), pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private regarding influence." Mulgan opines that corruption involves "the improper or illegitimate pursuit of self-interest or sectional advantage" (Storry, 2008:4). He adds that it is "the excessive pursuit of private interest, not the pursuit of private interest per se."

Two variables have emerged in most definitions or rather descriptions of corruption. Self-interest and moral deviation! For instance, Kleinig (in Storry, 2008:5) contextually defines corruption in the police force as an act that is primarily intended to further private, departmental or divisional advantage. Departmental and divisional here refer to the police office. In this, Mulgan (in Storry, 2008:5) is with Kleinig even more emphatically when he argues that the police form an exception to his rule above. He points out that the police are one arm of government that should be held to higher, more idealistic standards and should not be allowed any leeway for preferring their own interest to those of the community as a whole.

Storry (2008:34) quotes Loree as "pairing down" the various conceptions of corruption to five "core ideas" (i) abuse or misuse of position or power for gain (ii) breach of public trust (iii) personal profit and/or group or organizational gain (iv) inappropriate relationship between at least two positions (v) acts forbidden by law, rule, regulation or ethical standard.

Although this classification has not treated the various forms of corruption as mutually exclusive, this paper finds it handy and comprehensive because each one can be linked to one form of corruption or the other. A good example is Mulgan's argument about corruption in the police force as an institution. Since this paper focuses on another governmental organization, that engages in high politics, i.e. international politics, one can deploy one particular form that fits into our frame of analysis.

For example, in Australia, Loree's fifth definition has gained most traction with Commissions of inquiry and legislatures according to Storry (2008:5). Storry quotes the Wood Rogal Commission in Australia enquiring into the police force as defining corruption to mean "deliberate unlawful conduct on the part of a member of the Police Service, utilizing his or her position, whether on or off duty, and the exercise of police powers in bad faith." The Commission also noted that when assessing whether conduct is corrupt, it is not relevant to consider whether or not it was motivated by private gain or whether or not it was successful. Thus, the conduct has to be unlawful and the wrongdoing conscious to constitute corruption. The arithmetic is therefore, unlawfulness + intent = corruption.

The point here has been made succinctly in the fact that in all cases, there is breach of social contract between the police and the public. Similarly, most parliaments, according to Storry (2008:6) used the more common concept of "misconduct."

Story goes ahead to identify “hard core” corruption such as bribery or evidence tampering (in Mulgan, 2006:20 although even “grey areas” like racism and favouritism fall within the ambit of corruption.

In a seminal work on causes of corruption, de Graaf (2007:1) argues that “the more we know about the causes of corruption, the better we can decide which policy instruments to use to combat corruption. He observes that there are not many studies on actual individual corruption cases. He explored how causes of corruption in Western countries can be studied. Using the “causality of explanations of corruption” as a framework of analysis, de Graaf identified six groups of theories concerning causes of corruption.

Of course, Storry's article had identified one individual case – policing or the police – more institutions must be observed individually to enable us make firm generalisations on corruption. The Institute of Development Research in Zaria had done something earlier on this and it came out with a list of the most corrupt public institutions in Nigeria. Surprisingly, the Nigeria Police Force was found to be the most corrupt (Gwarzo, 2007:60-69).

De Graaf's causal typology of corruption began with a premise that there is a distinction between cases of corruption in lower income countries and cases of corruption in higher income countries. His second assumption is that low salaries and poor working conditions greatly improve the chances of corrupt instances occurring. De Graaf's work concentrated on cases of corruption in Western countries (high income countries) where corruption is much 'the exception,' quoting Caiden (2001:27). If corruption is a universal phenomenon, as it surely is, then low income countries have greater claim to be studied where corruption is much the rule. This is a gap that this paper attempts to fill.

De Graaf chose Huntington's definition of corruption out of the so many, in his own reckoning. Huntington (1989:377) defines corruption as “behavior of public officials which deviates from accepted norms in order to serve private end.” According to de Graaf (citing Mulec, 1993:16), research has shown that elected officials are judged more severely than appointed officials (Nigeria's National Assembly to note); judges more severely than police officers; bribery and extortion more harshly than conflict of interest; campaign contribution more harshly than petty behavior.

The common denominator in almost all discussions on corruption is that corruption is wrong. It is always a deviation from right moral conduct (de Graaf, 2007:6). But people differ more as to the norms that determine a corrupt act than on the reprehensiveness of corruption. De Graaf adds that “corruption is a morally loaded term, just like integrity is a morally positive label.” De Graaf's observation can be seen in the recent scandal on “budget padding” in the National Assembly where the accused are saying that it may be wrong but it is not illegal.

