

## An Overview of Feminism and Nigeria's Foreign Policy

Tukur Abdulkadir  
&  
Esther Winnifred

### Abstract

*Feminism has become a global reality and identified as critical as the role of women in the development project of any society. In fact, the attainment of gender equality is not only seen as an end in itself, it is equally a catalyst to, and a sine-qua-non for the achievement of sustainable development. In Nigeria, it is observed that the womanhood is reduced to a mere infidel and a second-class citizen; hence, there is the commonality of general belief system that the best place for women is in the 'Kitchen'. Gender discrimination in Nigeria continues to be highly pervasive, manifesting in different dimensions and in different cultures as Nigerian women are seen as an available object for prostitution, forced marriage, street hawking, instrument of wide-range trafficking and a misfit in the society. The paper examined whether or not feminism is a challenge to Nigerian foreign policy and argued that though gender discrimination and domestic violence against women exists in Nigeria, the past and present government have done a lot to improve the quality of life for the female gender. The paper, therefore, discovered that radical feminist's activities which ushered in the recognition of same sex marriage, lesbianism, female law of inheritance, etc., which Nigeria is not a party to as it is regarded as a negative implication to the culture and traditions of the country, thus, Nigeria's global image is at stake and therefore, might even affect the realization of its foreign policy objectives. The Nigerian government should therefore, diversify its economy to be more dependent on internal economy to avoid over interference of foreign nations or bodies through threats of sanctions and removal of aids and also enhance a less corrupt environment were all citizens rights are guaranteed irrespective of gender.*

**Keywords:** Feminism, Foreign Policy, Nigeria, Politics of Human Right, Gender Discrimination.

## **Introduction**

One of the broad national and international debates in today's globalized world has been on human rights issue in gender terms. Gender inequality, gender disparity, gender segregation, gender conflict, gender liberation and gender discrimination of all sorts are critical points of references in documentary evidences in various conversations locally and worldwide (Alade, 2012). The recognition of historical and global discrimination against women prompted the United Nations Organization (UNO) to declare 1975- 1985 as "Decade for Women". This declaration was to raise global awareness on status of women and to mobilize the world community to eliminate discrimination against women so that women may attain equal economic, social, political and legal status with their male counterparts. In 1992, the United Nations Organization produced the convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopting General Recommendation, which includes violence in the prohibition of gender based discrimination. Violence against women is an internationally recognized human rights violation when either a public official or private person commits the violence (Kangiwa, 2015). Also the European Union adopted a political will to protect and promote women's rights as evident in the guidelines agreed in 2008, addressing discrimination as well as violence against women. The document prioritizes women's rights within the EU Human rights policy towards Third World countries, and sets out a strategy for dealing with individual cases of human rights violations (Alemika & Ogugua, 2001).

Despite all these, the feminine gender obviously continues to agitate for emancipation, empowerment and repositioning in their respective countries. Gender equality and women's empowerment has continued to be the central themes in global treaties, covenants, and declarations because they are now acknowledged as catalysts to people-centered development strategies that focus on poverty reduction, improved standard of living, and good governments which give men and women equal voices in decision-making and policy implementation. The attainment of gender equality is not only seen as an end in itself and human rights issue, but as a prerequisite for the achievement of sustainable development (Fatile and Ejalonibu, 2016).

While the notion of "gender mainstreaming" has gained purchase in policy circles since the late 1990s, scholars who view international politics through a feminist perspectives would be quick to point out that foreign policy has always been gendered. According to

Tickner (2001) feminists have been suspicious of what they have claimed are gendered states, whose internal and external institutions have been constructed to preserve and promote the interests of privileged groups. This has led many feminist scholars to view both institutions and policies as androcentric, normalizing the male point of view while simultaneously devaluing activities central to the female experience (Runyan & Peterson, 2013).

According to Henshaw (2017), employing a feminist lens in foreign policy analysis means understanding that it is not just policymakers who are gendered. Policies, institutions, and the methodologies by which we assess outcomes can all be inflected based on our notions of gender. For feminist political scientists this often means that issues that are of particular relevance to women, like funding for health and welfare programs, policies that address sexualized violence, and support for programs aimed at ending gender-based violence, are often not prioritized in foreign policy in favor of issues deemed more important by predominantly male policymakers. Makama (2013) avers that women constitute about half of the population of the Nigerian State and are known to play vital roles as mothers, producers, managers, community developers/organizers etc. Their contribution to the social and economic development of societies is also more than half as compared to that of men by virtue of their dual roles in the productive and reproductive spheres.

According to Okafor and Akokuwebe (2015), women are a major stakeholder in the development project of any society. There are sufficient evidences to prove that women are a veritable access in Public offices. In the military sphere, women play prominent leadership roles, not only in the military exploits of the Amazons of Greek legend, but also in those of the Amazons of South America and Dahomey, in modern times. Similarly, the heroic exploits of Queen Amina in the military and political ascendancy of Zaria in the sixteenth century were paralleled by those of Joan of Arc who led her French countrymen to record notable victories against the invading English forces in 1429 (Palmer, 1980).

