The Environment of Foreign Policy Making: Nigerian Experience

By

Asimiea, Monima Opiriba
Department of History and Diplomatic Studies
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education,
Rumuolumeni, Port Hartcourt, Rivers State.
pcs_portharcourt@yahoo.com

Abstract

National Interest is one of the most important principles in the conduct of International Relations. National Interest covers a range of values that are regarded as important on the part of state entities. Diplomats believe that the international arena is anarchic; but not necessarily chaotic. Therefore whereas nations do not get what they deserve, they get what they bargain for in the international system. The foreign policy making process of nations in the international space is essentially an instrument for such bargaining. States make various demands on the international system; demands which often times vary from one state to the other, and for any particular state, is a product both of the domestic and external environment. The environment of foreign policy making encompasses the milieu or setting of the environed unit, and includes the totality of intangible elements of Foreign Policy Making. The paper examines the Environment of Foreign Policy Making: Nigeria’s Experience; specifically how the Nigeria’s Environment has enhanced sound policy making or otherwise. This is based on the theoretical framework that the right environment of foreign policy making will be more beneficial to the environed unit, and the citizens will be better for it. This paper adopted the desktop (secondary) data collection and analysis method.

Key words: National Interest, Environed Unit, Foreign Policy Making, Domestic Environment, External Environment
Introduction

Environment of Foreign Policy Making covers a wide range of issues both in the domestic and external spheres of states in the world system. These issues mainly intangible, and are therefore not empirically measurable, influence foreign policy making in some salient ways. This is because as Northedge (1968) puts it, foreign policy making is a country’s response to the world outside or beyond a state’s frontiers; responses which are products of environmental factors of a state. The environment, domestic and external, confers certain powers to state entities which Palmer and Perkins (2007) have observed, are necessary for states to succeed in the international system. The environment of foreign policy making is the milieu or settlings, of a given society. This may also include the whole gamut of historical antecedence of a nation. For instance, in Nigeria, our colonial heritage have continued to be a germane environmental factor, coupled with the distribution of tribes, and human resources in foreign policy making efforts since independence. We shall in this discourse look at Environment of Foreign Policy Making under the Domestic, External and the Domestic-External Linkage, Orugbani (2004).

We are aware that Akindele and Ate (2000), Holsti (1995) have identified five basic issues that are often fundamental to states, which form their core values via safeguarding national sovereignty, national security, autonomy, welfare, status and prestige under which other incidences ancillary ot national interest may be subsumed. However, in determining National Interest and specific objectives which policy makers seek to achieve, domestic environmental factors must be taken into consideration. This is because as Orugbani (2004) has observed, policy makers are products of the domestic environment in the first instance; stressing that; Foreign Policy Decision-Makers are ultimately connected with their domestic environment. Indeed, they are part and parcel of their domestic environment since they have internalized it’s values, have imbibed the
natural culture and characteristics, and are constantly exposed to pressures and influences emanating there from.

Among these domestic environmental factors of foreign policy making are: Political Leadership, Cultural and Historical Background, Quality of Diplomacy, Public Opinion, Political Parties and Pressure Groups and a host of other socio-political groups that form the “National Morale” at a given time; in a particular environed unit, Orugbani (2004), Thomas (2018).

**Quality of Government and Leadership**

This is an intangible environmental factor of foreign policy making that is the common denominator to all the other determinants. It is one thing to have sound foreign policy, but how it is used and for what purposes are determined by a nation’s leadership. The government and its leadership should be able to determine priorities for foreign policy makers of the state. They should be able to develop methods to achieve their National interest. The leadership of a state should be able to mobilize and exploit the respective tangible and intangible elements of foreign policy making at the disposal of the state towards the attainment of its pursuits. The leadership also requires the support of its people and, as we have seen in recent times; it is also advantageous for the leadership to cultivate favourable international opinion towards the domestic environment for foreign policy making of the state. Lastly, the political system of the state should be stable and not to be characterized by upheavals and crises.

**National Morale**

National morale or national will has been described as “popular dedication to the nation and support for its policies even when that support involves sacrifice” (Orugbani, 2004:P24). It has also been described as “degree of determination with which a nation supports the policies of its government in peace and in war” (Asimiea, 2018: P.7). Although national morale tends to be manifested most intensely in times of national crisis or war, no state
can do without the support of its people. In peace time, national morale can be reflected in public opinion regarding the government and its policies.

