

## An investigation of the challenges constraining the performances of Nigeria institute of international relation

Modu Lawan Gana <sup>1</sup>, Hadiza Mali Bukar <sup>2</sup>, Maryam Mala <sup>3</sup>

### Abstract

The research focus on the examination of the roles of Nigeria Institute of International Relation in promoting Nigeria diplomatic relation. The study is approach on qualitative approach designed on phenomenological research. The empirical data was collected through in-depth interviews involving face to face method. Ten (10) respondents were engaged in the study. The primary source which contain an open-ended question administered to the respondents was triangulated with data from secondary source such as journals, articles, textbooks. and media. The research finds out that Nigeria Institute of International affairs have a positive role on the policy formulation processes of Nigeria. However, it revealed that the institution was bedeviled with several challenges such as financial, Administrative, infrastructural and political. While it concludes that the role of the Institute is inevitable for the promotion of Nigeria foreign policy interest, it recommends that the Institute should strive to expand its in-house revenue to manage its affaire. It also recommends the need for strong legislation that stipulate the areas of jurisdiction between and among the Institute and other related agencies and the ministry.

**Keywords:** Nigeria Institute of International Relation; Foreign Policy; Diplomacy; Challenges.

**Author Affiliation:** <sup>1</sup>Department of Public Administration, Mai Idris Aloomo Polytechnic, Geidam, Nigeria.

<sup>2,3</sup>Department of Public Administration, Yobe State University, Damaturu, Nigeria.

**Corresponding Author:** Modu Lawan Gana. Department of ublic Administration, Mai Idris Aloomo Polytechnic, Geidam, Nigeria.

**Email:** [gana.lawan@yahoo.com](mailto:gana.lawan@yahoo.com)

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### 1. Introduction

Since the decolonization of Africa States, the struggle for state building through concerted political and economic independence including creating, promoting and sustaining international relevance become the focus of most of the emerging states (Cadier, & Sus, 2017). The needs for the actualization of these objectives have witnessed the adoption and implementation of myriads of complex policies and programme including the establishment of institutions. In respect to the later, the Nigeria governments' struggle for the actualization of diplomatic relevancies both within and the outside the African states resulted in the establishment of Nigeria Institute of International Affairs (NIIA). The institution is task with the objective of creating or influencing an enabling environment and provide necessary information that can help promote Nigeria's diplomatic interest with the rest of the world. Among other task is also is to influence ideas that can positively enhance the quality of the foreign policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. It is in this context, Parmar (2002) stressed that NIIA also remained the center of training foreign

policy think tanks for promoting the present and future diplomatic interest. In most respect, the idea of the NIIA was be chmarked aftee the success of Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA) and Council of Foreign Affairs (CFR).<sup>[1]</sup>

Since its establishment, the NIIA have come with wide changing political scenery in Nigeria including series of democratic and military dispensation. The NIIA underwent a change in ownership and became a public institution, marking the entrenched contemporary status of the Institute and years of more proactive input into Nigeria's foreign policy. Several decades after it's establishment as public institution, the NIIA's input into Nigeria foreign policy process continues, with its relevance flourishing across the spheres of the Nigeria state. The successes notwithstanding, the role and performances of the NIIA has been alleged to have been beleaguered with many challenges. However, in spite of the acknowledgement of the challenges, the extant literature has not in-depthly investigated on this perspective. The existing works majorly focus on the roles of the NIIA. The

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consequence of this according to most researches undermine the successes of NIIA as a think-tank of foreign policy in Nigeria. This study therefore aimed to investigate on this perspective to address the gap. The importance of the study beyond contributing to the scholarly literature, it is important for policy making suitable for policy makers in the Nigeria's international relation both within Africa and the rest of the world. [2]