Causality explanations of corruption assume six factors:

- i. Public choice: here an official is making a rational decision that leads to a more-or-less predetermined outcome
- ii. Bad apple: this refers to a causal chain from bad character to corrupt acts
- iii. Organizational culture which refers to a causal path from a certain culture or group culture to a mental state which leads to corrupt behavior
- iv. Clashing moral values: here the causal chain starts with certain values and norms of individuals. Those values and norms influence the behavior of individual officials, making them corrupt
- v. Ethos of public administration: here a causal path from societal pressure - often through the level of organisations or officials to perform and lack of attention to integrity issues - leads to a focus on effectiveness, making him or her corrupt
- vi. Correlations: here factors such as longevity in power, level of development, historical background of a particular organization, urbanisation and education may lead to corruption

In short, de Graaf attempts to explain corruption based on its rationalization by those caught in the act or web of corruption. Simply put, why they do it?

An interesting policy-oriented survey by the Norwegian agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) defines corruption as a “problem that mainly arises in the interaction between government and the market economy where the government itself must be considered endogenous” (2007:6).

NORAD observes that corruption is therefore, complex to handle from a theoretical point of view because data are difficult to gather, and if available, are often soft, unreliable and masked. Moreover, from an organisation's point of view, says NORAD, the issue of anti-corruption may become diplomatically delicate since at least some of the stakeholders who are handling the aide instruments in the partner countries, are likely to be part of the problem.

Corruption is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon with multiple causes and effects, as it takes on various forms and functions in different contexts...The phenomenon ranges from the single act of a payment contradicted by law to an endemic malfunction of a political and economic system... it has been seen either as a structural problem of politics or economics, or as a cultural and individual problem (NORAD, 2000:9)

According to NORAD, corruption in its broadest sense can simply refer to “misuse of public power” and “moral decay” and in its strict legal definition it is an act of bribery and transfer of tangible resources (NORAD, 2000:9). In all cases, it is underdevelopment politically, economically, culturally and morally or something in between.

Interestingly, it has been observed, according to NORAD, that corruption does not disappear as countries develop and modernize but rather it takes on new forms. This begets what NORAD describes as “state of the art” survey on corruption in recent academic literature. That is why the myriad definitions of corruption as a multi-faceted phenomenon, observes NORAD, have led to categorization of the definitions in a multidisciplinary way. Seeing corruption in the context of state-society relationship, that is why researchers have made the distinction between “political corruption” and “bureaucratic corruption.”

Of greater interest to this paper is NORAD's observation that recent political science classification and definitions have tended to place corruption and the fight against it within the broader agenda of democratization. According to NORAD, the “encyclopedic” and working definitions of corruption used by the World Bank, Transparency International and others, is that corruption is “the abuse of public power for private benefit (or profit).”

All these definitions somehow do not fit into our paper here. For example, where is the element of abuse of public power when Nigerian diplomats abroad buy exotic cars in utter disregard to the school fees of their children in an American International School to which other diplomats rush their children? Even Nye's definition that NORAD considers “classical” does not adequately explain corruption in the Nigerian Foreign Service. Nye (NORAD, 2000:6) says that corruption is “behavior that deviates from the formal duties of a public role (elective or appointive) because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) wealth or status gains.”

Even Khan's definition which NORAD considers as the “updated version” is still inadequate. Corruption is “behavior that deviates from the formal rules of conduct governing the actions of someone in a position of public authority because of private-regarding motives such as wealth, power or status.” Most studies that specifically consider governmental or bureaucratic corruption rightly regard corruption as clientelism or rent-seeking. Those that specifically focus on firms and businesses consider it in form of illegal tax or tax evasion.

The focus of this paper is thus unique. It borders on lack of self-respect, indignity or moral decay. The closest to our study is NORAD's observation that “a weak separation between civil service and party

politics, a weak professionalization of the bureaucracy, a lack of administrative accountability and transparency and deficient political control and auditing mechanism will increase corruption at these junctions” (NORAD, 2000:14). Grudgingly, one may accept this as an explanation for corruption in Nigeria's Foreign Service.

NORAD has identified four main forms of corruption which it says are overlapping and at times interchangeable with other concepts. They are bribery, embezzlement, fraud and extortion. The types that may be found in the Nigerian Foreign Service are the first three.

