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Website: <https://jppssuniuyo.com/jld> Email: [jppssuniuyo@gmail.com](mailto:jppssuniuyo@gmail.com)

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### Article

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## U.S FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS: ASSESSING THE POLICY DECISIONS OF TRUMP IN UPHOLDING AMERICA'S NATIONAL INTEREST

Etebong A. Udofia <sup>1</sup>

Lawrence I. Edet <sup>2</sup>

Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Uyo, Nigeria <sup>1 & 2</sup>

Corresponding Email: [lawrence4justice@yahoo.com](mailto:lawrence4justice@yahoo.com) <sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

This work analyzed US foreign policy under Trump. Trump's policy thrust was anchored on 'America First' ideology which gave little or no consideration to the interest and cooperation of her allies and the global perception. This study revealed that Trump's foreign policy posture was a departure from that of his predecessors with a little semblance to a typical Republican style. Qualitative research method with Content Analysis was used in collection of data and evaluation of research questions. The research adopted Incremental Theory of public policy as a theoretical framework. Findings revealed that America's withdrawal from Paris Agreement on climate change was not in the overall interest of America and her allies, and that Trump's negotiation with the Taliban did not foreclose the rise of other extremist groups. This work concluded that America's withdrawal from Paris agreement brought about global tension and suspense on her allies and further threatened the graving consequences of climate change. Again, Trump's negotiation with the Taliban was against the principles of America's foreign policy that forbids negotiation with terrorist group. The study recommended amongst others, that stiffer penalty should be meted out to any State that breach multilateral agreement entered into and ratified by the United Nations, and that Congress should consider enlisting negotiation with terrorists as impeachable offence in America's legal system.

**Keywords:** Containment Doctrine; Foreign Policy; National Interests; Negotiations; Policy Decisions; Terrorism.

### Introduction

Foreign policy analysis is an aspect of International Relations that dissect the policy decisions and outcomes of States as they interact in the international system. This has been a trending issue that captures the interest of political analysts and essayists, with a view to place the approaches, processes, objectives and challenges of policy decisions side-by-side with the

idiosyncrasy of the President and national interest. For any country to be able to drive home her national interest, in the face of a conflicting interest of other countries in international system, a good foreign policy framework and instruments must be adopted. America is known for forward looking foreign policy experts and actors and can boast of institutions like Council for Foreign Relations and Congress which is more like a training platform for policy makers. In the American Foreign policy tradition, responsibility for crafting of foreign policy is shared by the executive and legislative branches. Under the constitution, the President is the central figure in the foreign policy process, by and with the consent of the congress. This invariably implies that the president and congress are the primary actors, as far as America's foreign policy decision is concerned (Parmer & Perkins, 2015).

Many are of the view that the President and his executive members exert more influence on policy decisions except on vital national issues like "Treaty". But Edwin S. Corwin averred that "What the Constitution does, and all that it does, is to confer on the President certain powers capable of affecting our foreign relations, and certain other powers of the same general kind on the Senate, and still other such powers on Congress; but which of these organs shall have the decisive and final voice in determining the course of American nation is left for events to resolve". Hence the constitution is presenting a level playing ground for Congress and President to struggle for the soul of the country's foreign policy. However, national interest of a state is often put forward while adopting a foreign policy posture. National interest supersedes all forms of interest, and it is the sole objective when two or more states are in relation. Morgenthau (1978) contends that national interest is defined as power and that statesmen should think and act along the direction. Certain variables are major determinants when a state's foreign policies are to be adopted. These determinants cut across both internal and external factors. The internal factors are occurrences within the state that influence foreign policy, while external factors are drawn outside the state.

America's foreign policy has undergone some changes before and after the world war era. America adopted non-interference in European affairs foreign policy posture during the period of World War I, but later it went beyond that as they feared for Adolf Hitler's movement to conquer the world was on the match (Parmer & Perkins, 2015). With the end of World War I, the struggle for world dominance was imminent, as America preached the gospel of containment against the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)'s communism. This later came to an end in 1992 with the collapse of the USSR. During the cold war period, the Cuban missile crisis, and the possibility of a third world war was averted by astute diplomacy and a limited display of power. The balance of power also shaped America's foreign policy. Terrorist attack on world trade center and the pentagon on September 11, 2001 also changed America's foreign policy posture and National Security strategy from containment to forward deterrence.

