

# Nigeria and the United Kingdom Diplomatic Relations: The Emerging Issues in the Post-Brexit Era

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**Abstract:** As United Kingdom embarked on exit from the European Union (EU) following the popular but unexpected outcome of the referendum of June 2016, scholars and analysts all over the world have been predicting the consequences as well as benefits of UK's actions on its close allies around the globe; particularly from Africa-(the commonwealth and non-commonwealth countries inclusive) and the Caribbean and Pacific (ACP). As a close ally to the UK, Nigeria's foreign policy and trade relations with UK and other member nations of the EU are likely to be altered in the post-Brexit diplomacy. This study therefore, seek to explore and unearth the emerging opportunities and challenges that may result from the post-Brexit trade and other diplomatic intercourse between the UK and Nigeria on one hand, and EU, ACP and other Commonwealth countries including Nigeria specifically, on the other hand. To achieve the objectives of this study, a combination of descriptive, explanatory and desktop methods were adapted to access valid qualitative but analytical data that helps to elicit and espouse the position of the authors in this study. General System Theory (GST) was adopted to explain the potential diplomatic relationships between the post-Brexit UK, EU and ACP, the Commonwealth with respect to trade, commerce and industry. The paper concludes that the emerging post-Brexit trade and other diplomacies will throw up challenges and opportunities which proportion may not be immediately determined. The study recommends as follows: that Government in Nigeria and other affected nations should key into the post-Brexit diplomacy by designing economic and industrial blueprints that would provide them the foundations for mutual economic benefits, be prepared to take advantage of the new changes that are likely to accompany post-Brexit trade diplomacy critically analysing them to avoid the mistakes of the past economic and trade regimes, ensure that currency equilibrium is permitted in its post-Brexit diplomacy. This simply means that the government should ensure that there is a balance of her local currency and pound in the post-Brexit trade intercourse with UK among others.

**Keywords:** United Kingdom, Great Britain, Nigeria, Diplomatic Relations, Post-Brexit Era.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, Britain and Nigeria have established mutual diplomatic relations following their colonial affiliation. Both nations have also maintained trade intercourse under the umbrella of the *Commonwealth nations* which was founded on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1931 with over 54 member nations currently. Although, Nigeria is considered a regional power in West African Sub-region and in African continent in general,

but the government still finds it necessary to receive assistance in the form of aids from its Western allies, including the United Kingdom (UK), United States America (USA) and France. Since Nigeria gained its independence in 1960, it has maintained strong diplomatic relations with Great Britain, its former colonial masters.

The post-colonial era has seen United Kingdom as one of Nigeria's closest allies, as such Nigeria's internal affairs including security issues has been London's major concern. This was evident in the 2018 official visit of former British Prime Minister, Mrs. Theresa May in August to Abuja, the Federal capital city of Nigeria, and Lagos which is the commercial capital of Nigeria. This was targeted at cementing the already existing diplomatic intercourse between the two nations of the *Commonwealth*. The reason behind her visit to Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa was believed to be related to UK's planned exit from the European Union (EU). This argument was further complemented by the November visit of UK's Defence Secretary, Gavin Williamson to Nigeria in the same year (Tayo, 2019).

Subsequently, on 31 January 2020, UK left the EU but has remained subjects to EU law, its customs union, as well as under the EU single market. When the EU-UK transition period elapses, UK officially will no longer remain part of the EU political bodies or institutions. This means that despite UK's official declaration of its exit from the EU, it remains part of EU political bodies until the transition period elapses (Edgington, 2020). Whether UK has actually left the EU or not the potential challenges of the post-Brexit appears evident that EU-UK relations will be renegotiated now or at the long run. However, the recent UK's action to exit or withdraw from the EU has made it imperative for both the EU, UK and the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Africa in general and Nigeria in particular, to prepare for the indispensable realignment that will come with it. It would be recalled that the European Economic Community (EEC) mandate was to end the bloody wars between neighbours in Europe which culminated in the Second World War (WWII), and to unite European countries economically and politically in order to have a common front for lasting peace and development in the region.