## 2. Conceptual Clarification

### 2.1 Diplomacy

The term diplomacy has been variously defined. Scholars have argued that, there is no generally encompassing definition of the subject (Palmer, 2004). Sing et al., (2014), defines diplomacy as "the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between the governments of independent states". This definition even as it captured some critical aspect of international relation, the idea was however criticized for its overemphasis on intelligence as it is not all diplomats that are either intelligent or tactful, yet they all take part in diplomacy. Moreover, Neak (2018) sees diplomacy as "a science which permits its practitioners to say nothing and shelter behind mysterious nods of the head, a science whose most successful exponent is he who can swim with his head above streams of events he pretends to conduct". [3,4,5]

### 2.2 Foreign Policy

Like most concepts in social sciences, scholars and diplomats are divided as to the meaning of foreign policy. Neack (2008) refers to the term as "a neglected concept" and contends that the neglect has been responsible for the difficulties in understanding and explaining the concept. Harun (2009) defines foreign policy as "the policy of a sovereign state in its interactions with other sovereign states. It is a policy that a nation pursues in its dealings with other nations designed to fulfill its national objectives." This definition centres on state and an independent for that matters. It is the policy pursuit by these independent states in their interaction with each other that is termed foreign policy. The definition ignores other actors in the international system who also formulate guidelines in their interaction with each other. [6,7,8]

In most respect, foreign policy is an extension of domestic policy referring to a well-rounded, comprehensively plan, based on knowledge and experience, for conducting the business of government with the rest of the world. It is aimed at promoting and protecting the interests of the nation." [9]

### 2.3 Nigerian Institute of International Affairs

The Nigerian Institute of International Affairs is the premier and foremost foreign affairs think tank in Nigeria. It was founded in 1961 and modelled after the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham

House, London. The NIIA was originally set up to be an independent body with financial assistance from the Federal Government of Nigeria. [10,11]

However, in 1971, the Federal Military Government of Nigeria, by Decree No.35 of 1971, established the institute as a corporate body to rid it of foreign influence

Omengh (2015). The Institute was created by the government with the following objectives

a) To encourage and facilitate the understanding of international affairs and of the circumstances, conditions, and attitudes of foreign countries and theory peoples;

b) To provide and maintain means of information upon international questions and promote the study and investigation of international questions by means of conferences, lectures, and discussions, and by the preparation and publication of books, records, reports, or otherwise as may seem desirable to develop a body of informed opinion on world affairs;

c) To establish contacts with other organizations with similar objects. To achieve the above objectives, the Institute is charged with promoting the scientific study of international politics, economics, and jurisprudence.

### 2.4 Methodology

This is a qualitative work designed on phenomenology. The empirical data was collected through a face-to-face in-depth interview. The primary data was triangulated with data from secondary materials collected from but not limited to journal articles, past researches, text books, magazines and other government budgets. The population of the study comprised of staff of the Roles of Nigeria Institute of International Relation and prominent international policy analyst in the country. A number of 10 participants selected purposively were engaged for study. To ensure accuracy in capturing the opinions of the research participants, notebooks and a voice recorder were used for recording and note taking. All interviewees participated in the study voluntarily with the researchee guaranteed their anonymity and the confidentiality of their data. In this respect, real identities of the participants were replaced with acronyms. All interviews were conducted in English language with each session lasted for at least thirty minutes. The venue and time of each interview was either selected or recommended by the prospective participant. The data was analyzed using the thematic analyses. The following subsection analyzed the challenges of NIIA in the execution of their tasks.

## 3. CHALLENGES TOWARDS THE FULFILMENT OF NIIA ROLES

### 3.1 Policy Complexities

The Field of Foreign Policy has today become enormously specialized. Similarly, activities involved

in the conduct of external affairs of states have equally expanded tremendously. The Foreign Policy landscape has also expanded and has historically remained intrigued dominated. The statement above testifies to the complexities, intricacies and enormity nature of Foreign Policy Formulation.