The leadership roles played by both Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti and Mrs. Margaret Ekpo in the Nigerian pre-independence political struggles of the 1950s are incontrovertible. Indeed, it may well be that the women who spearheaded the 1929 Aba Women's Riots in South-Eastern Nigeria were the precursors and role models of the two better known female political activists (Nduka, 2001). It is interesting to note that handful of women have occupied important and key administrative and political positions in Nigeria since 1999. In most instances, these women have performed creditably well thereby leaving

no doubt about the ability and capability of women to perform when saddled with responsibilities at all levels. Such women include; Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala; Professor Dora Akunyili; Mrs. Oby Ezekwesili; Professor Grace Alele-Williams; Dr. Kema Chikwe; and Ms. Christine Lagarde, former French Finance Minister and the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, among scores of other women worldwide.

Ugwuegede (2014) states that there has been a remarkable increase in women participation when measured with certain standards like the number of women who vote in elections; the number of appointive and elective positions held by women; number of women related policies implemented by government; and several other areas. There have been a number of visions and policies pursued by previous heads of government of Nigeria from independence to the present democratic dispensation. The present fourth republic development policies, particularly the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) Policy of Obasanjo regime (2004) and the 7- Point Agenda of President Yar'Adua (2007), former President Jonathan's Transformation Agenda (2011) which was aligned with Vision 20:2020 and the present change agenda are actually for both infrastructure and human capital development, and there are such Non Governmental efforts to improve the quality of women in the country like; the Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF), Better Life Programme for the African Rural Women, Fellowship of Muslim Women Association in Nigeria (FOMWAN), etc. However, the excellent policies and intentions have not resulted in the changes required by the international community as feminist activities has taken new dimension towards radicalism which in most cases not in line with domestic environment of some countries.

Nations seek to attain different goals and objectives in the process of governing their sovereign entities. While some of the goals can be attained by the States on their own, others can only be attained with the cooperation or active support of other similar entities beyond their borders in the form of foreign policy. National image both at home and abroad is an ethical issue. The perception of a country by members of the international community, how a country pursues its relations with others and particularly, the behaviour of its citizens at home and abroad can affect a country's image thus, image making its an essential feature of a nation's foreign policy (Boma, 2015). Nigeria's image has been shaped by a number of factors since 1960. These factors include Nigeria's Afro centric policy, Nigeria's big market for Euro-American finished products, Nigeria's oil boom, Nigeria's anti-apartheid policy, Nigeria's

policy of technical assistance, and several other factors that evolved over the years (Akinterinwa, 2004). It has become very obvious that the 21st century new wave of feminism coupled with terrorism resulting to the abuse of female rights and corruption which prevents the due practice of rule of law is also shaping the country's image.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The paper will adopt the Feminist Theory for its framework analysis. The basic assumption underlying the feminist theory is the critical explanations of women subordination. The feminist's theory revolves round the notion that both men and women are equal and that relegating women to the backdrop in any sphere of human endeavours must be resisted. According to Stacy (1993) feminist theory offers some kind of analysis and explanation of how and why women have less power than men, and how this imbalance could be challenged and transformed. Most feminist theories focus on direct social action as protesting against male dominated institutions and forming advocacy groups to represent and promote women's interests politically and socially (Rich, 20011). Feminist have produced diverse and competing theories about the general pattern of inequality and the broader structures, belief systems and institutions which produce and organize particular experience, in order to analyze, understand and hopefully challenge women's subordination. As a result this, there methods of analysis as regard to the causes of gender inequalities and as well their recommendations for change differs.

Three views have emerged in recent times as serious explanations of women exploitation and oppression which we have categorized as the materialist perspective (Marxist feminist), the radical feminist position and liberal feminism. The materialist sees oppression of women as systematic and built into the structure of society. They see women's subordination as having a material base and a consequence of capitalism especially in a class society that is structured in hierarchical patriarchal relations. The argument of this group is grounded on two premises. The first is that women are socialized into low paying jobs. Secondly, women in addition to any paid labour that they may be engaged in do unpaid domestic labour outside capitalist relations of production. Domestic labour is not only unpaid but is also not computed by economist in calculating the GDP of counties. Meanwhile, domestic labour is necessary to oil the wheel of capitalism. The materialists argue that domestic work or housework is productive labour and a hidden source of profit for capitalism (Dalla and James, 1972). The criticism against the materialist conception which has its root in

Marxism especially the orthodox ones is that there is too much emphasis on material factors and class analysis. In fact, some scholars argue that for most Marxists, it was unthinkable that those working class men might be oppressors in their own homes or that 'bourgeois' women might also be oppressed (Delphy and Leonard, 1992).