In a nut shell, EU's renewed mandate is to promote peace, establish a unified economic and monetary system; promote

inclusion and combat discrimination; break down barriers to trade and borders; encourage technological and scientific developments; champion environmental protection; and promote competitive global market and social process (Sraders, 2018; EU, 2020). As at today, member nation-states of EU has a new and common currency *the Euro* which is generally accepted as the legal tender among member nations and other parts of Europe and beyond aside from their domestic currencies. As at the moment the member nations of the EU includes: Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherland, Denmark, Ireland, United Kingdom, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Austria, Finland, Sweden, Cyprus, Czech, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia (EU, 2020).

Akinterinwa (2020) opines that Brexit is a coinage that signifies Britain's exit from the European Union (EU) which is believed to have a long historical dimension. First, it could be trace to the first referendum held in 1975 to determine whether or not Britain would continue to sustain its membership of the then *European Economic Community* (EEU), now the *European Union* (EU) or withdraw completely. Secondly, the word which was said to be coined by Peter Wilding in May 2012, a similitude and semblance of "Grexit" (Greece withdrawer from the Euro zone) to mean Britain's withdrawal from the EU, has raised a remarkable dimension to its meaning. Thirdly, is the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016 majority vote in favour of Britain's withdrawal from the EU, and again, and most specifically, the Brexit which was intensified by UK's final revocation of *Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty on 29 March 2017* which provides that, "any member nations of the Union may withdraw from the EU in accordance with her own constitutional provisions".

For Gadu (2019) the coinage *Brexit* is a short term working slogan for Britain's quest to leave the European Union to which it has been a member since 1973 during the Conservative government of Prime Minister Edward Heath. He opines that since Britain's entry into the EU, its relations with the EU has been highly acrimonious due to some differences ranging from agriculture, immigration, financial and monetary to governance policies. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC) and a prime mover of the Commonwealth of English-speaking countries, Britain has always found itself being caged by EU's policies. Outlining its grievances upon Brexit, Britain stated immigration and economic controls as the major reasons for exit. On immigration, it argued that Britain has often time's experienced alarming growth or increased surge of immigrants from Eastern European countries who were taking advantage of EU protocols on free movement of peoples within the EU to live and work in Britain which the British government argued that it has mounted pressure on the provisions of social amenities in Britain, as well as creating unnecessary competition between its citizens and these foreigners. On the economic front, the government felt constrained by the strict economic policies of the EU which

limited Britain's ability to take advantage of emerging economic opportunities in a changing world. However, with the Brexit, Britain hopes to bring these issues under maximum control (Daily Trust, Nigeria, 2020).

Although, UK withdrawal was hindered by its inability to meet up with the constitutional requirements irrespective of the EU extended dates for UK to either decline or sustain its withdrawal from the EU. EU extended the initial date of 28 October, 2019 for another three months which took effect on 31 October 2019 and to be terminated on 31 January, 2020. This was further extended to terminate at the end of 2020 which means that UK will officially withdraw from the EU at the end of 2020. UK's action, undoubtedly, has created discomfort for its close allies in the EU, Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) region and Commonwealth countries. Of note is the drama surrounding UK's intention to withdraw from the EU and which has so far led to the resignation of, first, the former Prime Ministers, David Cameron and lastly, Theresa May (Akinterinwa, 2020). If UK's foreign policy agenda under post-Brexit towards Nigeria and other African counterparts is friendly and favourable, then, Africa will make significant changes from its previous engagement with the UK and EU. However, to achieve this, means that Africa must be proactive in its dealings with the EU and UK on one hand; and other familiar partners such as USA, France, and Russia, as well as the new entrants such as India and China on the other hand.

Apparently, the major concern of Nigerian scholars, analysts and observers currently is not UK's withdrawal from the EU, but the aftermath of the *Brexit* on the existing diplomatic ties between the EU and UK, as well as between the UK, Commonwealth countries, and Nigeria which is a close ally and mutually dependent nation to the UK and the other Commonwealth Countries. There is apparently no doubt that the sustenance of post- Brexit Britain will be dependent on policies and actions which may differ significantly from the pre-Brexit era that could create impediments in existing diplomatic relationship between UK, ACP, African Commonwealth countries and Nigeria. This may also extend to other member nation-states of the EU, USA, etc. who are also Nigeria's trade partners.