Beside the expansion in the conduct of states interactions, NIIA faces the challenge of closely related institutional actors in Nigeria for resources, what this means is that the (NIIA) finds itself as an institution of the Nigerian State in a situation where she must compete with similar policy formulation bodies such as National Institute for Policy and strategic studies (NIPSS) and National Institute for Social and Economic Research (NISER) etc. to gain government attention and recognition. "NIIA now operates in a context where it has to compete with similar institutions for the attention of government and the Nigerian public". Each of the institutions would generate ideas that would attract the attention of the political authorities. This development has become a major challenge to the (NIIA) over the years. The close resources and supremacy may be detrimental to the entire system". Bureaucratic and political competition sometimes means that a state is running several foreign policies simultaneously" thus leaving the government with adopting the most viable alternative or options, (KII4)

The above statement was also confirmed by Singh et al., (2014) when he posited that the National Institute of International Affairs faces a number of challenges in the discharge of their duties in foreign policy formulation, among these challenges are competition from closely related institutions, inadequate funding and shortage of Manpower among others. Informant K11 also argued;

The NIIA also faces the challenge of re-establishing its relevance, repositioning itself and expanding the existing division to accommodate issues such as democracy, good governance, poverty eradication and human rights. The institute under discourse needs to take an urgent step that would re-commit Nigeria and make her focus attention on the issues and make same as determining factors and basis of relating with the other African States. The institute is also bedevilled by the absence of rigorous academic and intellectual leadership in the areas of international relations and Foreign Policy not only in the Sub-region but in Africa. These challenges have been bare of the declining Foreign Policy Formulation over the years.

Corroborating, Olukotun (2013) stressed that NIIA was bedevilled by the absence of rigorous academic and intellectual leadership in the areas of international relations and Foreign Policy formulation and implementation.

On the contrary another respondents has this to say:

As for me NIIA faces the challenge of contending

with the priority of material resources to meet her statutory responsibility. "It is quite regrettable that the NIIA library, admittedly one of the best in the country and indeed in the sub-region has in recent times suffered from poor funding, (KII7).

This correspond with the findings of Singh et al., (2014) who established that the National institute of international affairs faces a number of challenges in the discharge of their duties in foreign policy formulation, among these challenges are competition from closely related institutions, inadequate funding and shortage of Manpower among others.

### 3.2 Institutional Conflict

The lack of clear division of task between the ministry of foreign affairs and the NIIA was also alleged to be undermining the efficiency of their task.

There is this feeling that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs duties are been taken over by the NIIA. This erroneous notion has been a contributory factor to the Foreign Affairs and NIIA cold relations. Over the years, successive administrations both military and civilian had neglected the institute in terms of funding and manpower. As an institute our budgetary allocation is abysmal. The research Departments needs more qualified hands to discharge their duties optimally. The business of conducting research requires adequate manpower and funding (KII9).

This claim was validated by Agbu and Emi, (2006). Where he stressed that over five decades of NIIA's existence and operation has not been tales of achievements and progress alone as in every other Institution. Ideas running contrary to this inevitable reality are without doubt utopist and rather a mirage. Accordingly, several challenges grouped under administrative, technical and logistic factors have combined to constrain her operations, in effect, achievement of her institutional goals.

The challenges we are having (in the course of these roles) are not having the right equipment, adequate researchers or quality research to be able to do the work properly.

### 3.3 Inadequate Funding

Among the NIIA's varying challenges includes primarily the problem of raising the needed finances for its operations. Finance holds a strategic position in the existence and running of every organization and the NIIA is no exception in this regard. Funding is no less an important factor within the NIIA existence and working. Day to day running of the NIIA, involving employment, payment and remuneration of staff (both academic and non-academic), acquisition and maintenance of logistics, organization of events/program, travelling, publications among others have proven to be hugely costly, running into millions of Naira. As early as during NIIA's inception, this challenge was made obvious and

accordingly, Banjo points that it formed a great part of the Council's attention. Contemporarily, the NIIA is a public institution and derives almost all its funding from the government. The downturn in government finances no doubt tells on the NIIA and affect her operations. Worse still, bureaucratic set-up within the government circle slows down the ease with which the NIIA procures its appropriations of government budgetary funds. Logically, the NIIA is forced to limit its operations to suit its finances.