The radical feminists argue that women's subordination is not rooted in relations of production but in specific relations of reproduction and sexuality. They contend that housework can be looked at as reproducing and not producing labour power. Firestone, a radical feminist argued that unlike economic class, sex-class sprang directly from biological reality, men and women were created different, not equal (Firestone, 1972). Radical feminism was a creation against the sexism of the 1960s radical movements, women's practical experiences within left organizations and a reaction to the vulgar economist version of Marxism that prevailed at that time. Radical theorists raised the fear of men because it was combative enough to insist that men and the way they have treated women are a central problem. They therefore, see the oppression of women as the fundamental oppression, see men as the oppressors of women rather than capitalism, custom or biology, define women as the politically oppressed class, regardless of race or class, women have more in common with other women than with men of the same class or race.

The position of the radical feminists has been criticized for putting too much emphasis on reproduction and sexuality. It gives the impression that women are subordinated mainly because of their role of giving birth to children. But we do know that the subordination of women goes beyond reproduction. Some scholars have pointed out that it is curious that feminists should 'succumb to such blatant biological determinism' (Jackson, 1999).

Liberal feminism is rooted in the social contract theories of the sixteen and seventeenth centuries. These were distinguished from previous political theories partly by their insistence that all forms of social authority needed to be justified. For the liberal theorists, the justification for such authority was fundamental equality of all, based on their allegedly equal capacity to reason. Liberalism promoted the social ideals of liberty and equality.

Attah (2006) posits that liberal feminists see the causes of inequalities as lying in the socialization process and that given the same opportunities and environment, males and

females will behave similarly. They therefore favor gender equality in the sense of equal opportunities for women and men. The main idea here has been to fight for equality and liberty through campaigns for changes in laws that discriminate against women, gaining rights for women which were previously enjoyed by only men, campaigning against women but which claim to protect them.

### **Women in Nigerian Politics**

For the longest time, people thought that women and politics could not work well together, and some still argue that women are not allowed in political activities. Even a few decades back, women in African politics were not much more than pretty faces, as they were judged by their looks and not by what they had to say. African women had gained political power, and they definitely know what to do with it, they have in one way or the other contributed immensely to the growth and development of the country in economic, political and otherwise despite the little opportunity given to them because of gender discrimination.

According to Falae (2017) such women include the likes of Florence Ita-Giwa known by her nickname Mama Bakassi, who began her career in the late 80s as a chairperson for Delta state from NRC, later as a presidential adviser, a member of the Senate from 1999 until 2003, representing her home state of Cross River. While working at that post, her main focus was on the issues of the Niger Delta, dealing with drug problems, women empowerment, foreign affairs and environment. Another prominent figure is Patricia

Akwashiki who was the former Senator of Nasarawa North and Minister of Information, Patricia has always had an immaculate reputation as a politician. She is known for mentoring the new generations of young female leaders. During her term as a Senator (2007-2011), she worked on inter-parliamentary affairs, financial institutions and the rights of women and youth.

She further maintained that Obiageli Ezekwesili is another female leader who for her outstanding work as the head of the Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit earned her nickname Madam Due Process. She worked as the Minister of Education and in the past years, she had stepped away from politics to pursue business opportunities. She was also one of the people who started the campaign #BringBackOurGirls to return the girls abducted by Boko Haram in 2014. Christiana Anyanwu Cristiana started out as journalist, but soon in 2007, was elected Senator for Imo East from the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Four

years later, she was re-elected for the same post. During her work as a Senator, she worked hard to fight discrimination and segregation in Nigeria. Many consider her a very active and contributing member of the Senate. Monsurat Sunmonu This woman has achieved a lot during her political career, even though she started out only in 2011. She had managed to get a seat in the House of Assembly for Oyo State. A few months after that, she became the Oyo State House of Assembly's first female speaker. The House has never been more productive than under her leadership. She was able to unite people with different political views and make them work towards common goals. Kemafo Nonyerem Chikwe is yet another female politician and the National Women Leader of the PDP. In 1999-2001, she worked as the Minister of Transport, and in 2001-2003, she was the Minister of Aviation. She is also the ambassador to Ireland in Nigeria and a successful and highly intelligent politician who inspires many young women to shoot for the stars.

Amina J. Mohammed is the current Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, who was the minister of environment from November 2015 to December 2016, where she stressed the country's efforts on climate action, protecting the natural environment and conserving resources for sustainable development. She had served as Special Advisor to Secretary-General Ban Ki- Moon on the Millennium Development Goals and she had previously held so many positions in various Nigerian governments. Rose Okoji Oko Serving as another inspiring example is the current Senator for Cross River North. In 2011, she was the first female representative of her constituency. She worked as the Deputy Chairperson House Committee on Education until her election as the Senator in 2015. Aisha Jummai Al-Hassan popularly known as Mama Taraba, the current Minister of Women Affairs has previously held the post of Senator for Taraba North in 2011-2015, where she earned her nickname for successfully representing her people. She was the first woman to hold that post and finally though, not the least is Abike Kafayat Oluwatoyin Dabiri-Erewa the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Foreign Affairs and Diaspora. She is another former journalist, who decided to become a politician. She had previously held the positions of chairperson of the House of Representatives Committee on Media and Publicity in 2003-2007 and the chairperson of the House Committee on Diaspora Affairs in 2007-2015 (Falae, 2017).

