

## **Cybernetic Model of Decision-Making Theory in International Relations and Nigerian Foreign Policy: Application and Implications**

**By**

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### **Abstract**

*The dearth of theoretically-based studies on Nigerian foreign policy notwithstanding, the import of theory, as perceptible prism for examining external relations of states cannot be under-estimated. This paper is designed to underline the significance of, and interrogate, the cybernetic model of decision-making theory of International Relations, as part of the behavioural paradigm; in explaining the content, context and incidence of Nigerian foreign policy goals and behaviour, and to ascertain how these are shaped by existential conditions of the decision-maker(his personality traits, idiosyncracies, orientation, social background, interest, perception, etc), when initiating or responding to endogenous and exogenous factors; and to account for variation and continuity in the prevalence and /or application of the model to the Nigerian foreign policy process .*

*As a qualitative study, it relies predominantly on secondary sources of data, and on content analysis as tool for interpretation of evidence. It is argued that the implication of limited or near absence of interface between policy makers and citizens in the foreign policy process in Nigeria, following the marginalization or outright*

*exclusion of the latter, denies the former of the required public mood: as motive force or psychological impetus; to pursue a virile foreign policy on behalf of the people-that is legitimate and popularly supported. It is therefore suggested that legitimate and Pan-Nigerian foreign policy can protrude from increased and regular citizen-participation in the formulation and execution of Nigerian foreign policy, which will not lack the crucial elements of the communication perspective to decision-making.*

**Key words: Cybernetic, model, decision-making, theory of international relations, Nigerian foreign policy.**

### **Introduction**

The contemporary student of international relations is confronted with the challenge of being submerged in an avalanche of interrelated data, so much so, that it is difficult to clearly determine those that are vital and those to discountenance, and under which circumstance, consideration and in what sequence. This challenge is aptly illustrated by Smith and Baylis (2006:3) when they wondered:

Where on earth would you start if you wanted to explain the most important political process? How, for example, would you explain 9/11, or the 2003 war in Iraq? As you will know there are very different answers to questions such as these and there seems no easy way of arriving at definitive answers to them. Was the attack on Iraq motivated by a concern with human rights with oil, with unfinished business (handed over from President Bush Snr to President Bush Jnr) with imperialism, with the “war against terror”?

They observed that students of international relations often resort to or rely on theories to deal with such challenges, either intentionally or

inadvertently. This means that there are scarcely any international events without theoretical foundations for which no budding researcher can validly provide an alibi. To them a theory is not just a grand model characterized by conjectures or assumptions but rather it is:

- (a) kind of simplifying device that allows you to decide which facts matter and which do not... theory is an option. It is not as if you can say that you do not want to bother with a theory, all you want to do is to look at the "fact", we believe that this is simply impossible, since the only way in which you can decide which of the million of possible facts to look at is by adhering to simplifying device. Note also that you may well not be aware of your theory, it may just be the view of the world that you have inherited from family, peer group or the media. It may just seem common sense to you and not at all anything complicated like a theory. But we fervently believe that all that is happening in such a case is that your theoretical assumptions are implicit rather than explicit... thinking about world politics (p3).

This position is congruent with Lieber's (1973) stance and complementary to the view of Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff (1981). The former observed that:

There is no more vicious theorist than the man who says, I have no theory; I just let the facts speak for themselves. The problem is that some kind of theory (or conception or viewpoint) inherently determines which facts are selected, how they are ordered, and in what manner they are interpreted (p.2).

The latter described theory as:

Intellectual tool that helps us to orient and organize knowledge, to ask significant questions; and to guide the

formulation of priorities in the design of research; it enables us to apply the methods of scientific inquiry in an orderly way, as it becomes more comprehensive, it enables us to relate knowledge in our own field to that of other fields; and thus it enhances our ability to understand and explain reality in a satisfying way (p.11).