Corruption is legally defined as a transaction between two individuals, one state agent and the other 'civilian' where the state agent goes beyond the limits of the law and regulations in order to secure himself a personal benefit in the form of a bribe (NORAD, 2000:15).

In the case of the Foreign Service, the form of corruption is more of embezzlement which is not considered as corruption from the strict legal point of view (NORAD, 2000:15). Embezzlement, according to NORAD, is “theft” because it does not involve the civilian side directly. The effect is that the general public is deprived when public funds are embezzled, but no individual property is stolen and individual citizens are bereft of legal rights to present themselves as forfeited. What is extremely enigmatic in the embezzlement of public funds by the Nigerian Foreign Service diplomat is that it directly affects the diplomat or the embassy in not too distant future. For example, the incidence of not paying the school fees of their children that resulted in the embassy being blacklisted by the American International School. The repercussions of this 'extractive industry' are depletion of budgets and public morale. In the final analysis this will lead to collapse of the organization or system.

Similarly, corruption in the Nigerian Foreign Service will fall in to the category of “bureaucratic corruption” not only because it involves bureaucrats but also because it is “petty” corruption as it involves “modest” sums compared to what obtains in “political corruption.” Political corruption takes place at the highest level of governmental authority (heads of state, ministers and top officials). But the question arises: is it possible for hundreds of dollars (in forex) in which the Foreign Service deals pass under the bridge unnoticed? At least the Minister must be actively involved.

But as NORAD suggests (2000:19), both “political corruption” and “bureaucratic corruption” may be mutually reinforcing. It is important to understand that political corruption may be curbed if a leader is capable and competent to clean the corridors of power but it may not necessarily permeate down to the “low level” or “street corruption” in the bureaucratic arena. Applying this to Nigeria we can make a contrast: the World Bank in 2003 declared that (Obasanjo's) Presidency accounted for 51 per cent of corruption perpetrated in Nigeria; today (Buhari's) Presidency may account for far less. But it has not been able to reduce corruption in say, the National Assembly which has refused to subject itself to the Treasury Single Account (TSA) system enforced by the Administration. Arguably, bureaucratic corruption can be controlled when there is a political will and ability to implement the necessary regulations through auditing, legislation and institutional reforms in liberal societies (NORAD, 2000:20). This can also be seen in the TSA where all government Departments and Agencies have to remit their receipts and close independent bank accounts that they used to have.

Although Jain's definition of corruption (2011) does not depart from the norm, he has added a new dimension to the fight against it when he said that if it is controlled it is due to the ability of civil society and public institutions to check the behavior of public officials and if it is unchecked it is accompanied by misallocation of resources (look at budget padding by Nigeria's National Assembly in collaboration with government agencies), economic disparities and, eventually political violence(Jain, 2011:3).

Jain argues that to understand corruption we must first recognize the forms it takes, the environment in which it thrives, the consequences on the society and the successful measures in controlling it. Describing it as a hydra-headed dragon (it appears in many shapes though originating from the same

body) Jain alluded to the two extremes of corruption: the doorman asking for a tip to let you in and a leader treating society's assets as personal property.

Corruption thrives on three conditions according to Jain (2011:4): rents associated with a government's regulatory powers; corrupt, and somewhat independent bureaucracies within the remaining (if any) administrative structure of government; weak and ineffective public institutions that are charged with controlling corruption. These institutions include civic groups that exert moral pressure, political parties, the media and the legal system.

In conclusion, the reader can see how problematic it is to conceptualise corruption even though there is a general agreement that it is evil. This does not in any way stop observers from discussing it within certain context as a social phenomenon. This is what this paper has done.

Methodological Problem

This paper is derived from my PhD research on Legislature and Foreign Policy. Chapter five of that work dealt extensively with legislative oversight on the ministry of foreign affairs and the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy in general. It was an eye-opener particularly given the annual reports of the Senate and House committees on foreign affairs which contained some details of their tours, appropriation bill, public hearings, petitions and even special investigations. But because the research is now dated (1999-2007) this writer attempted to get the latest reports (2008-2015) from the Secretaries of the Committees. Unfortunately, they have travelled to Saudi Arabia for the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. The final version of the paper shall include details from such reports. Another source of our data is interviews conducted in the course of that research. The author interviewed members and Chairmen of the Senate and House Committees on Foreign Affairs.