### **Implications of Feminism on Nigeria Foreign Policy**

Since Independence in 1960, Nigeria has had extensive diplomatic contacts with its fellow African countries and western nations and had worked through all these to safeguard

its national interest and to achieve other international political interests. Based on its economic and demographic strength, Nigeria has always considered itself as one of the leading countries in Africa and its foreign policy has been geared to reflect this. Apart from belonging to many international organizations: United Nations and several of its special and related agencies such as, Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), African Union (AU), it also has taken the lead in articulating the views of developing nations on the need for modification of the existing international economic order (Ajiye, 2015). However, its relation with other nations is determined by the kind of image it projects abroad and this image emanates from domestic affairs of the country. These implications include:

### **Same Sex Marriage and Lesbianism**

The issue of same-sex marriages or civil unions for same-sex couples is not recognized in Nigeria. Homosexuality can land men up to 14 years in prison in Southern Nigeria and capital punishment for men in areas under Sharia Islamic Law. The law on Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act 2006 was approved on January 18, 2007 by the Federal Executive Council, prohibiting same sex marriages (Adetoun, 2014).

In 2008, the Same Gender Marriage Prohibition Bill came up before the Senate, the Bill was passed in 2013 after a series of amendments. On January 7, 2014, Nigeria's former President, Goodluck Jonathan, signed the Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Bill (SSMPA) into law. The notional purpose of the SSMPA is to prohibit marriage between persons of the same sex, though in reality, its scope is much wider. The law forbids any cohabitation between same-sex sexual partners and bans any "public show of same sex amorous relationship." The SSMPA imposes a 10-year prison sentence on anyone who "registers, operates or participates in gay clubs, societies and organization" or "supports" the activities of such organizations. Punishments are severe, ranging from 10 to 14 years in prison. Such provisions build on existing

legislation in Nigeria, but go much further: while the colonial-era criminal and penal codes outlawed sexual acts between members of the same sex, the SSMPA effectively criminalizes lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The law is a way to use scare tactics to discourage same sex unions and the intent of the bill is to ban anything remotely associated with being 'gay' or just gay in the country (Glenna, 2016).

Ndiribe (2014) posited that leading western countries piled pressure on the Federal government, following President Goodluck Jonathan's signing of the Same-Sex Prohibition Act 2014. That the United States, Member countries of the European Union and Canada all expressed their objection to the law as the implications of the anti-same sex marriage law restrict the fundamental rights of a section of the Nigerian population. The United States Department in February 2006 condemned the proposal. In March 2006, 16 international human rights groups signed a letter condemning the bill, calling it a violation of the freedoms of expression, association and assembly guaranteed by international law as well as by the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and a barrier to the struggle against the spread of AIDS, with the claim that Nigeria has the world's third-highest population of persons with AIDS: 3.6 million Nigerians are infected with HIV.

U.S. Reaction : According to Baffour (2014) the United States Secretary of State John Kerry said the U.S. were "deeply concerned" with the development, as the new law "dangerously restricts freedom of assembly, association and expression for all Nigerians". The act, according to Mr. Kerry, is "inconsistent with Nigeria's international legal obligations and undermines the democratic reforms and human rights protections enshrined in its 1999 constitution". "People everywhere deserve to live in freedom and equality. No one should face violence or discrimination for who they are or who they love," the U.S. Secretary added. The United States Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr James Entwistle threatened that the United States will scale down its support for HIV/AIDS and anti-malaria programmes in response to the Federal Government's position on the gay rights issue (Ndiribe, 2014).

Canadian Reaction: The Canadian Government as a result of the law cancelled a planned state visit by President Jonathan. The Canadian government's action which came within a week after the bill was signed into law is widely believed to be that country's reaction to the President's action of assenting to the bill which has so far enjoyed popular support in the country (Ndiribe, 2014).

UK Reaction: In Britain, the news was met with equal disapproval, with gay rights campaigners describing the new law as "one of the world's most homophobic laws," while advocacy groups called it "tragic" and a backward step in the fight for equality (Baffour, 2014).

Amnesty International: Baffour further maintained that Amnesty International ranked Nigeria as one of the 38 African countries, about 70 per cent of the continent, that have laws persecuting gay people. The organization urged President Jonathan to reject the bill, calling it "discriminatory" and warning of "catastrophic" consequences for Nigeria's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. Besides the implications on Nigeria's foreign relations, domestically, the law has become a tool being used by some police officers and members of the public to legitimize multiple human rights violations perpetrated against LGBT people. Such violations include torture, sexual violence, arbitrary detention, violations of due process rights, and extortion. Human Rights Watch research indicates that since January 2014, there have been rising incidents of mob violence, with groups of people gathering together and acting with a common intent of committing acts of violence against persons based on their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, this therefore, further supports the claims by some states and international bodies (Glenna, 2016). The critiques further maintained that this provision is unconstitutional under the Nigerian Constitution as it violates article 38 that recognizes the freedom of religion, and constitutes the basis for separation between state and churches.