Hence theories propounded to cover dominant or traditional interest and (increasingly) broad range of concern of international relations today are also diverse and contentious; not only in terms of the issues and actors but also the myriad or combination of theorists. The growth in the theory of international relations also emblemizes the field as a crucible of contested perspectives, objectives and methodologies. So, the critical question about the theory of international relations revolves around the possibility of developing propositions or offering explanations about the international behaviour of state and non-state actors that transcend spatio-temporal parameters. The contentions are intermeshing and manifold (see Burchill, Linklater, Devetak, Donnelly, Nardin, Paterson, Reus-Smith & True; 2009). Given the fact that the contentions are about the world around us, it follows that theories of international relations constitute the lenses through which we explain claims, values and developments in different facets of the global order, consciously and systematically.

So far, the theory of international relations permeates such sub-fields like international politics, international economic relations, foreign policy analysis, international organizations, international law, diplomacy, international political economy, etc. Thus, from the pioneering works of E. H Carr (*The twenty years crisis*) first published in 1939, and Hans Morgenthau's magnum opus (*Politics among Nations*) published in 1948, the theory of international relations has grown in significant proportions (in number and variety of subject-matter). But, despite the multiplicity of theories of international relations, in the specific instance of Nigerian

foreign policy studies, the application of theoretical framework have been regrettably limited. Yet there is an avalanche of productive literature on Nigeria foreign policy. Thus, Asobie (1990) laments the dearth of systematic empirical studies, explicit use of foreign policy and/or international relations theories, paradigm or model to guide these efforts, and cumulative conscious data making and methodic studies on Nigeria foreign policy. Rather, majority of the researchers on the field according to him, are largely idiosyncratic in nature, with each writer pursuing his position as though detached is sequence from existing or previous literature; which engenders the pressing necessity for studies of this kind to be built on coherence and precision of thought and language, and to demonstrate a clear reliance upon that which is assumptive and normative versus that which is empirically verifiable. It is not uncommon today to read articles on Nigeria foreign policy, by both renowned scholars and mere commentators; that are bereft of implicit or explicit theoretical acknowledgement and premise. What is sometimes taken as theoretical stance of some writers is their personal (perceived, professed or real) ideological orientation.

But in line with the admonition of Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff (1981:11) that:

No matter how aesthetically or intellectually satisfying a neat, logically unified theoretical system may be, none at present can adequately explain the international reality in all its complexity. The theoretical analyst who makes a significant contribution to the field must choose a coherent intellectual framework within which to work on a specific problem;

we are wont to commence this paper with an initial excursion into decision-making theory in international relations, perspectives on cybernetic model of decision-making theories, and to interrogate the application and implications of cybernetic model in the formulation and implementation of Nigerian foreign policy as well as make concluding remarks accordingly.

### **Reflections on decision-making theories of International Relations.**

More than half a century ago David Easton ((1963) identified decisions as part of the output of the political system, through which authoritative allocation of values are made in any given society. This tends to bring decision-making (although a common human practice) into close relationship with the processes of the political system. According to Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff (2001:553) decision-making simply means “the act of choosing among available alternatives about which uncertainty exists”. In the political sphere, the scope of decision-making is broad and penetrative.

And as observed by Van Dyke in Gauba (2007:100)

Every actor is a decision-maker. Those acting for political parties decide which candidate to nominate. Voters decide whether to vote and for whom. Legislators decide which proposals to advance or support. Executives decide what legislation to seek, whether to sign or veto acts of the legislative body, precisely which steps to take in executing or administering the laws, and what policies to pursue where action is left to their discretion.

Gauba has gone further to isolate the broad concerns of the decision-making analysis as follows:

- a. Identification of issues on which decisions are made;
- b. The structures involved in decision-making,
- c. The actors involved in decision-making (this may involve study of personality, if necessary); the alternative course of action or options that were considered before making a choice;
- d. The factors influencing the choice of the decision-makers, i.e. their range of preferences vis-à-vis the utilities attached to each of the alternatives;

- e. Any external factors, pressures or constraints which influenced their decision; and
- f. The outcome of the decision including its political cost.