Due to the challenges of insufficient funding, the NIIA has been forced to limit her manpower, especially Research fellows to few capable hands, thus affecting research and general operations in general. Also, due to this problem, several logistic and material supports are not given the needed attention; in addition, most NIIA activities as collaboration suffer. It is for collaborations with other sister institutions, that Agwu submits that "the extent of the collaborations we [NIIA] have are driven by those other foreign institutions because we don't have enough resources to drive such collaborations, sometimes they come here, we sparingly go there."

Retrospectively, it is on record that due to scarcity of funds, the NIIA under Bolaji Akinyemi once launched an appeal for five million naira. Also within the same era, Dr. (Professor) Akinyemi stated that the subvention received the NIIA from the FMG was 50% and this was putting the NIIA monetary balance sheet to be at a 50% deficit. In addition, owing to the financial constraints, the institute's building scheme had to be reduced in scale as capital funds had been cut; and due to the looming financial crisis, the institute had sent over 2,000 letters to solicit funds from the public-spirited men and organizations.

Also, the proposed effects of the inadequacy of funds could not be more confirmed, as in 1977 alone, out of the 12 proposed lecture series, only 6 were successfully carried out, and staff of the institute went as far as doing three peoples job, including the fact that Bolaji Akinyemi threatened to resign in 1982 as a result of financial crunch.

Moreover, some informant indicate that in 1983, the NIIA was to build an International Conference Center in Abuja. The contract however took a long time before the money was released to the NIIA and this arose from the effects of the late 70s and early 80s. Arising from the financial deficit, informants indicate that the institute's library suffered from challenges of lack of new books and journals.

The problem of insufficient funding was reminiscent of most of the successive leaders such as G.O Olusanya, R.A Akindele, Joy Ogwu, Osita Eze eras, even in the present times. Disturbingly, it was alledged that in 1984, the Federal Government have exempted the institute from payment of tax on gifts and donations. In recent times, Ofongo points that due to lack of financial

capabilities, it was not until the present era that the deplorable floor of the lecture hall was repaired and put in a state of perfection.

### 3.4 Falling Standard of Education in Nigeria

This sums up part of the obstacles constraining the NIIA's operational proficiency. Like most other sectors within Nigeria, the educational sector has been faced with years of neglect and non-investment both infrastructural and personnel-wise, thus leading to the ugly trend of a retarded educational system that has seen the quality of output from Nigerian educational institutions retrogress and degenerate in general. Being that NIIA's statute recommends/stipulates Nigerians as members and staff,

NIIA derives an overriding percentage of her personnel from outputs of the Nigerian educational system and in cases where they are poorly trained, the institute bears the brunt of such degenerated and weak system. Invariably achieved research is bound to be poor, alongside policy recommendations and other related institutional products to Nigeria's foreign policy process, which would be affected or rather put non-performing, considering the faulty source. In essence, affecting NIIA's proficiency and by extension Nigeria's foreign policy.

Informant KII8 in affirmation laments that sometimes when you recruit somebody from the Nigerian University with PhD or M.Sc, when the person comes here the person can't fly. It is part of the problem, so if the education sector does not produce qualitative graduates, it will become difficult for the Institute to get people to work here.