### **Image problem and Nigerian Women Politicians**

Over the years, there has been a great record of women's capacity to mobilize, some of these great women took bold steps to have their views reflected in the way and manner the society is governed. However, with the increase in feminists activities, there has been a great increase in women participation in Nigerian politics, but instead of positive impacts the increase rather brings about negative impacts as the present generation of women revolutionaries prefers to be more fashionable than selling their ideas, showcasing their costly jewelries and clothes, paint their lips and fingers, seating were cameras can easily pick their faces, they prefer a dash of latest cars in town than sit down and articulate on ways of bringing positive change to the society, they would prefer contracts at the expense of their integrity than engage in issues that could liberate women and reposition them for greater and brighter political involvement (Irabor, 2011). The major consequence of this materialistic nature of Nigerian women politicians is that they engage in major corrupt practices so as to satisfy their selfish desires.

Fatile and Ejalonibu (2015) avers that the President Jonathan's 'Transformation Agenda' tried to promote gender equality by improving the level of political participation of

women in Nigeria, but however, Large number of Nigerians are of the opinion that gender mainstreaming in Nigeria both at the local and international level is of negative impact because majority of the Nigerian women who have one time or the other held political positions has been found wanting in terms of corrupt practices and that this does not project good image of Nigeria abroad, thus creating a challenge to its foreign policy. Many Nigerians are not treated well, both at home and abroad, which points to the persistence of a negative image of the country, there is also the case of targeted persecution and maltreatment of Nigerians in different African countries, restrictive labour policies aimed strictly at Nigerians, among others.

For instance, Diezani Alison-Madueke has been in the centre of controversies for years, she is one of the most controversial members of President Goodluck Jonathan's administration who was accused of spending N10 billion of state funds to charter, operate and maintain a jet for her personal use. Besides that, she has also been accused by the former CBN Governor Sanusi Lamido Sanusi of embezzling cosmic sum of \$20 billion. He insists that the former petroleum minister is responsible for disappearance of \$20 billion in oil revenues from the national treasury. The Indian High Commissioner to Nigeria, Ajjampur R. Ghanashyam accused her of stealing at least \$25 million from Indian businessmen in a shady oil deal. Alison- Madueke strongly denies all the accusations. Nevertheless, according to a report by Sahara Reporters, in order to receive immunity from prosecution Diezani Alison-Madueke has allegedly offered Muhammadu Buhari at least \$250 million dollars; however, the president did not take the offer (Nagarajan, 2015).

Bert (2016) reported that Stella Oduah is yet another former Nigerian female Minister of Aviation in the administration of Goodluck Jonathan, who was involved in the corruption scandal of buying two bulletproof BMW cars at an allegedly inflated rate of N255 million. However, Justice Mohammed Yunusa restrained the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) from arresting the former minister of aviation on September 3. The decision of a Federal High Court in Lagos also stopped the attorney general of the federation, the inspector general of police and the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission from inviting Oduah for questioning. Besides that her Masters' degree has been challenged by St Paul's College, the United States school which supposedly awarded it.

He further emphasized that Marilyn Ogar, a former Department of State Security spokesperson, was also accused of collecting bribes shortly before the governorship elections in Osun state from the Petroleum Products Marketing Company to supply lorry-loads of dual purpose kerosene. Besides that she made a very strange politically charged statement, telling that the APC offered two top SSS officials a combined bribe of N14 million to influence the Osun state governorship election. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was also accused of stealing \$1 billion while serving as finance minister in Jonathan's administration. However, she denied the accusations of misspending the money, as well as the allegations that her family was planning to open a multi-million dollar hospital in Abuja. Toyin Saraki, the wife of the Senate president and former governor of Kwara state, Bukola Saraki, was also invited by the EFCC to explain the strange inflow of funds into companies where she had interests when her husband was the governor of Kwara state. A senior agent at the EFCC said the agency generated solid evidence of graft against the Senate president's wife.

Zainab Dakingari, the daughter of former President Umaru Yar' Adua and the wife of former Kebbi State ex-Governor Saidu Dakingari, was another woman accused by the EFCC of a fraud worth N2 billion perpetrated during her husband's tenure as governor of the state and also the case of Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello, the daughter of Nigerian ex-president Olusegun Obasanjo, who was embroiled in a money laundering scandal worth N300 million. In 2008, the EFCC charged her to court, but she urged the court to dismiss the charges on the grounds that the money allegedly given to her by the ministry of health had been spent for a bribe given to the members of the Senate Committee on Health. Besides that, she together with her colleagues spent N500, 000 each for a full-paid trip for a seminar in a luxury hotel in Ghana (Bert, 2016). Since foreign policy is only a reflection of domestic politics, there inherent contradictions here had serious implication in Nigeria's foreign policy.