As an intangible element of foreign policy, national morale is extremely important because it directly affects the ability of the state to mobilize its citizenry in pursuit of national objectives and it also directly impinges upon the zeal and vigour with which citizens pursue such objectives. This is how national morale also affects the morale and strength of the military. The various anti-colonial struggles that led to the emergence of independent African states were facilitated by high levels of national morale to the extent that the colonial governments were seen as alien to the people. On the other hand, the collapse of the government of Zaire under Mobutu, for example, was facilitated by a low level of national morale which was reflected in the Zairian military. Oche (2000).

The element of national morale should not be taken for granted especially in pluralistic multi-ethnic societies like we have in Nigeria and other African states. If any segment or group within a state perceives or feels that it is permanently deprived of its rights and of full participation in the life of the nation like the case of the Igbo in South East Nigeria, then the tendency will be for the group to have a lower level of morale, and consequently be less patriotic, than other groups. This will detract from the overall strength of the state. Furthermore, if divisions exist between groups within a country, it becomes more difficult for the government of the day to muster popular support for its policies. Thus, any state that has deep divisions within its society will find its level of national morale to be low and making foreign policy decisions difficult. Akindele and Ate (2000), Orugbani (2004). The national morale of a people is also affected by the quality of government in the country. A government whose policies identify very closely with the needs, yearnings and aspirations of the people has a greater chance of mobilizing support from the people and the level of national morale will be higher. In general, therefore, the more closely identified a
people are with the actions and objectives of their government, the better are the chances for national morale to be high and vice versa.

We shall end this segment by adding that the whole gamut of activities of non-governmental pressure groups can safely be subsumed under national morale and though their influence varies from society to society, they are veritable environmental elements of foreign policy making that cannot be overlooked, as they bring to bare on policy decision makers various degree of influence.

**Quality of Diplomacy**

Diplomacy has been defined as “the application of tact and intelligence in international policies through negotiation, persuasion and compromise” (Satow, 2017: P. 32). In relation to Diplomacy, foreign policy making, is the main vehicle for achieving National Interest. The quality of diplomacy at the disposal of the state is critical to the pursuit of those interests in the international arena. Indeed, Morgenthau (1978) had argued that, the conduct of a nation’s foreign affairs by its diplomats is for national power in peace what military strategy and tactics by its military leaders are for national power in war. It is the art of bringing the different elements of national power to bear with maximum effect on those points in the international arena which concerns the national interest most directly.

**Information**

It is the position of this paper that the intangible elements of Foreign Policy Making would be incomplete without the mention of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a form of environmental element. The world has entered a new millennium which will, by the assessment of commentators from various discipline, be information driven. Indeed, the information revolution, which has been facilitated by the development of even more advanced and sophisticated computer systems, has propelled a process of change at a rate that has been unmatched in human history.
The centrality of information as an element of Foreign Policy making can be seen in the fact that it has implications for virtually every facet of human existence. The availability of information facilitates overall societal development. The unfortunate reality, however, is that, just as in most other aspects of international political and economic life, African states still remain at the periphery of the information revolution. The process of globalization is being precipitated; to a very large extent, by the information revolution.

**The Domestic Environment of Foreign Policy Making**

Factors which influence the domestic environment of foreign policy making in Nigeria include the ethnic composition of the state, the colonial heritage, the attitude and perception of the elite and the priorities which the government sets for itself, Adefuye (1992). Cultural diversity also colours a nation’s foreign policy because different cultural and religious values may indicate different orientation and interests thereby complicating foreign policy. Domestic environment for foreign policy making in Nigeria is also determined by the state of inter-ethnic relations, the level of political stability, ethno-religious conflict, unemployment and other socio-economic factors. Nigeria’s nationalist movement has been fractured into three ethno-regional blocs, Mustapha (2009). These three blocs, the East, West and North, dominated by the Igbos, the Yorubas and the Hausa/Fulani respectively have led to a general public policy which has been much about keeping various sections of the Nigerian society apart than keeping the country together. Further, the Nigerian nation has been polarized into dominant Muslim North, and Christian South.