To this effect, Akinterinwa (2020) argues that, "Nigeria's relations with her traditional partners from the West, including the USA and China have always been exploitative, and now that there is the possibility of a paradigm shift from familiar global politics, there is also the possibility of a reshuffling and realignment in global *realpolitik* and *realeconomik* with Africa, especially Nigeria which is likely to be at the receiving end. On the contrary, Dirk (2018:120) argues that, *Brexit trade regime* may result to increased ambiguity, but it may also increase resilience and generate new opportunities and investment for UK and its allies Africa Commonwealth countries, including Nigeria. Since UK provides the biggest market for exports for African Commonwealth countries, there is the possibility that UK will

enhance its trade relations with Nigeria, and by extension to the ACP countries.

What happens next in the *post-Brexit diplomacy* is uncertain so Nigeria government will have no option than to redefine its trade diplomatic relations with UK and other members of European Union. Trade and investment will be affected, no doubt, but most of UK's trade relations with Nigeria and other partners from Africa Commonwealth countries are likely to be renegotiated since some of these negotiations were done through the EU. This is also likely to present a little setback in Africans diplomatic trade intercourse with UK and EU respectively (Tan, 2016). In a nut shell, we predict a *new trade regime* that is likely to alter all existing tariff and non-tariff arrangements negotiated under the EU and other sundry existing arrangements now and in future.

#### *Statement of the Problem*

Analysts and observers of the Brexit process have expressed concern about challenges Brexit may pose and the consequences to the European Union (EU); Africa, Caribbean and Pacific nations and Commonwealth countries' economic diplomacies. Nigeria which is one of the major allies and a member of some of these regional and global arrangements has been predicted to suffer the most from UK's exit from the EU. To this effect, there are several contradictory predictions surrounding the phenomenon of the Brexit diplomacy. This phenomenon is what scholars and analysts regarded today as the emerging issue in the post-Brexit era.

Kohnart (2018) analysing the possible post-Brexit relationships between the EU, UK and African countries including Nigeria, as it stands, identifies some salient challenges or problems that are likely to be confronted in the post-Brexit trade and diplomatic relations. These challenges include: a change or shift in market access, foreign direct investment (FDI), aids, security, and nature of the new partnership that is likely to emerge. In other words, the pursuits of ultranationalist agenda and goals would be envisaged following in the post-Brexit diplomacy. Compromising of human rights with respect to increased inequality and crusade against immigrants are also possible challenges in the post-Brexit era. Unarguably, these emerging issues are likely to impact negatively on the existing diplomatic relations between Nigeria and UK and to other EU member countries.

Scholars and analysts have had to argue that the emerging *post-Brexit trade diplomacy* will complicate Nigeria's internal challenges occasioned by violent clashes between Fulani cattle herders and sedentary farmers, banditry, kidnappings, armed robbery, as well as the security challenges occasioned by Islamic Jihadist movements in the form of Boko Haram and the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP). Nigeria, thus, is likely to face a more critical challenge in her foreign policy formulation and implementation in the post-Brexit era because of her close diplomatic ties with UK and EU member states that have

bilateral diplomatic ties with Nigeria. Some analysts argued that Nigeria's bilateral and multilateral arrangements will be altered and will require renegotiations under the post-Brexit era, hence, the fear of the unknown.

Razzaque and Vickers (2016) argue that the prospect of UK formulating new trade policies in the post-Brexit era may have damaging implications on the exiting *Economic Partnership Agreements* (EPAs) between EU and the ACP countries. Most importantly, Britain's (UK) future trade and diplomatic arrangement with the ACP countries may be renegotiated and if this is done, its impacts may not be comfortable to all the parties. Originally, there are certain privileged concessions enjoyed by these nations in their trade diplomatic intercourse, such as *duty-free and quota-free (DFQF)* market access. The question of whether there would be any tangible benefit or equivalent market access to UK's post-Brexit trade and other diplomatic relationships with African countries, with Nigeria as a focus may arise? This may be detrimental to both UK and its African allies if not properly negotiated in post-Brexit diplomacies. The problem here is that one cannot rule out emerging issues now and in the post-Brexit diplomacy such as changes in tariffs and competitive pressure in the UK market.