### **Terrorism and the Bring Back Our Girls Campaign**

Gender inequality as demonstrated through the violation of human rights is a major factor affecting the realization of its goals and objectives. The emergence of the insurgent's activities which has become a recurrent decimal has made the nation to lose all respect and its relevance in the international community, the continued violence against innocent citizens mostly the female gender in Jos, Bauchi, and Maiduguri and other parts of the country, carried out with impunity on a daily basis. The Boko Haram group has continued to attack schools, abduct hundreds of women and increase its use of children as suicide bombers; the

abduction of 230 Chibok school girls in April 2014 attracted a lot of foreign reactions especially from, human rights activists, Michelle Obama, Angelina Jolie and also brought about the emergence of the Bring Back Our Girls campaign by Obi Ezekwesili and Abdullahi. All these are enough to scare foreigners from coming into the country to invest.

The prevailing trend is also capable of stopping foreign election monitors from coming to observe subsequent elections in Nigeria. It suffices to aver that since the escalation of abduction, kidnapping and bombings in Nigeria, the country has lost its 6th position in the league of oil exporting countries. The position has been taken over by Angola that now tops the chart as Africa's largest exporter of crude oil. Prior to the precarious situation, Nigeria used to produce a total output of 2.4 million barrels per day. Industry sources now put the average total oil production output at 1.4 million barrels while Angola produces 1.9 million barrels daily (Punch, 2009).

Nevertheless, given the currency at which these activities (kidnapping, abduction and blowing up of pipelines and terrorism) are going, the secured are no longer safe. However, the essence of striving to attract more foreign investments to Nigeria is to boost Nigeria's economy and position us as a future world leader, which of course is part of our foreign policy. This set of goals can only be achieved if the female gender is protected from rape, kidnapping, abduction, and all kinds of domestic violence against women and children are abolished. Suffices to say, that the more the country lacks security and respect for women which are the major pillar of development, foreign bodies will be discouraged from entering into a bilateral relationship with Nigeria and perhaps prefer a country where all including women and young girls are safe from abduction and rape.

### **Discriminatory Female Inheritance Practices**

Customary law is often used in this instance and there are as many variations as there are ethnic groups in the country. As observed, inheritance rights like most rights are tilted towards the male gender. The cultural practices of the various constituent tribes, societal norms, illiteracy, poverty, and religious beliefs have all fuelled the continuing inequitable representation of women directly and indirectly. And even though there are laws, conventions and treaties that advocates for the equal treatment of all human beings regardless of their sex, tribe, origin and circumstance of birth, these discriminatory practices still operate today unfettered.

Gender equality to inheritance rights in Nigeria differ from tribe to tribe, region to region, state to state even community to community. Usually it is the deceased person's custom that will be applied with regards to his personal property. For the real property, that is immovable property like land, farmland and houses, the applicable law is that of the place where the property is situate on the principles of *Lex Situs*. The principle aims at discouraging conflict of laws in customary law application because customs vary from one locality to the other. However, in Nigeria, as result of the bride price payment by the man to the wife's family, it is believed that a man got his wife for a price and as such, she is a piece of property, such a woman cannot inherit her late husband's property; instead, she is to be inherited by one of her deceased husband's brothers, it was based on this belief that the Court of Appeal in Lagos had held that wives are also regarded as chattel that are inheritable by other members of the family of the deceased husband under certain conditions (Mordi, 2017).

Mordi argued that this is regarded as the violation of the fundamental rights of women. Disinheritance - have not been visible within the prevailing concern and protection of the law. This is because women have traditionally been relegated to the "private" sphere of the home and family; the typical citizen has been portrayed as male, and thus the dominant notions of human rights abuse have implicitly had a man as their archetype. However, governments overlook much of what happens to women at the hands of men and male family members, for example domestic violence or confinement, even when there are laws against such abuse. Thus, abuses done to women in the name of family, religion, and culture have been hidden by the sanctity of the so-called private sphere, and perpetrators of such human rights violations have enjoyed immunity from accountability for their actions.

However, there are clearly defined criteria for inheritance among the adherence of both Christianity and Islam. This situation somehow conflict with the western notion of feminism and it reflect on their attitude to the country.

## Conclusion

Gender discrimination is now universally recognized as unethical, every country strives towards gender equality by ensuring that both men and women enjoy equal opportunities in such important fields as education, politics, economy and commerce. However, feminism through its radical perspective is taking new dimension as some of the developed nations through the politics of human right used it as a means to interfere in domestic politics of the developing countries. In Nigeria, deliberate efforts are made towards

improving the status of women through policies and programmes based on gender considerations, the country has participated in many International Conferences on development issues such as the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. In order to domesticate these international decorations and conventions, Nigerian government drafted a National Gender Policy which was enacted in 2006 to speed up the implementation process of the policy. Thus, government takes cognizance of many International Conventions and aims at harmonizing them with the National Gender Policy, and the existence of several Nongovernmental Organizations that are allowed to thrive in the country for the promotion of girl child/women's rights.