Since independence, domestic events such as military coups, civil war and other domestic political crises have impacted no the direction of the nation’s foreign policy. A major factor in the consideration of the domestic environment for foreign policy making as already indicated is the economic endowment of the nation. In this regard, Nigeria should be considered very
fortunate, because she is one of the most naturally endowed nations of the world with a huge population and an abundance of oil and gas, solid mineral wealth and huge arable land for very profitable agricultural production and food security. Its crude is much prized because of the ease with which it can be refined into petrol, while its huge and still expanding proven gas reserves are already playing a big role in the world-wide shift toward gas, Peel (2009). Of course, over dependence on oil, has its own challenge. It takes a nation hostage to the oil buyers. In addition, the oil economy has fuelled a fierce agitation and insurgency which has continued to threaten the peace and stability of the nation, making the nation even more vulnerable.

In addition to her national wealth, Nigeria is also endowed with critical ingredients for power, human resources, with a population of about 170 million. This has made her a demographic power but, when unaligned to any other currency of power, is a liability, Akinyemi (2002). Thus, because of oil and her huge population, Nigeria is a centre of great geopolitical interest for many powers and can therefore be said to have some power to effectively participate in world affairs.

The Concentric Circles Model adopted in 1984 as a framework, most eloquently established the fundamental role of the domestic environment in the evolution and development of the nation’s foreign policy. The Domestic Environment being the innermost circle of Nigeria’s Foreign Policy Making, also has other critical elements which include ethnic and regional cleavages and economic challenges. Thus, the domestic environment poses limitations to the realization of the nation’s effectiveness in foreign affairs. In addition, her leadership in intra-African affairs has always been constrained more by domestic environment contradictions than by external factors. Alli, (2000). The significance of the domestic environment in foreign policy making was to be further demonstrated in the fourth Republic under President Obasanjo when the
Concentric Circle Model was redefined to become Constructive and Beneficial Concentric circle. This constructive engagement became inevitable considering that there’s hardly anyway domestic issues could be tackled separately from external ones. Zabadi (2004).

By the time the Cold War was ending in 1990s, Nigeria’s role began to decline as a result of changes on the continent since the anti-colonial struggle was drawing to a close. The continued military rule in the country and the annulment of the 1993 presidential elections, abuse of human rights were to lead to the imposition of sanction on the regime of General Sani Abacha by traditional partners, including the Commonwealth, the European Union (EU) and others. The regime became isolated for the entire period of Abacha’s rule notwithstanding her great role in conflict resolution and peacekeeping. Sani Abacha was thus forced to seek new friends in Asia: China and North Korea became allies while another alliance, the D8 was built with some other largely Asian and Muslim countries – Turkey, Pakistan, Iran, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Egypt.

In 1999, democratic rule altered the domestic environment of foreign policy making. The military bequeathed to the nation a legacy of strong executive aggrandizement. Democratic polities assigned a central role and a prominent place to the legislature in the management of national life, with oversight power and function, Akindele (2004). The Senate has been given an asymmetric profile in the 1999 constitution in the conduct of foreign policy, confirmation of presidential ambassadorial appointments and treaties entered into by the President for ratification.

However, Nigeria’s democracy has been suffering from legitimacy deficit because of the way and manner elections were conducted in the country. This, in turn, fuelled political instability. Importantly, democracy demands high level of organizational commitment and public involvement which might result to technological and economic progress, thereby improving
physical infrastructure and political communication, Burel (2008). All these have in varying degrees, influenced the domestic environment of foreign policy making.

The United Nations, European Union and the Bretton Woods institutions, according to Ake, in a significant break from their traditional apoliticism, have come to the conclusion that democracy is essential for improved development performance hence its currency as political conditionality, Ake (2000), The process of reintegrating Nigeria into the international system, maintenance of political stability in the post military era from the threat of military rule and democratic reversal, building and sustaining democratic rule and importantly, improving the socio-economic welfare of the people, attraction of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) all define the character of new domestic environment for foreign policy making and informed in so many ways the foreign policy thrusts since 1999.

The military is very important in the assessment of the domestic environment of foreign policy making because the military is an influential political partner to the civilians in the formulation of national security policy and by extension the foreign policy. Defense and foreign policy are very closely linked. But coming from a long period of military rule, this influence had to be curtailed to subject it to civil authority through what became known as re-professionalization since its participation in governance had undermined military professionalism. Long period of military involvement in the nation’s politics had eroded and distorted the foundation of the nation’s politics in very many ways – authoritarianism in governance, lack of transparency and the lowering of ethical standards in public life.

Globalization-induced economic reform, which crystallized more clearly in the Fourth Republic, is another factor that has great impact on the way and manner the economy of the nation is managed and the impact of this on
agenda setting and interaction on the global stage and even in the choice of allies and partners in the emerging new global economy. In sum, massive changes were introduced and a whole new economic package was adopted with attendant consequences for foreign policy making.