Under President Trump, America's foreign policy was focused on 'America First' doctrine, where concerns centered on withdrawing from cooperation and alliances that did not unilaterally constitute immense benefits to America. The idea of building a wall to restrict movement of immigrants from Mexico to the U.S and withdrawal from Paris agreement on climate change was informed by this 'America First' doctrine. In the past decade, a good number of research has focused on U.S foreign policy vis-à-vis important historical periods like World War I; World War II; Cold War era; Post Cold War era and post September 11, 2001 etc. Hence, attempt has been made by past researchers to examine and assess the U.S policy behavior. This study intends to explore the U.S foreign policy analysis under President Trump (2017 – 2021).

## **Statement of the Problem**

America is known for objective driven foreign policy experts and actors that help in crafting policies that are in line with her national interest, and can boast of institutions like Council for Foreign Relations and Congress which is more like a training platform for policy makers. Past Presidents have made considerable efforts in professing a doctrine or policy thrust that help articulate America's national interest. But with the assumption of office by Donald Trump in 2017, the U.S. foreign policy underwent series of drastic adjustments, causing shocks in the U.S. relations with the rest of the world. One of the policy decisions of Trump was his disengagement from Paris Climate Treaty which was meant to address mitigation of greenhouse gas emission (Downie, 2014). The fallout of this disengagement has unsettled the global community and further threatened water and food security, increased mortality, massive population movement and suspicion, which has affected vulnerable population like children and the poor disproportionately. Some analysts have also reported that the age long tradition of America not negotiating with the terrorists was abrogated by President Trump when he negotiated with the Taliban in Doha in 2020 thereby giving other terrorists group the effrontery to act with impunity, which has further led to many other splinter groups of terrorists. This study therefore, is an attempt to examine the U.S Foreign Policy Analysis under President Donald Trump (2017 – 2021).

### **Research Questions**

- i. Does America's withdrawal from Paris Agreement on climate change enhance cooperation of the U.S allies in shaping international system?
- ii. To what extent has President Trump's negotiation with the Taliban prevented the emergence of hostile extremists?

### **Research Objectives**

- i. To examine how America's withdrawal from Paris Agreement on climate change enhance cooperation of the U.S. allies in shaping international system.
- ii. To examine the extent to which Trump's negotiation with the Taliban has prevented the emergence of hostile extremists.

### **Significance of Study**

This work is considered highly significance as it critically examines the U.S foreign policy during the administration of Donald Trump (2017 – 2021). Also, being a burning and trending issue that involves a very important Super power, whose policy approach is taken as a model by other countries, the strength, weakness and the way forward is imperative. The study will come up with recommendations to address these issues. Aside from adding impetus to the current agitation for a dynamic foreign policy posture that is driven by national interest, global peace and tranquility, the study will assist scholars and learners of international relations, foreign policy experts, and decision makers, etc., to attempt to craft a balanced foreign policy that will address domestic and external issues. In addition, the work will broaden the knowledge base and enhance the understanding of the researcher on the subject matter. Finally, it will contribute to existing body of knowledge and literature. It will advance the frontiers of human knowledge relating to Foreign Policy Analysis while, governments, students and the general public will find this mini research work useful.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Conceptual Literature Review**

**Foreign Policy :** The concept of foreign policy encompasses a set of principles that a state formulates, guiding its mode and dimension of interaction with other states based on its national interest. Ofoegbu (1980), posits that foreign policy is the category which deals with defence, security, international political relations, and international economic relations. It deals with the relations between one actor in the international system and other actors in the international system. Folarin (2017), defines foreign policy as the rational pursuit of a set of national objectives. This national objective is based on the state's primarily vital and non-vital interests. According to Agaba, Obiageli and Idagu (2018), foreign policy emanates from interactions in the domestic and international environments. What is constituted as foreign policy is simply a blend of a country's domestic policy and happenings in the international system. In the view of Frazier (2019), foreign policy refers to the tactics that a state employs to safeguard its international and domestic interests and how it interacts with other states and non-state players.