Since UK has been the biggest market for Nigeria, Nigeria may face much higher tariffs in its exports to UK and to other EU member states following Brexit. This means that Nigeria may also experience double impacts in its trade relations with UK and EU respectively. Since Nigeria's economic stability to some extent is tied to the provisions of the ECOWAS within the West African sub-region, and further externally to the umbrellas of the Commonwealth, WTO, ACP-EU and UK relations, Nigeria's economy may be threatened by post-Brexit diplomacy. The question now is to what extent could these impacts on Nigeria's economic development? Will Nigeria and UK trade diplomacy improve following the predicted Brexit tariff regime which is likely to occur? What are the likely scenarios of Nigeria, a close ally of UK with other EU member nations? These are pertinent questions that are likely to manifest in future and that would require urgent responses if the Brexit trade tariff regime changes eventually occur. Nigeria which is one of the major beneficiaries of the old world economic order may face double impact and may be exposed to greater competition in the UK market. This will no doubt affect the foreign policy posture of Nigeria and the UK towards each other. It is in the light of the foregoing background that this study seeks to examine the fundamental issues emanating from Brexit and how it may affect Nigeria.

#### *Objectives of the Study*

The main objective of this study is to examine the long-term consequences of Brexit on the trade diplomatic relation between Nigeria-UK and EU, while the specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the impacts of post-Brexit trade diplomacy in Africa, particularly in Nigeria,

2. Examine the benefits of post-Brexit diplomacy in Africa, particularly Nigeria, and
3. Examine the challenges of post-Brexit trade diplomacy to Nigeria and Africa and proffer solutions that could mitigate the negative effect of post-Brexit policies and actions in Africa generally and Nigeria in particular.

### Research Questions

The following questions are raised to give direction to the study:

1. What are the possible impacts of post-Brexit trade diplomacy on Africa, particularly Nigeria?
2. What are the benefits of the post-Brexit diplomacy in African, particularly Nigeria?
3. What are the challenges of post-Brexit trade diplomacy to Nigeria and possible solutions?

## II. METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objectives of this study, a combination of descriptive, explanatory and desktop methods was adopted to access valid qualitative but analytical data that helps to elicit and espouse the position of the authors in this study. The study, thus, relied on secondary sources of data for its related literatures.

## III. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

### *Nigeria and the Post-Brexit Diplomacy*

With the exit of United Kingdom from the European Union a new *global realpolitik* has began. As a consequence, UK is facing one of its greatest challenges likewise the EU and UK's foreign partners from the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) of African, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Undoubtedly, UK's withdrawal has raised a lot of debates from scholars, policy analysts and commentators all over the world some of which are in support of the Brexit and some of who faulted it on the ground that it wasn't necessary since UK is a leader not only to the LDCs trade partners but also in the EU hierarchy. However, supporters of Brexit have argued that UK's exit is likely to offer UK and its closest allies from Africa a lot of favourable opportunities in their trade relations with the rest of the EU member states.

In the affirmative, Mendez-Parra, Willen te Velde and LAlan (2020) argued that Brexit is likely to offer UK the opportunity to pursue new strategic interests and renewed policy objectives in its relations with the LDCs, Commonwealth countries and the nations of the EU. Most significant is its agenda in the LDCs which it has already established its hegemony and leadership status over the years. Perhaps, the most critical challenge of *post-Brexit* on the UK-LDCs relations, Nigeria in particular, is a sustained dominance of the political and economic relations of the partnership. It can be argued that UK definitely is going to pursue a *new tariff regime* and champion its national policy objectives on a plain ground. This means that UK's foreign policy objectives in the

post-Brexit era may or may not favour the LDCs due to the fact that some of the LDCs have colonial link with Britain, especially Anglophone West African countries, including Nigeria.

In the same vein, Willem te Velde (2016:21) argued that from the time UK decided to leave the EU and voted against its stay in the EU, the effects of its exit on the developing economies, particularly Nigeria which is UK's closest ally, was already predicted. This has manifested with the devaluation of *Pounds* through the reduction of *Dollar* value of trade, aid, investment and remittance. This has no doubt lend credence to the heightened uncertainty in the LDCs economic development already affected by recent global economic recession in which LDCs especially Nigeria are the most affected because of over reliance on the economies of the developed countries of the EU, USA, etc. In another development, Willem te Velde predicted possible scenarios in UK's post-Brexit trade policy towards the LDCs, especially the ACP countries and some of the emerging middle-income countries from the Middle East, Europe and Latin America. By implication, the outcome of UK-EU negotiations will have a lot of negative effects in UK's relations with the LDCs in the post-Brexit era due to the fact that LDCs', particularly Nigeria depends on exports to UK which is also likely to be affected by a new tariff regime.