This author is fortunate to have access to a recent report on the Foreign Service from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It contains the Ministerial briefing by the Permanent Secretary on repositioning the Ministry in line with the "CHANGE" Agenda of the Buhari Administration. It highlighted a lot of "challenges" that the Ministry faces. The challenge is bad governance, or if you like "bureaucratic corruption," alluded to in the theoretical postulates that were reviewed above. We thank a staff of the Ministry for making these sources available which stems out of the close friendship between us.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs began as a small desk in the Prime Minister's office (Gambari, 1989:16-17). The first twelve disciples were recruited in 1957 from Regional and Federal civil services (Garba, 1989). They were some of the finest that the foreign service had had: John Mamman Garba, Aminu Sunusi, Nwokedi, Ignatius Olisemeka, Chukwura, Dike, Haastrup, George Dove-Edwin, Philip Asiodu, etc. They were recruited from the best crop of civil servants in their Regions and at the federal government. The Ministry as at 1984 had 14 top management officers on Grade Level 17 (equivalent to Federal Permanent Secretary) and 60 Grade Level 16 officers. According to Gambari (1989:15) this adds up to more than all the officers in the home ministries on that grade put together. The Ministry is also the only government department that has overseas missions which grew from in 1960 to 92 in 1981 to 86 in 1984 and to over 100 by 2015. The staff strength grew from 20 in the Prime Minister's office in 1957 to 4,500 in the early 1980s, including staff local recruited to serve in the overseas missions (Gambari, 1989:15-16). The Ministry is the instrument for the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy (MFA, 2016).

The Report further included recommendations for turning the Ministry round and strategies for implementing them within the life of the Buhari Administration. One of the "three core priorities" of President Buhari is anti-corruption. The other two are security and the economy. According to the Report, the "immediate task" of the Ministry is to identify the foreign policy dimensions and implications of those priorities and ensure their effective delivery.

The Report listed thirty-two “challenges” the Ministry is facing at present in terms of policy, systemic function and processes and procedures. The list is frightening not only for its length but also for the weight of some of the challenges.

One of the “policy challenges” identified by the Report is “weak policy-making and advisory organs and processes, including the capacity for research, strategic thinking and analysis of foreign policy matters and the death of such organs as Policy Planning Committee and Crisis Management Committee, including Situation Room.”

One of the “systemic challenges” is inadequate maintenance of the Headquarters facilities and irregular supply of office equipment and stationery.

One of the “challenges of process and procedure” is the loss of respect for the Ministry by the State House, the Presidency and other agencies and departments of government.

Although most of the challenges reflect the general indiscipline that has afflicted the Nigerian state, some are clear examples of crass corruption. Some may also be the effects of corruption, such as lack of capacity to deliver, which the Report mentioned.

Pungently, the Report listed corruption, waste and lack of accountability and transparency in the affairs of the Ministry. The Report also said that there was “flagrant disregard for extant rules, regulations and procedures leading to impunity and non-adherence to due process.”

This Report alone, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, though in the spirit of soul-searching, is enough to prove our assumption that there is corruption in the Nigerian Foreign Service. But that is not enough for a research paper like this. We need to operationalize the concept or give it a contextual definition by adducing some data on corruption practices in the Ministry and in the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy.

Corrupt Practices in the Foreign Service

1. Nigerian diplomats abroad accumulated huge fines for wrong parking (Interview: Aminu Isa, Abuja, July 29, 2008 in Gwarzo, 2015:)
2. Staff returning home had turned the Headquarters of the Ministry into a market place for foreign goods. Foreign diplomats working in Nigeria complained that they were finding it difficult to conduct business with the ministry (Interview: Aminu Isa, Abuja, July 29, 2008 in Gwarzo, 2015)
3. At a meeting of the House Committee on Foreign Relations, the Chairman, Hon. Bugaje, suggested that the solution was to locate the ministry to its permanent place which construction was stalled because of money the contractor owed the Ministry. Work could not start on schedule ostensibly because of delay in the Due Process office, according to a briefing by a Director in the Ministry. In reality, the money was in private accounts to accumulate interest (Interview: Aminu Isa, Abuja, July 29, 2008 in Gwarzo, 2015)
4. Appointment of junior officers as Heads of Chancery in Embassies (HCFA, 2005/06)
5. Violation of four-year tour of officers
6. Violation of federal character principle in posting of officers to diplomatic Missions abroad
7. Lumping Embassies together under one sub-head. The effect is that the Minister and the Permanent Secretary used their discretion to remit funds to Missions. This loophole was plugged by the National Assembly as part of its oversight duties (Interview: Jibril Aminu, Abuja, February 8, 2010 in Gwarzo, 2015)
8. Embarrassing delay in release of funds to Embassies
9. Debt accumulation in Embassies and Missions abroad as a result of unpaid dues, salaries, statutory contributions to international organisations, etc. (HCFA, 2004/05)
10. Missions were collecting revenue from service they render but they were not remitting them into the federation account