These are obvious in national politics, where the terrain is traditionally familiar and fairly visible and clearer. But in international politics where foreign policies are rarely explicit, due to the complex interplay of domestic forces and unpredictable dynamics of external factors; and are gropingly formulated in the context of a total situation in which disagreement can arise over which estimate of the situation is most valid, what alternatives exist, which consequences are likely to flow from various choices, and what values should serve as criteria for ranking, the various alternatives from most to least preferred, (Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, 2001:553-554), then the import of model of decision-making cannot be under-estimated and remains a pressing necessity.

Even though the concept of decision-making as a key component of a country's foreign policy process is implicit or tangential to the classical rational (Allison, 1971) or billiard ball model (Wolfer, 1962.9) of the realist paradigm which is systemic in orientation and ascribe human characteristics to states, as well as in both the structuralist and instrumentalist models (Mc Gowan and Walker, 1981; in Asobie, 1990:39-40) of the Marxist political economy paradigm, it is within the vortex of the behavioural paradigm that decision-making theories/models are pungently articulated and pursued as a deliberate analytical construct. Some of these models include the comprehensive model, bureaucratic perspective, cybernetic theory, etc; any of which can be used as tools for analyzing Nigerian foreign policy. This paper is however restricted to, and exclusively concerned with the cybernetic perspective.

### **Perspectives on Cybernetic model of decision-making theory.**

Karl Deutsch (1966) cited in Akpan (2012:81-82) defined the concept of cybernetics as “the systematic study of communication and control in organization of all kinds (that)... represents a shift in the centre of interest from drives to steering, and from instincts to systems of decisions, regulation and control...”. The thrust of his exposition is that stability and change in the political system can be gleaned at from the nature and volume of communication flow between decision-makers “message storage and retrieval and the response of decision-makers”. The cybernetic perspective as alternative to the classical model of decision-making based on the “rational weighing of value costs and value outcomes” (Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, 2001:576) can be traced to the work of John .D. Steinbruner. It is presented as the foundation of decision-making theories or models. He insists that humans do not always confront complex problems by isolating, disentangling or analyzing all the logical componential elements or access all necessary information or calculate all the value trade-offs as presupposed by the classical rational approach (Steinbruner, 1974).

Consequently, he offers to supplant the analytic paradigm, with the cybernetic theory, by which decision-making occurs as adaptive, situational or intuitional behaviour rather than reliance on elaborate mechanism. Under this approach he likened the decision-maker to a tennis player, retail store manager or cook (Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, 2001:577) who confront “few simple choices on each sequence” of decision-making. He is simply expected to eliminate variety, ignore elaborate mathematical or value-related calculations about the ecology and track a few simple feedback variables that stimulate a behavioural adjustment. According to them what is required is to “monitor a small set of critical values and to reduce uncertainty by keeping those variables in this tolerable range” (p. 577).

When applied to the field of foreign policy that is characterized by greater complexity, heterogeneity of actors, multiple value and trade-offs relationship, uncertainty and dispersal of organizational units;

Steinbruner's model concedes that the "decision-maker must have a more elaborate response repertory if he is to retain adaptive capacity" (Steinbruner, 1974:68). Structurally, it demands that the number of decision-makers should be increased, segmented into small decisional units and each group charged with solving an aspect of complex problems. This shows that he depends heavily, first on organizational behaviour theories to shift the locus of decision-making, under the cybernetic approach; from the realm of the individual to the realm of a collectivity, and then in combination with theories of cognition (already developed by Chomsky, Neisser, Festinger, Abelson, cited in Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, 2001:577), to advocate information processing as the bedrock of decision-making or for dealing with uncertainty. The combination of both approaches crystallized in the cybernetic-cognitive approach and paves the way for the introduction of its corollary; the "grooved thinking" strategy: the simplistic classification of problems into little basic types, whether in terms of uncommitted thinking (in which the decision-maker for want of appropriate idea about an issue vacillate between groups of advisers and may apply varying solutions at different times to the same problem) or theoretical thinking (the tendency for the decision-maker to be dogmatic about certain abstract ideas over a period of time, which shapes his decision and action) (p. 578).