While feminism and gender discrimination may be seen as grave threat to the social, economic and political status of women, the significant question is: is feminism a challenge to Nigeria foreign policy, is it really needed in Nigeria? The answer still remains that feminism is a challenge to Nigeria foreign policy considering the politics of human right towards legalizing same sex marriage and lesbianism. Though the Nigerian society have largely been characterized by the re-occurring patterns of gender discrimination in which women are either denied access to or experience unequal access to critical goods and services, violation of women rights, they are victims of rape, they are hindered from pursuing their dreams for instance the case of the Chibok girls, early child marriage, there has been some recorded improvement as women today are gaining more grounds in politics, receives equal pay at places of work, allowed to own properties, etc.

However, the feminism needed in Nigeria is that which allows every person irrespective of gender to reach their potential, while safeguarding the nation's sovereignty and protecting the cultures and traditions of the country, without allowing negative vices to thrive all in the name of feminism and human right.

### **Recommendations**

The feminist's theory resolves round the notion that both men and women are equal and that relegating women to the backdrop in any sphere of human endeavours must be resisted. It has become an obvious truth that the foreign policy of a country is to a large extent determined by its domestic environment. There is therefore the urgent need for Nigeria to reframe its foreign policy objectives in effort to tackle the current challenges posed by feminist's activities as well as the politics of human right while improving its sovereignty.

This paper therefore recommends that for Nigeria to pursue her foreign policy objectives, attain some level of global respect and be independent of foreign interference in her domestic laws and culture, it must be to some extent sovereign and economically independent and thus put in place the following measures:

- Nigerian leaders should be independent of foreign loans through improving the economy with the abundant resources that the country is endowed with so as to avoid being dependent on foreign assistance for governance.
- The government should look at some of the discriminatory laws against the female gender modified it and also endeavor to make use of the clearly defined criteria for inheritance by the different religious groups of Christian and Muslim so as to enhance the protection of fundamental human rights while ensuring that it does not alter completely the Nigerian culture and customs.
- Nigerian government should adopt gender mainstreaming as a strategy for women development. Gender mainstreaming include removing restrictions to women's mobility, providing full access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, ensuring access to education and employment opportunities as well as access to economic resources such as land and financial services. This will go a long way in reducing their outcry of been marginalized.
- Diversification of the Nigerian economy is very paramount for the development of the country. The government should improve other areas of the economy such as agriculture, textile industry as well as provide an enabling environment for entrepreneurs to thrive which will reduced the cry of marginalization by women and equally improve its export capacity instead of over dependence on foreign made products.
- Ensuring good governance is also a panacea for improving the country's image abroad. Government should ensure that the rule of equity in the federal character principle should be emphasized by the government so as to avoid marginalization which often at times led to frustration and violence.

- Favourable government policies should be put in place to eradicate or reduce poverty rate among women and the establishment of a functioning Ministry of Women Affairs will be most helpful to address the issues facing women. These will go a long way in reducing the rate of human/girl child trafficking, domestic violence and rape.
- The general populace especially women should be re-oriented to understand that the democracy we are practicing today is entirely a western culture imposed on us and there is need for us why fighting for equality to also look at our pre-colonial cultures in which women had their roles in the society, where respected and our culture still prevails.

**Reference**

- Adetoun, T. A. (2014). Culture, morality and the law: Nigeria's anti-gay law in perspective, *International Journal of Discrimination and the Law* December 2015 vol. 15 no. 4 256-270
- Agbu, O. (2009), Nigerian Foreign Policy under President Umar Musa Yar'adua: Challenges and Prospects, the Nigerian Institute of International Journal of Innovative Social Sciences and Humanities
- Akinterinwa BA (2004) Concentricism in Nigeria's foreign, Ibadan-Nigeria, Vantage publishers limited.
- Alade, I.A. (2012), Gender stereotyping and empowerment in Nigeria society: Implications for women repositioning in curriculum delivery, *An International Journal of Language, Literature and Gender Studies* Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, Vol. 1, No. 1.
- Alemika, E. E. O. & Agugua, A. O. (2001), Gender Relations and Discrimination in Nigeria Police Force, Ikeja, Lagos, Centre for Law Enforcement Education (CLEEN).
- Baffour, K. (2014), Nigeria's Anti Gay Law Sparks International Outrage, *Naija.com*. Retrieved from <https://www.naija.ng/56522.html>
- Beth, H. (2016) 7 Women Embroiled In Huge Corruption Scandals In Nigeria, *Naija News.Com*. Retrieved from <https://www.naij.com/541086-7-prominent-female-nigerians-embroiled-in-corruption-scandals.html>
- Boma L.D.A., Terfa, T.A. and Tsegysu, S. (2015) Nigerian Foreign Policy and Global Image: A Critical Assessment of Goodluck Jonathan's Administration, *J Mass Communication*
- Journalism5:279.doi:10.4172/2165-7912.1000279. Retrieved from <https://www.omicsonline.org/open-access/nigerian-foreign-policy-and-global-image-a-critical-assessment-of-goodluck-jonathans-administration-2165-7912-1000279.php?aid=63866>
- Cohn, C. (1987), Sex and death in the rational world of defense intellectuals. *Signs*, 12(4).
- Dalla Costa, M. and James, S. (1972), *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*, Bristol, Falling Wall Press.
- Delphy, C. and Leonard, D. (1992), *Familiar Exploitation: A New Analysis of Marriage in Contemporary Western Societies*, Cambridge, Polity.
- Falae, V. (2017), Women in Politics in Nigeria, *Naija.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.naija1119107-women-politics-nigeria>.