Page (2016) understudying the challenges envisaged for the LDCs relations with UK and EU due to the exit of UK advised the LDCs to focus their attention to the remaining EU member countries and probably on the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Page, thus, suggest that the LDCs should use this opportunity to revisit the lapses in their trade intercourse with the member states of the EU, UK and WTO since UK's trade objectives and future relations are not yet clear following its exit from EU. Likewise, Nigeria in particular should explore the opportunity of post-Brexit to renegotiate special and more favourable trade arrangements with the EU member states, and UK in particular. In fact, the best option for the LDCs, including Nigeria is to prioritise their negotiations with the EU and the WTO instead of negotiating with UK which is likely to present a unilateral front for them. This implies that EU and WTO present better options to Nigeria and other LDCs since they are multilateral fronts which they will need most rather than a unilateral front UK is likely to present to them.

As a complement to scholars and analysts' predictions of the prospects of post-Brexit trade diplomacy between UK and EU on the one hand, and the EU, UK and LDCs on the other hand, Hearne, Ruyter and Davies (2019) opine that geography and history will have a lot of roles to play after UK' transition period from its exit from the EU elapses. Putting into consideration the historical ties between Britain and majority of the Commonwealth member countries, UK is likely to shift its attentions to the Commonwealth which it has a dominant position. It should be noted that majority of the member countries of the Commonwealth of Nations are former British colonies, an advantage London may prioritise during and after

its transition period and in the post-Brexit era. Remarkably, majority of these countries are dependent economies from the South, another advantage UK is likely to explore in the post-Brexit trade diplomacy. Although, UK may experience some policy barriers but its advantage over its former colonies cannot be neglected in the post-Brexit trade regime which is already envisaged by scholars and analysts alike.

In absolute terms, UK and Nigeria may sustain and solidify their trade diplomatic intercourse in the post-Brexit era in several dimensions. Since Nigeria already have one of the largest economy in Africa with crude oil and a little exports from agriculture as its major export commodities, though, a major importer of finished goods and services abroad, one may predict a smooth trade flow from the UK to Nigeria in the post-Brexit era. To this respect, Hearne et al. (2019) opine that, since Nigeria is a major UK's commodities exporter and importer, it is a potential market soon to be reconsidered and explored by UK to grow its post-Brexit trade. In addition to the advantages already in UK's disposal, especially its Commonwealth link with African countries, it has lot of other advantages; first, with the fact that UK is home to a substantial Nigerian diaspora and ongoing educational link notably at the higher level where Nigerians are the third largest groups studying in UK universities and colleges.

Secondly, Britain luxury goods are already well-known and highly patronised in Nigeria and by Nigerians. Thirdly, British firms control reasonable shares in Nigeria's oil and gas industry, and lastly, UK runs a number of investments in other sectors of Nigeria's economy. According to IMF (2017) report, UK's exports over the years account for a greater share of Nigerian imports of merchandise goods. By implication, this position is likely to resurface in the post-Brexit trade diplomacy between UK and Nigeria. In short, all of these factors put together may account for another successful penetration of Nigeria's market by UK on the one hand and the EU on the other hand using post-Brexit trade diplomacy as an excuse. UK's import market volume in Nigeria may also increase beyond imagination in the post-Brexit era.

#### *Post-Brexit Diplomacy and Its Benefits*

Much as academic and professionals opinions underline the challenges occasioned by UK's withdrawal from EU, there are also possible benefits of UK's exit to the ACP and Commonwealth countries, especially to Nigeria's economic development. Since the UK government has disclosed its intension of prioritising trade negotiations with trade partners following her exit from EU, there is the likelihood that African countries including Nigeria will be the prime targets. Recent statistics shows that Africa is home to over eight of the world fastest growing economies, an opportunity UK will not fail to explore in the post-Brexit diplomacies with foreign allies. According to Salaudeen (2020) before the Brexit, the EU made agreements on behalf of its member states and the interest of the UK may not have been a priority for the EU at the time of negotiations but now Britain has embarked on her

exit from the EU it has the opportunity to renegotiate trade diplomacy with trade partners in order to cover its interests areas that were not covered initially by the collective trade agreements under the EU. Furthermore, she pointed out the fact that under the UK's transition period, it has so far replicated EU trade agreements that will no longer apply when the transition period ends.