At the operational level, the cybernetic theory emphasizes more or less a stimulus-response relationship in international crises situation, (developed by Ole Holsti, Robert North and Richard Brody to study the exchange of messages that preceded the outbreak of World War I; and cited in Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, p.580) in which a country's inferior capability status, for instance, can discourage it from going to war even when confronted with serious threat to its national interest. The model is built on the perceptive interpretation by the decision-maker of messages transmitted between state actors about developments or events in their international or external environment. The task of the decision-maker in

this context is to collate information, compile records of messages, create a chart of communication flow between the states concerned, analyze both the degree of quantitative and qualitative significance of the intelligence and devise appropriate response trajectory and behaviour (whether positive or negative, planned or interpretative), thereby making the perception of the decision-maker a strategic determinant of a country's foreign policy.

For the foreign policy analyst the vital steps in applying the cybernetic model to foreign policy formulation and implementation include identification of decisional units/actors (their cognitive orientation as well as affective and evaluative capacity), isolating the factors influencing the perception and personal orientation of the decision-maker, analyzing the planning process in terms of goal selection, assessment of national capabilities and choice of techniques for foreign policy execution by decision-makers as well as the feedback process (which enables the decision-maker to determine the extent of change or continuity [and if so the intensity, extensity and velocity] of the initial stimuli).

Clearly, the cybernetic model of decision-making provides a deeper insight and understanding into the foreign policy process, by not only underlining the significance of communication flows between and within state actors but also highlighting the import of the decision-makers' perception and interpretation of communication and the relevance of all these in shaping the output of foreign policies. The inclusion of the feedback mechanism helps to reveal the intricate link between the domestic and external factors influencing policies as well as the relationship between the decision-making environment and the decision-making process. However, the major drawback of the model is that it seems to be more appropriate for a long drawn period of communication flow in a fairly stable political regime. But for a society where there is frequent change in government and decision-makers, and discontinuity in policy objectives, the model may be susceptible to distortion. Thus as observed by Zeev Maoz (1990) cited in

Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff (2001:578) decision-makers with long tenure in office are more disposed to cybernetic decision-making and less inclined toward the analytical choice behaviour.

Finally, it has been argued that outside the field of engineering where the cybernetic theory enjoys profound applicability and adaptability, in international relations its relevance collapses in the face of glaring disjuncture, because not all the elements of the latter fit neatly into the former's framework. For as noted by Lieber (1973) its usage requires special conditions "first, the behaviour of any actor is repetitive and variable; second, the distance of a system from its goal is affected by the systems own behavior; and third, the goal itself relates to some environmental trait" (p. 80), otherwise since international relations itself is not a stable system, any cybernetic treatment of the field will perhaps also follow suit. Despite these weaknesses the idea of feedback is central in explaining foreign policy.

### **Application and implications of cybernetic model of decision-making theories in Nigerian foreign policy.**

When examining decision-making in foreign policy, it should be borne in mind that it ranges from the generic or routine, to those that are strategic. Such decisions are either the initiatives of Nigeria or a response to external forces. Foreign policy decision-making is continuous and dynamic process, which in a sense implies making simultaneous decisions on several related or interrelated issues at the bilateral or multilateral levels of engagement or interaction.

Within the foreign policy process, there is the ultimate decision unit. For critical foreign policy matters, this is often at the apex of the administrative system in all government. It exercises the capacity or power to commit resources of the country into foreign affairs and retains the relative authority to preclude other entities within the state from neither overtly circumventing its stance nor restricting its jurisdiction. On routine foreign policy issues the decision unit may be at much lower levels, for example the

Foreign Mission or Service. This means that the decision process may directly or indirectly involve a broad range of actors like government officials, professionals, high network(private) individuals, pressure groups and even the populace; just as foreign policy decisions portend wide internal and external implications and consequences, some of which might be unforeseen.