- Fatile, J.O and Ejalombu, G.H. (2016), A Critical Appraisal Of Jonathan's Transformation Agenda And Gender Equality In Nigeria, University Of Mauritius Research Journal, University Of Mauritius, Reduit, Mauritius, Volume 22.
- Firestone, S. (1972), *The Dialectic of Sex*. London, Paladin.
- Fleischman, J. (2014), Why it's Time to Put Women's Issues at Center of Foreign Policy, CNN News 16/05/2014. Retrieved from <http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2014/05/16/why-its-time-to-put-womens-issues-at-center-of-foreign-policy/>
- Glenna, G. (2016), "Tell Me Where I Can Be Safe" The Impact of Nigeria's Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act, The New York Times 20/10/2016. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/10/20/tell-me-where-i-can-be-safe/impact-nigerias-same-sex-marriage-prohibition-act>
- Henshaw, A.L. (2017), *Groups and Identities, World Politics: Gender and Foreign Policy*, Oxford Research Encyclopidias.
- Jackson, S. (1999), "Marxism and Feminism" in Gamble, A. March, D. and Tant, T. (Eds), *Marxism and Social Science*, London, Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Makama, G.A. (2013), *Patriarchy And Gender Inequality In Nigeria: The Way Forward*, European Scientific Journal, Department Of Political Science, Faculty Of Social Sciences, Nasarawa State University, Vol.9, No.17 , ISSN 1857- 7431.
- Mohanty, C. T., Russo, A., & Torres, L. (1991), *Third world women and the politics of Feminism*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.
- <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/01/corruption-and-the-nigerian-woman-is-everyone-and-everything-for-sale/>
- Mordi, R. (2017) "An Appraisal of Inheritance Right of Women in Nigeria". Retrieved from [http://www.academia.edu/7187814/AN APPRAISAL OF INHERITANCE RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN NIGERIA](http://www.academia.edu/7187814/AN_APPRAISAL_OF_INHERITANCE_RIGHTS_OF_WOMEN_IN_NIGERIA)
- Nagarajan, C. (2015), What has President Buhari delivered for Nigerian women?:No change, The Guardian Newspaper 16/10/2015. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/oct/16/president-buhari-nigeria-women-politics>

- Ndiribe, K., Eyoboka, S. and Ojeme, V. (2014) Gay-Marriage Law: US threaten to sanction Nigeria, Vanguard News 21/01/2014. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/01/gay-marriage-law-us-threatens-sanction-nigeria/>
- Nduka, O. (2001), Women and Leadership in South-Eastern Communities: A Comparative Perspective, In I. Bola Udegbe, (eds), Dialogue on Leadership in Nigeria, The Social Sciences and Reproductive Health Research Network (SSRHN), Ibadan.
- Nweke, G.A. (1986). "Domestic Structure and Processes of Nigeria's Foreign Policy", In Olusanya and Akindete (eds.) Nigeria's External Foreign Policy: Twenty-Five Years, Ibadan, University Press Limited.
- Obi E (2006) Nigeria's Foreign Policy and International Relations Theories, Onitsha, Vector Publishers.
- Ojo, O. Sesay, A. (1988) Concepts in International Relations, Lagos, JAD Publishers.
- Okafor, E.E. and Akokuwebe, M.E (2015), Women and Leadership in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects, Developing Country Studies, Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan and Department of Sociology, Osun State University, Okuku Campus, Osun State-Nigeria, Vol.5, No.4, ISSN 2225-0565.
- Palmer, H. R. (eds.), 1980, The Kano Chronicle, Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol. 38.
- Punch Newspaper, Sunday, August 9, 2009.
- Rich, T.R. (2011), "The Role of Women in the Society", in Judaism 101. Retrieved from <http://www.ieffaq.org/women.htm>
- Runyan, A. S., & Peterson, V. S. (2013). Global gender issues in the new millennium (4th ed.). Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Stacey, J. (1993), "Understanding Feminist Theory" In Richardson, D. and Robinson, V. (eds) Introducing Women's Studies: Feminist theory and Practice, London, Macmillan.
- Tickner, J. A. (2001), Gendering world politics, New York, Columbia University Press.
- Ugwuegede, P.N. (2014), Challenges to Women Active Participation in Politics in Nigeria, Sociology and Anthropology 2(7), Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu, Vol. 2, No. 7.
- Nwankwo, O (2013), Concentricism in Nigeria's Foreign Policy, Lagos, The Nigeria Institute of International Affairs.
- UNIFEM (2006), Mainstreaming Gender Equality into National Response to HIV and AIDS Nigerian Case Study, UNIFEM Anglophone West Africa, Abuja.

Winter, H.R. and Bellows, T.J. (1992), *Conflicts and Compromise: An Introduction to Political Science*. New York, Harper Collins Publishers.