11. Some Missions dispose of priced property in a manner that called for investigations (HCFA, 2006/07)
12. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not have a full record of Treaties Nigeria has entered into (HCFA, 2006/07)
13. Hajj 2005 and Hajj 2006 organised by the Ministry's Directorate of Pilgrim Affairs called for investigations by the House of Representatives. This led to the establishment of the National Hajj Commission as an autonomous body
14. Some "key" and "strategic" Missions were understaffed and underfunded. Average quarterly allocation to some Missions was \$600,000 but their funding stood at \$130,000. Some, like Nairobi, were indebted to \$739,277.05 in 2004 and a further \$53,850 in school fees as at May 2005 (HCFA, 2005/06); the Nigerian Mission in Johannesburg budgeted \$2,921,009 for 2004 but it received \$674,034.13 only. Its debt profile was \$1,012,150. Added to the mortgage on the Chancery building, the debt rose to \$1,121,681.65. The High Commission in London was in debt of £5 million and \$12,435.2 only (HCFA, 2004/05)
15. Although many of Nigerian Embassy buildings are owned by the Nigerian government, they are dilapidated, forcing some Ambassadors to rent expensive houses
16. The last review of foreign service allowances (as at 2005) was in 1981 (HCFA, 2004/05)
17. The Hostels in the Foreign Service Academy were dilapidated (HCFA, 2004/05)
18. Dereliction of duty by staff of the Directorate of Pilgrim Affairs led to Visa racketeering by Tour and Travelling Agencies in collusion with some Saudi Embassy staff
19. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Olu Adeniji, acknowledged his "innocent ignorance" over an Agreement signed between Nigeria and the United States of America on Non-Surrender Agreement concerning the jurisdiction and operation of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The Solicitor-General and Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice confirmed that Nigeria had indeed signed it as an Executive Agreement which did not require Senate approval
20. Fraudulent note verbales were being signed by some foreign service officials in the Ministry to foreign Embassies in Nigeria
21. Foreign Minister, Olu Adeniji, acknowledged at Senate hearing, that some foreign Consuls in Nigeria had established their own private agencies for issuing Visa. Yet, the Ministry had not made any further investigations

Conclusion

This paper attempted to show the pandemic of corruption in Nigeria's Foreign Service, hitherto an unknown area. It first reviewed the various attempts at conceptualizing a phenomenon that exists in reality but which cannot be easily defined in one particular way, hence, Jain's description of it as hydra-headed. The paper also treated the subject within the context of a particular government department (bureaucratic corruption) which in the strict legal definition is not corruption but theft (embezzlement). In doing some justice to the topic, the author used sources within the Ministry which can be described as primary sources and drew a lot from his previous work on legislative oversight on foreign affairs in Nigeria (1999-2007). In the final analysis, empirical data was marshaled to support the assumption that there is corruption in Nigeria's Foreign Service.

These corrupt practices such as incurring unnecessarily huge debt by embassies resulting in court action hinder effective discharge of diplomatic service because the diplomats spend more time on them than on promoting and monitoring Nigeria's national interest in those countries. Moreover, diplomatic service is a prestigious cadre and integrity is very important. If a country's diplomats lose face they can hardly assert themselves. They usually resort to appeals and sometimes use the country's past glory. Even in terms of correspondence between some of the embassies and Headquarters there are delays because they use hand courier whereby visiting Nigerians are given letters to deliver. Since most of them come for their businesses they can hardly be expected to deliver the letters on time for action to be taken. Worst is when officials of the Ministry sign fraudulent note verbal as reported by a House investigation. Most of the foreign embassies in Nigeria might disregard most note verbales including genuine ones.

By way of recommendation, this author suggests, first, a closer and consistent oversight by the National Assembly. Second, the Nigerian press must also take greater interest in the conduct of their country's external relations. Foreign Affairs is high politics and it is usually shrouded in secrecy a loophole that governments and their diplomatic agents can always exploit to do something wrong. If many or all the newspapers in Nigeria, particularly private ones establish a full Foreign Desk with a correspondent stationed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs they can expose a lot of shady deals and the Legislators would find them a good source of information from which they can begin investigations.

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