### 3.5 Growing Challenges from Similar Institutions to the NIIA's Roles

As asserted by informant KII8, "since the emphasis is on policy-oriented research... the NIIA now operates in a context where it has to compete with similar institutions for the attention of government and the Nigerian public." This poses the challenge of closely related institutional actors in Nigeria for resources. Amongst, some of the NIIA's competitors include, the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) and the National Institute for Social and Economic Research (NISER), in addition to various other bodies. This makes for an unannounced rivalry for attention and resources. This situation is further worsened, since, Policymakers are frequently besieged by more information than they can use: complaints from international agencies or civil society organizations, advice from bureaucrats, position papers from lobbyists and interest groups and exposure to the problems of current government programs in the popular or elite media. "there are now many centres of foreign policy analysis, public and private, thus enriching the sources of foreign policy information and advice... In many ways,



these new centres are also impacting on foreign policy.” Thus, the NIIA faces numerous and continuously piling competition to her roles, which threatens her place and poses a serious potential threat to her institutional relevance. At all times, the NIIA is faced with the challenge of being a step further (despite her problems) thereby guaranteeing government and public attention, invariably manifesting in improved government stipends and budgetary allocation, in addition to her overall Institutional relevance and corporate existence.

### 3.6 Inadequacy of Manpower

It is not in doubt what place staffing holds in any organization. Notwithstanding this fact, the inadequacy of manpower stands as one of the constraints facing the NIIA especially concerning the research department, the supposed nerve centre of the Institute. Within the present crop of staff, an overriding percentage is a non-research staff which ideally should compose few numbers of staff; thus defeating the NIIA's supposed status as a public policy research institution, in addition to begging the question “What is the NIIA?”. NIIA's history is marred by this constraint. Banjo affirms that “the recruitment of suitable research fellows was a more protracted affair”. Consequently, given the delay and problems... in recruiting suitable staff for the Research Department, it is not surprising that there was a consequent delay in the realization of the research and training aspects of the Institute's objectives.

Thus, it explains the appointment of a research fellowbare mostly on a part-time or temporary fellowship basis. Later years were not different as events would prove.

This problem lingers on even up to contemporary times. Within the NIIA today, non-research staff maintain an overriding percentage over research staff such that most times the institute appears more bureaucratic than a think tank. Worse still, demise; sack; leave; seconding to government ministries; an appointment to other institutions (within Nigeria and outside), occasionally threaten the numeration of staff. Also, credibility questions surround most appointed staff and concerns on the ability of potential staff continue to undermine the quantity and quality of NIIA's manpower.

### 3.7 Government Control/Ownership

More controversial is the issue of government control of the institute. According to Ofongo, this problem was not obvious during the Fabunmi era (1963-1971), but with the enactment of Decree 35 (of 1971), the NIIA was made a corporate entity under the administrative auspices of the MEA (now MFA), while MEA was under the control of the FMG. This situation as in other think tanks (including the NIIA) limits it in many ways and exposes her defences, especially about “preserving their intellectual and institutional

independence”, In view of this, one respondent stated that:

What can be safely said is that the NIIA is a government-funded institution or a semi-independent institution. Consequently for as long as the NIIA is funded and supervised by the Vice-Presidency [or the MFA in any case] the independent status of the institute has to be understood in a limited context. The independence of the Institute can only total in terms of independence of actions in the area of research activities. The Institute, to put it succinctly, can lay claim to academic freedom but within certain official limits. If the NIIA was granted independent status, the interpretation can only be to the extent of self-management. Thus, administrative autonomy is necessarily limited by the Institute's responsibility to the government, (KII6).

Above all, the problem subjects the NIIA to a tight situation. In view of this, Akinterinwa wonders, how do we determine the limits of the rights contained in their ‘academic freedom’? Should a research fellow be constrained in criticizing an ambassador whose country has a very warm relationship with the Director-General of the NIIA? When can a research fellow agree or 91 disagree with the policies of the government of Nigeria? Has a research fellow of the NIIA the right to criticize the government openly or otherwise?

Due to the problem, informant KII5 observes that the NIIA's moves at establishing branches at various locations of the federation such as Ilorin, Jos, Kaduna and Calabar was abruptly stopped by the Federal Government decree of 1979 and as already noted, government takeover of the institute aided the perennial problem of feuding between the NIIA and the MFA; following the latter's assumption that the NIIA is an arm of the ministry.