In Nigeria, these responsibilities fall predominantly within the domain of the federal authority or government, as against the component units, because the 1999 constitution places international relationship exclusively under the administrative jurisdiction of the central government in the power sharing arrangement (FRN, 1999 Constitution). The scope of the federal organs that superintend over foreign affairs includes the presidency (where the president or prime minister- as it was in the First Republic- holds sway), Federal Executive Council (FEC), National Assembly, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and subsidiary agencies like the ministries of defence, finance, petroleum, information, economic planning, commerce, education and industry; national intelligence agencies, Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, even though the influence of the states, economically-powerful elite and public opinion cannot be totally discountenanced or excluded.

An interesting trend in Nigeria foreign policy is the fact that although many political regimes have traversed the country's political space, with diverse leadership and decision-making styles and trajectories, the substance - objectives and principles - remained largely enduring. It is the variation in characterization, extensity, and velocity in pursuing these interests and incidence thereto, across the various political regimes that have engaged the attention of most writers on Nigerian foreign policy. Also the formulation and implementation of the country's foreign policy from independence (in 1960) to date (2019) have been conducted by fifteen distinct administrations, under two kinds of regime, namely , military regime (under Generals Ironsi, Gowon, Murtala/Obasanjo, Buhari,

Babangida, Abacha and Abdulsalami; who governed Nigeria for twenty-nine years) and civilian administration (under Prime Minister Balewa, President Shagari, Chairman Shonekan and Presidents Obasanjo, Yar' Adua, Jonathan and Buhari, that have governed the country for almost three decades now). Therefore the contention here is to ascertain the manifestation or cursory application of the cybernetic model of decision-making in Nigerian foreign policy process; to interrogate broadly whether regime type and personal orientation and personality traits influence any such occurrence, and to account for change (variation) and continuity (frequency) in the utilization of the model. Our ultimate goal is to use examples of key foreign policy decisions to determine the prevalence of this model of decision-making and appraise the immediate and / or remote implications for the foreign policy process.

The communication theory of decision-making in the foreign policy process envisages a forward and backward linkage between the citizens and Nigerian foreign policy. But evidences abound that this seldom occurs. Rather, citizen blackout or marginalization in foreign policy making has elicited widespread nonchalance and apprehension among the populace toward foreign policy output. Thus, they neither feed the system with commensurate inputs nor feedback emanating from the knowledge, experience, consensus and solidarity of the generality of Nigerians. In the military era, the command political structures and environment typified by the distinguishing characteristics of order flowing from the head of state to every person in the polity laid the foundation for the communication gap and minimal inter-face that existed between officials conducting foreign policy and the Nigerian people. The military neither tolerated nor encouraged dissenting viewpoints from the body politic. On rare occasions when the military regime attempted to build national consensus on foreign policy issues, as shown in 1986, during which General Babangida initiated a national debate on the propriety of subscribing to IMF loan, the feedback

conveying popular rejection of the proposal, was applauded widely in the domestic milieu as public involvement in shaping foreign policy decision-making. But events thereafter; involving the systematic (albeit sudden) fulfillment or implementation of the conditionalities of the loan, like privatization of public enterprises, currency-devaluation, downsizing of public workforce, rationalization of the public sector, etc. by the regime appeared to suggest the surreptitious acceptance of the facility by the Nigeria government; thereby causing some commentators to regard the initial exercise as a mere ritual of legitimacy-building for the young regime, and the subsequent decision as a unilateral reversal or repudiation of popular will in decision-making process about foreign affairs by the Nigeria government (see Ibiamu, 2009: 18).

Ironically, the civilian administrations (particularly the presidential system of government that dovetailed military rule) seem to be emulating and replicating the detestable tradition of treating Nigerians as being inconsequential in the conduct of the country's foreign policy (Eminue, 2006; Osaghae, 1998). It is important to note that Nigerians had in the days of decolonization in Africa and apartheid regime in Southern Africa been enthusiastic about the leadership role of their country in Africa on such matters based on justifiable popular causes (Akindele, 2007). But all this appears to be changing, as most Nigerians are burdened by escalating domestic economic and political pressures, as to spare a thought and time for foreign policy issues, which they also adjudged to have failed to improve their living condition. Adebajo (2006) for instance noted that only a handful of Nigerians were concerned about uninspiring stance of Nigeria on the President Mugabe saga: his stifling of the democratic space in Zimbabwe; which allowed South Africa as against Nigeria to gain an upper hand in the crisis, in a country where the latter had hitherto made remarkable impact. Similarly the euphoria of achieving debt relief from the London and Paris Clubs of creditors by President Obasanjo's administration in July 2015 was popular in official circles, but remote with