Another dimension of the domestic environment was the crisis of unresolved national questions. While the consociational federal system that came out of the state creation exercise, the federal character principle and the reform of political party system (making them national), have improved representativeness in governance, they have done very little to quell the hegemonic impulses in the political system, Mustapha (2009). Consociational federalism has also contributed to the invention of reinforcement of cleavages as different sub-ethnic and communal elites jostle for a share of federally controlled oil revenues, resulting in countless ethno-religious and communal conflicts across the country with thousands killed and even injured and internally displaced. This is why, despite the reforms introduced since the 1970s, there remains a fundamental legitimacy deficit at the core of the Nigerian state. This may explain why elite consensus is lacking on key aspects of the nation’s foreign policy and national interests remain unspecified, Alii (2000).

This has led to a high level of insecurity arising from violent crimes and lawlessness by individuals and groups. In addition, several militant groups, such as the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), the Egbesu Boys and others, have appeared across the country particularly in the Niger Delta region of the country. The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is active in the South-East region, while the Odua People’s Congress (OPC) is dominant in the South West. Religious extremists and fundamentalists, exemplified by Boko Haram and other such sects and ethnic minority rights agitators complete the picture in the North.
In the wake of democratic construction, several criminal gangs have also appeared in different parts of the country perpetuating armed robbery, extortion, kidnapping for ransom, rape and other nefarious activities against which the police and other security agencies appeared helpless. Thousands of persons have been kidnapped in the country between 2009 and 2019 with over 5 billion naira paid in ransom money, NPF (2019). This high level of criminal activity and discontent show that Nigeria has been lacking in effective and meaningful social provisioning for the people. As McNamara (2000) has argued, any society that seeks to achieve adequate military security against the background of acute food shortages, population explosion, low level of productivity and per capita income, low technological development, inadequate and inefficient public utilities and chronic problem of unemployment has a false sense of security. All these provide basis for the fear in some quarters of the threat of the failure of the Nigerian State. State failure defined as the failure of a government to provide security, prevent conflict and provide even the basic public services to its population, (Dervis (2005).

These became mechanics for the global dissemination of the macro-economic policy package. The adoption of this package by Nigeria had benefited Nigeria in a way, achieving a debt relief of over 30 billion dollars in 2005. It has also made the economy to be very open and over expose. It is well and intimately integrated with, and excessively dependent on the international economy. Consequently, it is open to external shocks and the boom and bust cycles of the world macro-economic forces.

The reform was, however, to have a negative impact on the society at large as the government pursued the key elements of the reform, including massive retrenchment of workers in the government service and withdrawal of so-called subsidy from all basic services, unemployment has continued to rise, poverty level has increased. Thus, in spite of the economic growth recorded in recent years, progress in human development has been
quite unimpressive considering various indicators such as poverty incidence (UNDP 2019)

Nigeria, a major oil exporter, is dependent on the export of the commodity which contributes 50 percent of the GDP, 80 percent of the budget revenue and 95 percent of foreign earnings, Kaldor, Karl and Said, (2007); is currently among the poorest nations in the world with over 70 percent of the citizens living on less than the UN benchmark of one dollar per day. The high level of corruption in government and the resultant poor governance has in turn, led to failure of basic infrastructural facilities. Manufacturing industries are closing down and/or relocating to neighbouring countries. It is thus clear that the way and manner domestic political and economic processes are managed, and the conduct of the nation’s democracy have implications for foreign policy making and the kind of support to be expected from development partners.

The domestic environment also determines a nation’s image. National image, character and reputation are also critical for effective conduct of foreign policy. Material, cultural and moral traits tend to inform behaviour on the international scene, Mustapha (2009). Hans Morgenthau (1978) had argued that national character and national moral stand out both for their elusiveness from the point of view of rational prognosis and for their permanent and often decisive influence upon the weight a nation is able to put in the scales of international politics. The perception of the character of the nation and its reputation is informed by the many socio-economic, political challenges facing the country, and the character of the leadership. Thus, the preponderance of criminal activities identified with Nigerians both at the domestic and international spaces tend to give the nation a bad character profile and as a consequence a bad reputation. As a result, Nigeria’s national reputation in the international arena, is that of a country full of fraudsters, drugs and human traffickers and corrupt public officials and criminalization of the state as shown by the many cases before the
courts and the investigations being carried out by the anti-graft agencies such as the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC).