Amazingly, UK under its transition period has already signed trade deals with eleven (11) African countries covering over 43% of the country's total trade within Africa. Unarguably, this singular step will in turn benefit African continents that have always been at the receiving end of all its dealings with the super economies from the North since African governments will have the opportunities to renegotiate the lapses observed in their trade agreements with the EU and extend same to UK. Likewise Nigeria would utilise Brexit diplomacy to open up opportunities to various options with the EU nations other than Britain alone and redefines its trade relations without sentiment with several other economies of the world (Salaudeen, 2020). Kohnert (2018:4) expressing Nicholas Westcott's, director of the Royal Africa Society (2018) opinion on the possible impacts of Brexit on African and other LDCs or Developing Countries (DCs) argued that, "the only alternative for these countries is to tap on the *golden opportunity* to be offered to them by Brexit and to achieve this they must secure better access, greater protection, and more aid from Britain, although this cannot be achieved without some challenges but they must strive to tap from the *golden egg* to be laid by Brexit".

Expressing their views on the benefits of the Brexit diplomacy, Onyekwere, Ajelurou and Olumide (2020) said Africa should expect to prosper from the unfolding scenario since Britain will be seeking to make new friends and solidify old relationships, especially with the US, and to some extent, Nigeria and Africa. Though, the exit may have some disadvantages to Nigeria because Nigeria would have to sign separate pacts with the EU and with UK unlike before when it only sign one agreement with EU to cover all its pacts with the EU countries, but to be realistic, it would offer the government of Nigeria the opportunity to go back to the drawing table and critically analyse her initial lapses with the EU pact and immediately readjust and renegotiate them to better the country's economic development in future.

Oyedoyin (2020) argues that Brexit is a second chance for Great Britain to re-launch herself into the global arena as an independent developed nation in this era of competitive globalisation and multi-polar world order, moreover, Britain going global on an independent level will no doubt open a new and better frontier for the Commonwealth countries and African countries, such as Nigeria. In this new age of advanced technology, coupled with rising demand for technology transfer, Nigeria is in a good position to make genuine gains but only if the government can solidly reposition itself and have good negotiations with the UK and EU that are likely to focus their attentions in Africa. Nigerian

government, thus, has a better opportunity to address the issues affecting its commodity produce in terms of quality and international standardisation that would meet UK as well as other partners import regulatory systems.

By extension, this will also create the avenue for Nigeria and her African counterparts under the Commonwealth of Nations to re-launch themselves into relevance in global political economic frontier not as dependent nations on the economies of the West but as equal partners in global economic affairs. They will also protect and reposition their domestic markets and infant industries, though, this strategy is most likely to be successful in areas where British products and services do not compete hugely and frightfully with their domestic markets and infant industries. The prospects for the realisation of this benefit depends at least on a situation where there are less strict or rigid tariff rates or quotas and non-tariff barriers to trade from both partner nations of the post-Brexit.

#### *Theoretical Framework (General Systems Theory)*

The systems concept is not relatively new. It dates back to the mid 1940's with the earlier works of Ludwig von Bertalanffy, a German biologist and Kenneth Boulding, an American economist as some of the earliest contributors to this concept and was brought into organisational setting by Katanz and Khan (1966), (Ottih 1996 & Gomez-Mejia and Balkin 2005).

General Systems Theory (GST) is a collection of ideas from diverse discipline but mainly from the natural and social sciences as well as engineering. In applying this concept to our object of analysis Nigeria and the United Kingdom diplomatic relations and the emerging issues in the post-Brexit era, an attempt will be made to define the concept in order to sharpen our focus. However, it must be noted as Ottih (1996) did indicate that "the definitions of system are as varied and ubiquitous as systems themselves". The GST likens an organisation to an organism with interdependent parts, each with its own specific function and interrelated responsibilities in pursuance of a collective goal. A system is an object or an entity made up of different parts, components, units, compartments systematically arranged to interact with one another in a systemic manner, that the overall goal of the system is achieved.