the generality of Nigerians. And as noted by Saliu (2007), Omotola and Saliu (2009), such achievement did not matter so much to them. Hence, when President Obasanjo tried to leverage on the subject to gain tenure elongation, the project was iconoclastically rebuffed by the masses, which caused the National Assembly in response to the outcry (in May, 2006) to jettison not only the proposal but also the entirety of the constitutional review programme, for which it was a part thereof.

Furthermore, despite the significance of Nigeria's election, for the fourth and fifth time; as nonpermanent member of the UN Secretary Council in 2010 and 2013 (Premium Times, 4 January 2016) the celebration of the feat occurred only in selected circles, while the populace remained largely unperturbed and perhaps oblivious of the import of the development because of the absence of effective communication (for they were not carried along) in the execution of the country's foreign policy (see Saliu, 2001: 399). Again another issue that has caused a gulf between the government and the citizens in the foreign policy process was the inability of the former to defend and/or intervene in cases involving Nigerians in foreign land. In so far as the conduct of some Nigerians in Diaspora has been terribly deviant from the legal precepts of their host countries, in cases of miscarriage of justice that have been widely reported, Nigeria's inability to perform its diplomatic obligation to these citizens has been cause for concern.

Unfortunately, where state intervention occurred at all, it has neither been timely nor auspicious or penetrative enough to prevent both the guilty and innocently charged Nigerians from serving jail terms or facing the hangman in extreme cases. Examples are many about the fate of Nigerian citizens in Indonesia, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Australia, South Africa, etc. in this respect. Perhaps the frequently-held position of the Nigeria State about of the convicted Nigerians abroad as outcast that deserve their jail terms, had also discouraged the latter from accepting governments offer to them to return home to complete their prison terms in the era of citizen

diplomacy (Agbu, 2009; 54 – 55). At other times the spontaneous verbal outburst of top presidency officials in Nigeria, (as did recently by Abike Dabiri-Erewa; Special Assistant to President Buhari on Diaspora Matters) condemning the arrested or jailed Nigerians in Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirate (UAE), as criminals, generate frustration and alienation in Nigerians about the willingness of their country to use the instrumental of its foreign policy to rescue them. It is crucial to note however that President Buhari only woke lately to this reality in the latest drug trafficking saga involving a Nigerian undergraduate student of Maitama Sule University, Kano; Zainab Aliyu on December 26 2018; while on pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia, and how rewarding the effect of that effort, when she was released unconditionally as a result of the intervention of the Nigerian authorities (Pulse.ng, 29 April 2019; BBC News, 30 April 2019).

Reflecting on citizen diplomacy as a conceptual construct in the civilian era, it is rated as the most strategic feature in Nigeria foreign policy thrust since the return of democracy in 1999. It was initiated by President Yar'Adua's administration, with the former Foreign Affairs Minister, Ojo Maduekwe as the torch bearer. It was designed to underline the relevance, contribution and sensibilities of non-state actors and to integrate the inputs and interest of Nigerian citizens at home and abroad in the foreign policy process, in what Maduekwe himself described as "diplomacy of consequence or "responsive reaction" and which in its totality was designed to increase communication between citizens and government in the making and implementation of the country's foreign policy ( SIRA, 2012: 52).

Regrettably the National Assembly which carries the conscience of the nation, as accredited representatives of the citizenry has often been marginalized in the communication jigsaw of the foreign policy process. The 1999 Constitution (as amended) stipulates the role of the legislature vis-à-vis the executive with regards to foreign policy matters. Apart from guarantees for the sovereignty and participation of the people of Nigeria

(FRN: 1999 Constitution, Chapter II, Paragraph 14 [2]) in domestic and foreign affairs, the constitution empowers the national legislature to hold the fore-string of the government in foreign issues. The ratification of the National Assembly is required for treaties to be effective; while Nigeria's foray into foreign affairs shall be done with the legislative approval, except in emergencies where approval can be sought retrospectively but within a stipulated time frame.