### **Causal Dynamics and Historical Events that Shaped America's Foreign Policy**

- i. **World War I (1914-1918):** The rise and increase of unrest and turbulence in Europe that degenerate into World War I were seen by most Americans as non-American affairs. President Woodrow Wilson would proclaim a neutral position to these wars at the initial stage and was supported by most Americans. He adopted a foreign policy of non-interference in other states' affairs. This war broke out in 1914, with the assassination of Austro-Hungarian Prince Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie both assassinated by a Bosnian Serb nationalist in Sarajevo. The gravity of annoyance and retaliation led to Austria-Hungary declaring war on Serbia. Not too long, alliances and counter alliances were made as World War 1 officially began
- ii. **The Zimmerman Telegram in 1917:** The Zimmerman Telegram was a secret diplomatic communication issued from the German Foreign office in January 1917 that proposed a military contract between the German empire and Mexico if the U.S entered World War I against Germany. The telegram was intercepted by British Intelligence. This led to America's declaration of war against Germany in April, 1917, after German Secretary for Foreign Affairs Arthur Zimmerman publicly admitted that the telegram was genuine.
- iii. **World War II (1939-1945):** After the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor in December, 1941, the United States declared war on Japan. Germany and Italy declared war on the U.S. a few days later, and the nation became fully engaged in the Second World War. The war ended with the bombing of two Japanese cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima by the U.S. nuclear bomb. U.S and USSR eventually became two global powers.
- iv. **Cold War and Opposition to Communism in 1947:** Cold war liberals including United States supported opposition to communism. It was a period of geopolitical tension between the U.S and the Soviet Union and their respective allies, the western bloc and the Eastern bloc, that started in 1947 and ended in 1991 after the fall of Soviet Union. The conflict was based on ideological struggle for global influence. America was guided by Truman Doctrine which encourages rebuilding the democratic and economic systems of Europe and to counter perceived threats to European balance of power, such as communist parties seizing control through revolutions.
- v. **Response to 9/11 Attacks in 2001:** September 11, 2001 attack by Osama Bin Laden led Al Qaeda terrorist group on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon sent a shock wave to America and the global society. This led to President George Bush push for review of National Security Strategy from Containment to forward deterrence (Preemption).

### **Some Past Presidents of U.S and their Policy Ideologies**

- i. George Washington - Isolationist Doctrine
- ii. Theodore Roosevelt - Open door policy
- iii. Woodrow Wilson - Fourteen Point Policy
- iv. Harry Truman - Truman Doctrine
- v. Richard Nixon - Détente Policy
- vi. Ronald Reagan - Reaganomics Policy
- vii. George Bush - Preemptive Doctrine
- viii. Barack Obama - Countering violent extremism
- ix. Donald Trump - America First policy

### **The Concept of National Interest**

When adopting a foreign policy posture, it is always of importance to project a national interest in which the state is put first while interacting with other states. Liu (2014) argued that national interest is very important in international relations, for as a concept it centers on the political, security, economic and cultural interest of a state. The core principle of a country's foreign policy is surrounded by its national interest. Nuechterlein (2009), defines national interest as the aspirations and goals of sovereign entities in the international arena. In the process of formulating any foreign policy, a state will first consider what it feels is vital and core to its existence. The core and vital interest of a state constitute its national interest. (Morgenthau, 1978) cited in Dinesh (2019) sees national interest as a nation's survival and protection of its physical and cultural identity against encroachment by other nations. Furthermore, a state could go to any length, if need be, for the protection and preservation of this national interest. Therefore, the components of national interest are vital and non-vital interests.

### **America's National Interest**

America's national interest has always been pushed forward in the process of formulating and implementing its foreign policy. The vital and non-vital interests are always put into consideration. According to Allison and Blackwill (2000), the vital interest of America's foreign policy are to:

- i. prevents, deter, and reduce the threat of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons attacks on the American citizens and its military.
- ii. ensure U.S allies' survival and their active cooperation in shaping the international system.
- iii. prevent the emergence of hostile major powers around the U.S borders.
- iv. ensure global trade.
- v. achieves productive relations.

America's foreign policy in recent times has been concerned with addressing any issue as core and vital. Even though as argued by some scholars the extent of the spread of democracy by the U.S is not a vital interest, the case scenario of supporting rebel groups as in Libya, and Syria to unseat dictatorial and undemocratically elected governments was a very relevant agenda on the U.S foreign policy radar.