Due to the problem, the informant argued that the NIIA's moves at establishing branches at various locations of the federation such as Ilorin, Jos, Kaduna and Calabar was abruptly stopped by the Federal Government decree of 1979 and as already noted, government takeover of the institute aided the perennial problem of feuding between the NIIA and the MFA; following the latter's assumption that the NIIA is an arm of the ministry.

In addition, there have been several delays in the building of an Abuja headquarters for the institute since 1997 and worse still, at completion, after several unsuccessful attempts by the Ministry of Federal Capital territory (MFCT) and the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) to take over the new headquarter project, the FCDA took over and continued to occupy the NIIA headquarter project, despite attempts by the management of the NIIA to reclaim it, (KII1).

According to Agbu and Emi (2006) posited that, “it is only a warped and corrupt system that can allow such incidences to occur, a structure that is designed in the name of a particular organization, completed

and then the government allows it to be overtaken by another organization.

Let me say more contemporarily, due to persistent underfunding and refusal of the government to honour out-standing agreements, the Association of Academic Research Institutes which includes the NIIA went on a national strike, which lasted about four months. Thus, crippling the NIIA's role in Nigeria's foreign policy process and starving the sector of the much-needed expertise ideas on policy options, (KII9).

In addition, the strike placed Nigeria's foreign policy in danger of rash policy decisions, especially by politicians. Essentially, to a great extent, despite the government's support of the institute, its control of the institute limits the NIIA's efficiency, both as an institution and to the Nigerian foreign policy in many ways, (Agbu and Emi, 2006).

#### 4. Conclusion

Despite the NIIA's recorded input and efforts to Nigeria's foreign policy, this research recognizes the unreserved need for improvement. Thus, in view of the observed need for improvement, as well as the constraints to the roles of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs within Nigeria's foreign policy formulation process, it is only logical that sincere and urgent moves are made towards achieving a more proactive Institute of International Affairs. Against this backdrop, this study therefore made the following recommendations.

Bearing in mind that funding holds a strategic position in the operational existence of the NIIA, coupled with the fact that shortage of funds constitutes one of its biggest limitations, NIIA financing as a matter of urgency needs serious attention. Being the NIIA's major benefactor, the government should appropriate more funds to the Institute. A special fund should be set up via public-private partnership to guarantee a ready fund for NIIA operations. Moreover, the NIIA on its own should strive to expand its in-house revenue push to raise needed funds, through the making of a formal request to the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs or the Presidency for more funding.

Essentially, also the NIIA should intensify every effort to have a permanent physical presence in Abuja. Such a move will increase her closeness to the government and invariably influence on government policy stance;

Furthermore, the Institute on its own should engage in more publicity activities both within the print and electronic media, in addition to holding more of her activities outside Lagos and Abuja. This strategy will gain the institute more popularity among a greater percentage of the Nigerian citizenry, not just among academics, and as well aid in maintaining her relevance/position over other related institutions and competitors.

Based on the strategy to gain more relevance, the institute will need to expand and intensify its cooperation/partnership with universities, groups and organizations. Through cooperative undertakings such as providing related departments in Universities, groups and organizations with her publications; alongside incorporating them in more of her programs; including encouraging more of her staff to participate in occasional external intellectual gatherings; the Institute will raise her publicity and achieve a body of informed people able to criticize, appraise and react constructively to her activities, and above all enhance her outreach and national significance/influence.

Akin to other proposals is the need for the NIIA to always seek a cordial relationship with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) at all times. This can only be achieved through mutual respect and understanding of their respective roles and status, including seeking to partner in strategic concerns where a party may be resourceful and the other under-equipped. The presidency has a duty in this regard to check the MFA's suppose moves on the NIIA. Above all, the independence of the Institute remains sacrosanct for its effective operation. Thus, the government should accord the NIIA full independent recognition in its operations to ensure that institutional products are uncorrupted by partisan, sectional or any group interest.

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