The prevailing practice or tendency however is for the executive to by-pass or even ignore the National Assembly, as though the latter has no role in the governance of Nigeria's external relations. This proclivity seems to be more prevalent among heads of government that possess assertive personality. In the civilian dispensation, President Obasanjo (1999 – 1983) and Buhari (2015 – date), coincidentally individuals with military background; have been guilty of this aberration. Obasanjo's overbearing influence in the ceding of the Bakasi Peninsula to Cameroun, pursuant to the judgment of the International Court of Justice at The Hague in October 2009, was neither in collaboration with the National Assembly nor in consultation with the Nigerian people before the Federal government's acceptance of the Court verdict (SIRA, 2012: 24). For President Buhari, evidences abound that major foreign policy decisions are made without due communication with appropriate stakeholders. A classical example of his infringement on the proper consultation channel between the government and the people was the illegal withdrawal and payment of a whopping sum of \$496m from the excess crude account of the federation for 12 Super Tucano fighter jets from USA in early 2018, which even the government acknowledged was government-to-government transaction; with neither prior legislative communication nor approval. For an equipment to be delivered in 2020, the government merely informed the National Assembly after a deluge of public outcry over the illegality of the transaction, on the excuse that it reckoned on anticipatory approval from the legislature, and time-limitation (Punch, 25 April 2018).

On the other hand, in isolated cases when the National Assembly pungently asserted its role and authority in foreign policy issues, the efforts generated altercation that was attributed to communication gap between the two critical organs of government. The former Foreign Affairs Minister, Sule Lamido; alluded to this fact when he wrote that:

in January 2003, some members of the House of Representatives visited Pakistan, apparently seeking to mediate in the dispute over Kashmir without consulting the Foreign Ministry. We wrote to the Chairman of the Committee, pointing out the risk of such a trip without background knowledge of the delicate balance of the alliances. They reacted angrily, saying '...nobody is here as an appendage of Sule Lamido's ministry. We are not his boys; we are not bound by his whatever foreign policy strategy' (Lamido, 2013, cited in SIRA, 2013: 66).

Another challenge to effective communication in the foreign policy process is the weakness of institutional or structural capacity for doing so. The primary institution that merits attention is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: the main agency that is statutorily charged with the duties of foreign relations. It is however worrisome that the ministry is largely ill-equipped to discharge such responsibility. It is reputed to be lacking the requisite manpower in quantitative and qualitative terms to mount the various Nigeria's diplomatic posts globally. It is also said to be under-funded (especially as its input and performance index in government can scarcely be measured in material denomination because of its service-oriented character). This much was disclosed by the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Odein Ajumogobia. He notes *inter alia*:

...the need for Nigeria to adhere to international standards in the calibre of men it deploys to foreign

missions and the quality of infrastructure provided at the various Nigerian embassies... I have had opportunity to visit several of our missions abroad before now and... can speak first-hand about the deplorable state of some of those houses and missions in various countries (Ajumogobia, 2010: April, 27).

In fact, in a comparative study of the funding profile of Nigeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and South African Foreign Affairs Ministry (representing two countries competing for leadership role of Sub-Saharan Africa), Society for International Relations Awareness (2011: 55 – 56) discovered that between 2009 and 2010 the former received a budgetary allocation of \$306.6m and \$232.6m respectively, while the latter on the other hand was allocated \$702m and \$634m respectively within the same period. The data above show that the South African Foreign Affairs Ministry received an amount that was 100 percent higher than the amount allocated to its Nigerian counterpart. This situation is not surprising though, for as aptly noted by Saliu (2010: 327 – 328), except for the staunch support of the head of government, hardly do memoranda (memos) emanating from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs gain overwhelming approval from other cabinet members on home duties, and are often isolated in Executive Council meetings. Also the nature and character of the Nigeria state has been implicated for the defective or ineffective communication pattern or disconnect between the government and people in foreign policy making and implementation. Saliu (2010: 341) criticizes the state for being a partial arbiter in "inter group or class contestation", thereby making it a compromised party in the production and allocation process of valued public resources, which lacks the moral integrity to champion the democratization of the foreign policy process. The character of the Nigeria state is such that lacks autonomization and is vulnerable to class interest. Thus any fraction of the ruling class that captures state apparatus uses it to