### **U.S. Foreign Policy under President Trump: An Overview**

President Trump's entrant into politics took many by surprise and turn out to be a game changing moment in the annals of U.S. politics. His presidential campaign message was radical in nature and hinge on America first doctrine, a position some critics alleged to be similar to isolationism of Woodrow Wilson era. Since the presidential campaign in 2016, President Trump

had claimed that the Joint Cooperative Plan of Action (JCPOA) was biased in favor of Iran and would not bring peace to the Middle East. Scrapping the JCPOA framework was part of the President's pledge since taking office, along with moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel to West Jerusalem. The president was also skeptical about the global trade deals and overtly reneged on the agreement of the global trading system. It was during Trump era that withdrawal and breach of Paris agreement on climate change took place. The long-awaited Statement by President Trump on the Paris Climate Accord of 1<sup>st</sup> June 2017 is clear about the US choice:

the United States will withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord and the United States will cease all implementation of the non-binding Paris Accord and the draconian financial and economic burdens the agreement imposes on our country. He added that his decision includes ending the implementation of the nationally determined contribution and the Green Climate Fund which is costing the United States a vast fortune. (Pavone, 2018)

He justified his double decision by saying:

the bottom line is that the Paris Accord is very unfair, at the highest level, to the United States. Indeed, he made reference to the potential detriment of U.S economy if choosing to remain in the Agreement and the serious obstacles it would have created as we begin the process of unlocking the restrictions on America's abundant energy reserves. (Pavone, 2018).

He also made reference to the "lack of binding obligations" on other States, particularly China and India, and the impact of the Agreement on the U.S economy, showing "a fundamentally flawed understanding of the Paris Agreement" (Rajamani, 2017). In response to U.S announced exit, the European Union (EU) officially rebuked this option in the European Council conclusions on the Paris Agreement on climate change of 22 June 2017, stating that "the Agreement remains a cornerstone of global efforts to effectively tackle climate change, and cannot be renegotiated." The reactions of the world community have been unanimous in condemning the U.S decision to exit the Agreement. According to the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, Trump's decision is "a major disappointment for global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote global security" (Pavone, 2018).

The French President Macron labeled the U.S. decision as a mistake both for the U.S and for our planet, while German Chancellor Merkel "deplored" the U.S leaving the Paris Agreement. (Rajamani, 2017). Negotiation with a terrorist group against the long-standing tradition of the U.S. also happened under the presidency of Donald Trump. To further understand the decisions of Trump, we will look at some of the areas that key decisions were made.

### **Trump's Withdrawal from Paris Agreement on Climate Change**

The U.S policy on climate change is characterized by a historical divide between Democrats and Republicans. While Democrats are traditionally more sensitive towards environmental issues, Republicans believe that the economic interests of U.S companies shall prevail over the collective interest to the protection of the environment. The traditional reluctance of the Republican Party towards the UN multilateral process and environmental negotiations implicated the non-ratification of several environmental treaties (Montego Bay Convention on the Law of the Sea, Basel Convention on the Control of Trans-boundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Kyoto Protocol), or the non-signature (Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in



Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters). President Trump affirmed on several occasions that global warming is a 'hoax' perpetrated by China in order to damage the US industry. His position on climate change is not dissimilar from that of Bush Jr. and echoes his words in his 'Letter to Members of the Senate on the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change'. Indeed, he wants to eliminate what he considers 'unnecessary restrictions' on the main sources of energy, such as coal and onshore and offshore oil and gas, because the reduction of CO2 emissions must not take place at detriment of the domestic industry. His environmental plan is against a calendar of reductions imposed by the United Nations, but is instead favorable to a mechanism of self-regulation by domestic companies under the supervision of the central government.

President Trump's unpredictable decision to openly breach the Paris Agreement is in contradiction with the 'rational choice theory (but President Trump is not a very rational actor). In sum, the Trump administration seems to be more worried by the internal consent, than by its level of reputation abroad. To this aim, he opted for a unilateral foreign policy in several occasions (examples are the air strikes against Syria, the decisions not to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership, to pull out of UNESCO to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and to impose import restrictions). The reactions of the world community have been unanimous in condemning the US decision to exit the Agreement. According to the UN Secretary-General, Trump's decision is "a major disappointment for global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote global security". The French President Macron labeled the U.S. decision as a "mistake both for the U.S. and for our planet", while German Chancellor Merkel "deplored" the U.S. leaving the Paris Agreement. In addition, internal consent to the exit from the Paris Agreement was not unanimous. There is a lot of posturing in Trump's announcement when the federal government is not the only player: much of the efforts to reduce U.S. emissions will arguably come from single U.S. states, cities and private actors as they have done since Bush's 2001 decision. Indeed, many voices counseled against the U.S. exit. Also, many corporations like Apple, Google, and Microsoft, which started a strong policy of investment in renewable energies, with advertisements publicized in several newspapers (*The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *New York Post*) "urged President Trump to keep the United States in the Paris Agreement.