Cleland and King (1975) as in Ottih (1996) define this concept as an organized or complex whole, an assemblage or combination of things forming a complex or unitary whole. With foregoing definitions, a clearer and near-enough picture of the systems concept as it relates to the subject of discuss can be achieved by looking further into some salient and key elements in these definitions. These are as follows; parts, relationship, whole, common objective or goal, systemic and systematic. Every system is made up of different parts known in systems language as subsystems, which within the context of this discuss could be likened to the different nations that make up the EU, other international, regional, national bodies and organisations that are not part of the EU, which post-Brexit relationships could affect. The subsystems relate with

one another and are related in one form or the other. Trade, commerce and industry, military cooperation, development aids, security among others are some of the relationships that Brexit will affect. The subsystems are related in such a manner that the boundary of the system is reasonably definable and or identifiable. Implicit of this, is that the focal system's (EU) boundary can be clearly isolated from other systems (non-EU nations and organisations) but a subsystems of another but larger system the global system. Subsystems for instance the member nations of the EU have a unity of purpose and function in such a manner that the overall goal is fulfilled. Subsystems do not work at cross-purposes but do contribute their own quota towards accomplishing the systems objective. Systemic here refers to the interaction and interface among the subsystems, the interrelationships among the subsystems. Systematic on the other hand refers to the orderly placement or positioning of the subsystems or system part. It is the structuring of the system, the orderly functioning of the parts of the system parts and the entire process Ottih (1996) paraphrased.

Aside from the foregoing, there are three systems constructs/concepts which are also some of the characteristics of systems that could help to espouse the position of the authors in this paper, these are; negentropy, equifinality and dynamic homeostasis. The coinage negentropy is derived from entropy a chemistry term, which means tendency towards disorder, spoilage or natural death. Every system particularly living organisms tends towards entropy. Systems tend to reverse or counter this trend and this process is known as negative entropy or negentropy. When entropy set in the system will loses its steady state or equilibrium and will need some conscious and concerted effort to reverse. This reversal can be done through equifinality a systems concept that advocates the attainment of systems goals through diverse means recognising that "there are so many ways to skin a cat".

Both the EU and Britain are challenged by the Brexit resulting in some form of imbalances these challenges are akin to the systems' entropy. These imbalances will need to be fixed by applying different means equifinality, which in turn can throw up opportunities to all interested parties in the Brexit including Nigeria in order to achieve dynamic homeostasis or steady state.

#### IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

From the analyses so far, it is obvious that Commonwealth will serve as a major panacea, though, alongside other factors such as geography and historical ties for UK's post-Brexit trade diplomacy with Africa, including Nigeria. Since Nigeria gained her independence from Great Britain on 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1960 its foreign policy posture has been influenced by its *Afrocentric ideology*, as well as its relations with UK, EU and to the new entrants- USA and China. By implication, one may predict similar trend in Nigeria's foreign policy in the post-Brexit diplomacy with more resilience in dealing with the difficult conditions in *pre-Brexit diplomacy (diplomacy before*

*Brexit*) with UK on one hand and EU member states on the other hand.

At the moment, Nigeria and its African counterparts in the Commonwealth are exposed to a *new scramble* not only by Britain but by EU member countries and other new comers like China as well as familiar faces like France, America and Russia. The new form of scramble may create new avenue for exploitations as well as benefits to Great Britain, EU, USA, France, Russia and China. If this situation is not properly managed Nigeria may fall for the second time and lose its opportunity of revitalising is economic development through adequate and efficient renegotiations of lapses in its *pre-Brexit* trade relations with the UK and EU.

Kohnart (2015) as in Kohnart (2018:5) analysing the benefits of Brexit identified a silent area that will be of immense benefit for African countries in their negotiations with the EU in particular. He noted that the controversial trade agreement between African countries and EU negotiated under the *Cotonou Agreement* often regarded as the *Economic Partnership Agreements* (EPAs) and said to be imposed on African countries by EU in the past decade is likely to be renegotiated by African countries in post-Brexit trade diplomacy to present a better options to African counterparts. Possibly, the government of Anglophone states will now have the opportunities to pull out or renegotiate terms in this disputed trade agreement with the EU following the Brexit trade diplomacy, he noted.