instigate crisis with, and to impose itself on other classes, in order to hold sway in the society. Given its alien nature, it is treated publicly as an endangered entity, and consequently denied the backing and solidarity of and/or connectivity with the majority of Nigerians both domestically and internationally.

More so, high profile cases of graft among high ranking public officers in the management of state resources tend to create disillusionment, low morale and diminishing sense of nationalism and patriotism among the populace, such that they (can) easily rebuff any entreaties for support or partnership with the state, which they legitimately suspect or believe will primarily or ultimately enrich the elite and disempower or impoverish the masses (p. 341). Their despair is exacerbated by the dearth of social amenities and social safety nets for the larger aggregate of the poor and downtrodden due to maladministration; all of which conduce to deny the frustrated populace of the proverbial dividends of democracy. It is arguable, if not unequivocal; that the sordid socio-political and economic condition of Nigerians and atrophying media attention to Nigerian foreign policy contribute significantly to dampen public interest in the country's foreign policy issues and render them peripheral and weak element in the foreign policy process.

The implication is that we have a foreign policy process that is largely elitist, in which a plurality of the populace are neither incorporated nor does it run with the interest and feedback from stakeholders; and in which the latter do not feel a sense of affinity to the outcomes.

### **Summary and concluding remarks**

In this paper, we have given useful insights into the foreign policy decision-making process in Nigeria, based on the potency, pungency and /or relevance of the cybernetic model of decision-making theories (whether in concordance or in contradistinction). While it may be difficult to bring every facet of, or all the hypotheses underpinning the processes of

formulating and implementing Nigerian foreign policy (that exhibit the indices of a developing society anyway), the case-studies highlighted or mentioned here, were carefully selected to interrogate the manifestation in, and/or implications of this aspect of decision-making theories for the country's foreign policy, pursuant to our specific objectives, as already outlined in the preliminary part of the essay.

It provides a cursory explication of the rationale and import of theories of International Relations, and the cybernetic model of foreign policy decision-making; as well as the interrogation of the application and implications of the theory in the formulation and implementation of Nigerian foreign policy. Finally the core complex of the cybernetic perspective is to the effect of regular interaction between the policy maker and the environment in a stimulus-response trajectory or to integrate populism into the foreign policy process with the primary goal of making the citizens the central input. But, as we have shown in our analysis, this is scarcely the case in Nigeria where citizen-exclusion and citizen-alienation from the foreign policy process is a recurring experience across the various political regimes that governed the country. The implications of marginalizing the citizens in the process of foreign policy formulation, directly or indirectly, approximate the twin virus of crisis of legitimacy and crisis of participation besetting the process in which the ordinary Nigerians are largely nonchalant, apathetic and unsupportive of the country's foreign policy and consequentially denying the political leadership the popular mood for pursuing a virile foreign policy in an open and democratic world system. When this weakness is combined with institutional fragility of Nigeria's Foreign Service due to poor funding, politicization, poor staffing and ill-equipped working condition, it can be validly posited that the communication model of decision-making can rarely be said to be deliberately pursued or applied in the Nigerian foreign policy process.

In the light of the foregoing analysis, it is instructive that a productive analogy of Nigerian foreign policy should be informed by

precise theoretical premise. Although the theory examined in this paper is liberal in nature and can only explain superficial short-term swathes of policy stances rather than the relationship between structural changes in local conditions and Nigeria's external behaviour, it nevertheless proved invaluable in accounting for the content, context, incidence and challenges as well as change and stability (the intensity, extensity and velocity thereto) in Nigerian foreign policy for almost six decades of statehood.

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