In this regard, it is not so much that there are criminal and corrupt officials in Nigeria that undermine the nation’s reputation; rather, it is the fact that, in spite of all efforts to arrest the situation, criminals and corrupt officials continue to behave with impurity and enjoy what appears to be political protection. It is significant that the domestic structure of foreign policy making and its architecture have also not improved over the years and in fact have deteriorated.

The personnel for driving foreign policy is a critical component of what we should consider as domestic environment of foreign policy making. To succeed in today’s highly competitive international environment, a nation should deploy high quality diplomats and technocrats. With over 60 to 80 percent of ambassadorial appointments going to political appointees rather than to career diplomats, and usually to the most important and demanding diplomatic posts suggest a lack of adequate appreciation of the challenges of the era and displays a disturbing nonchalance towards the place of foreign policy making in the national agenda.

The External Environment of Foreign Policy Making
The international arena is anarchic. But, necessarily chaotic, therefore whereas nations do not get what they deserve, they get what they bargain for. Foreign policy making of nations is essentially an instrument for such bargaining in the world stage. As Northedge (1968) puts it Foreign policy is a country’s response to the world outside - responses to anarchic international system. To Raiser (1971) The ideal type of international politics stresses two points: First, the field of action of politics lies in the area between the nation-states. Second, the actors involved are states, or multilaterally, among large numbers of single states, through diplomatic
negotiations and international conference, and through the conclusion of treaties and agreement Orugbani (2004). However, to Rosenau (1961) the external environment refers to the human and non-human phenomena located outside the geographic space of the society of which the polity is a part. Therefore, the environment that is external to the policy makers consists of units or segments of other states. This is so because, in our civilization so far, nation states have continued to be dominant actors in the international system - actions and reactions in the interaction of these state entities is what foreign policy seeks to address.

Frankel, J. (1963) has suggested that external environment can be divided into physical and social environment. Problems in the physical environment arise from the will of other states or from the structure of international society. On any given issue both sectors have to be considered simultaneously though one sector may predominate. However, in some cases the responses to both sectors may be equally significant. An instance of this is when Nigeria decided to put together the ECOMOG troops in support of the beleaguered government in Liberia; several elements came into play, as the relevant factors were all weighed- physical and social environments before decision was reached. Military experts considered the technical problems associated with the scope and physical difficulties of communications, supply of troops from home and other logistics; while economists will consider the cost, and political scientists, with the reaction of other actors in the international system. It is only trite to add that, in the face of globalization and increase interdependence the external environment influences policy making in no small measure.

The Domestic and External Environment Linkage
In the face of sweeping globalization and increased interdependence any nation that continues to look inward alone will be written off as "Isolationist crank". Today, states are subjected to diverse external and domestic conditioning factors that induce and constrain various responses. While
writers and practitioner of foreign policy making tend to distinguish the domestic from the external environment, it is evident that in practice, no clear and discernible line can be drawn between the two sectors. In our contemporary International system, massive workers strike in the United States of America resonates around the globe. Likewise unrest in the Middle East affects the price of Nigeria’s crude oil. Rosenau (1961) aptly describes this situation when he averred that “Almost every day incidences are reported that defy the principles of sovereignty.” Politics everywhere it would seem are related to politics everywhere else. Where the functioning of any political unit was once sustained by structures within its boundaries now the roots of its political life can be traced to remote concerns of the globe. How visible in practice, is the dividing line between domestic environmental and external environmental elements of foreign policy making? We are aware that, scholars, among them Resenau (1961), Orugbani (2004) have dubbed the interconnectedness as "Linkage" which they define as any recurrent sequence of behaviour that originates in one system and is reacted to in another. It is therefore trite to note that there is palpable increase in issues of dual (domestic and external) environmental linkages that influence Foreign Policy Making in our 21st century world which must be noted in considering the Environment of Foreign Policy Making.

Conclusion
In the context of diplomacy and other aspects of international politics, the environed unit may be conceived as a single policy-making agent of the state, as some ad hoc policy-making group, as a formal agency of government, as some non-official group within the body polity, as the population of the state as a whole, as the state itself viewed as a corporate entity, or as some supra-state grouping such as the “Atlantic Community” Harold and Margaret Sprout, in Rosenau (1961). The milieu of foreign policy making therefore encompass both domestic and external elements of
the environment, and these elements influence and are influenced by the foreign policy making processes of a nation state.

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