However, it is important to note that all of these benefits to be realised or enjoyed by parties in the post-Brexit trade diplomacy depend on the successes or outcomes of the pending agreements to be negotiated as well as those to be renegotiated by the principal actors, EU, UK, and Africa. Nevertheless, what is clear is that UK is committed to continue trading with African states including Nigeria. This is evident in Theresa May's visit to Cape Town in August 2018 and in which she reiterated *London's commitment* to continue trade relations across African continent. In a joint statement by the Southern African Custom Union, Mozambique and UK confirmed the commitment of UK to sign an EPA agreement if the Brexit is sustained. This is also evident in Boris Johnson's first official speech in which Africa stands prominent in his post-Brexit agenda. Having assumed leadership as Britain's foreign secretary of state after the British vote to leave the European Union in June 2016, Boris outlined London's future commitments beyond Europe but with priority on a global Britain and that which will revive the diminishing Western values worldwide, as well as stick with free trade, democracy and human rights in his new Brexit foreign policy (Polonska-Kimunguyi & Kimunguyi, 2018:8; Suess, 2019:2).

The benefits otherwise offered by Brexit to Nigeria and her African counterparts may elude them if they fail to identify the initial lapses and differences in their trade relations with the West, re-adjust and renegotiate same in the post-Brexit

trade agreements with UK, EU and familiar partners like France, USA, Russia and China. This means that new economic or trade pact or treaty arrangements is the only alternative to Africa and Nigeria's economic developments in the post-Brexit era, hence, should be adequately utilised by the government of Africa, including that of Nigeria. All of the benefits enumerated above are the benefits to be enjoyed in the post-Brexit era if properly managed by Nigeria and its African counterparts.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. To key completely into the new opportunities to be offered by Brexit, Nigeria should and without delays, key into the post-Brexit diplomacy by designing economic and industrial blueprints that would provide the foundations for mutual economic benefits in her relations with the UK, EU and interested nations. To no doubt would offer Nigeria the opportunity to renegotiate all grey areas in her initial agreement negotiated under the EU for efficient and equitable trade partnership rather than the seemingly exploitative ones.
- ii. It is obvious that one of the spurs of Brexit is to fall back to the Commonwealth countries, an indication that Britain's target is Africa which it has advantages. Nigeria as a member of the Commonwealth should be aware that it is also a potential target market; therefore, should be prepared to take advantage of the new changes likely to accompany post-Brexit trade diplomacy. It is obvious that Africa, Nigeria to be precise, has been targeted as a vast market for raw materials and finished goods, an opportunity the government of Nigeria should critically analyse in order to have efficient economic deals and benefits rather than the mistakes of the past economic and trade regimes. In essence, Nigeria stands a better chance to grow its economy that has always been exploited by its foreign partners from Europe, USA, etc.
- iii. Nigerian government should ensure that currency equilibrium is permitted in its post-Brexit diplomacy. This simply means that the government should ensure that there is a balance of its naira and pound in the post-Brexit trade intercourse with UK. This may place Nigeria's commodities in equilibrium with its imports from UK on the one hand and it exports to UK on the other hand.
- iv. Nigeria should use the Brexit as an opportunity to push for its industrialisation, a drive that would create more and efficient industries located in the country. In other words, this can only be achieved if the government can create conducive atmosphere that is capable of attracting foreign investors not only from UK but from the rest of the world. Rather than remaining the dumping ground for Europeans finished goods and source of raw materials for

- European industries, the government sign pacts with foreign counterparts to ensure they find the country conducive to site their industries which would automatically revive the country's economy and create more job opportunities for the teeming masses that are jobless.
- v. Most importantly, the government should use this as opportunity to address the regular cases of racism and incidences of xenophobic attacks and other anti-human vices. This has become essential considering the incessant cases in recent times, as evident in Boris Johnson, British Prime Ministers reckless outburst with unkind statement about African and black race, and which he called Africans *Pickaninies with water melon smiles*.
- vi. A more liberal attitude on all fronts is also required to alleviate and promote progressive trade partnership between London and the emerging new trade partners from Africa in particular in the post-Brexit era. This means that London, Nigeria and other partners from African Commonwealth nations should present liberal economic and trade strategies if they want the benefits to be created by Brexit to be sustained and for their mutual benefits to all parties.
- vii. Nigeria and African counterparts should ensure that they rebuild their economies around reciprocity or mutual interests in the post-Brexit trade diplomacy to be negotiated. To this respect, they should ensure that prosperous negotiations are made at the long run and economic system to be put in place should not just create an economic system but must create shared economic growth and development for the parties involved.

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