### **Trump's Negotiation with the Taliban and Withdrawal of Troops from Afghanistan**

One of the traditional policies of the U.S. has been the idea of not negotiating with the terrorists. President Trump was again disposed to upturn another policy that was upheld by Obama administration. In July 2016, President Obama announced that he would maintain 8,400 U.S. forces in the country through the end of his Administration, a higher level than planned, saying "Afghan forces are still not as strong as they need to be" (The White House statement on Afghanistan, 2016). The Taliban published an open letter addressed to President Trump in August 2017, urging him to withdraw U.S. forces from Afghanistan, citing what it characterized as the weakness and ineptitude of the Afghan government (Rowlatt, 2017). Nevertheless, soon after his inauguration, President Trump certainly put his finger on the collective pulse of the nation with remarks given at Fort Myer, Virginia, on August 21, 2017:

The American people are weary of war without victory. Nowhere is this more evident than with the war in Afghanistan, the longest war in American history (17 years). I share the American people's frustration. I

also share their frustration over a foreign policy that has spent too much time, energy, money, and most importantly lives, trying to rebuild countries in our own image, instead of pursuing our security interests above all other considerations. (Trump's remark, 2017).

Later that month, President Trump authorized an increase in the U.S. targeting authorities and force levels, though he conceded that a full withdrawal was his "original instinct". Within a year, President Trump was reportedly frustrated with the lack of military progress against the Taliban, and he ordered formal and direct the U.S.-Taliban talks without Afghan government participation for the first time (Mashal & Schmitt, 2018). Those talks culminated in the February 2020 U.S.-Taliban agreement, in which the two sides agreed to two "interconnected" commitments: the withdrawal of all U.S. and international forces by May 2021, and unspecified Taliban action to prevent other groups (including Al Qaeda) from using Afghan soil to threaten the U.S and its allies. The U.S. withdrawal commitment was not explicitly conditioned on the Taliban reducing violence against the Afghan government, making concessions in prospective intra-Afghan talks, or taking other actions.

The United States also committed to facilitating a prisoner exchange between the Taliban and the Afghan government, whose mutual releases of 1,000 and 5,000 prisoners, respectively, began in May 2020. France and Australia reportedly opposed the release of some specific Taliban prisoners accused of attacks that killed French and Australian nationals (Radio Azadi, August 17, 2020). Before the prisoner release concluded, some media reports indicated that released Taliban fighters were returning or intended to return to the battlefield, with one June 2020 report citing a Taliban commander as saying that released fighters would be redeployed (France24, June 10, 2020). Some Taliban prisoners released in 2020 reportedly played roles in the military offensives that led to the Taliban's August, 2021 takeover (Cullison & Shah, 2021).

### **Theoretical Framework**

To give this work a scientific base, the researcher adopted Incremental Theory of Decision making as put forward by Charles Lindblom and Robert Dahl in 1968 as a theoretical framework. The theory views policy decisions as a continuation of past government activities with only incremental modification, as a result of time constraints, information and cost that could prevent policymakers from identifying a full range of policy alternatives. Iglupas (2015) further agreed with the position of Lindblom when he asserts that policymakers generally continue previous policies, because they do not have time, information and money to investigate all the alternatives to existing policy. Implicit in these scholarly positions is the fact that incremental theory regards public policy and decision making as the continuation of existing government activities, alliances, and relations with only small incremental modification. Some leaders tend to begin every policy anew in every transition of one government to another which often amount to waste of resources with multiplier effects on the economy, security, and environmental issues that threatens a country and her allies.

Based on these, Dahl and Lindblom (cited in Ejere, et al) concluded that all analysts, policy and decision makers accept the legitimacy of previous policies because of the uncertainty about the consequences of completely new or different policies. However, other theorists have opposed this position and argued in favor of Rational- Comprehensive theory. But considering the position of United States of America as a super power, with strong institutions, decision making process should at all times reflect the National interest and the consideration of her allies and the world order they established. Trump was often accused of unilateral foreign policy



posture in decision making on vital issues that concerns environment, economy and even security without wider consultation with designated institutions or allies in bilateral and multilateral relations. This made acceptability and supports of such decisions to be difficult and further bring down the prestige and respect for the U.S.A. Often time, the president relied on the X platform (formerly twitter) to communicate official decision-making policies, to the surprise of State Department, Council of Foreign Relations, and even key allies like United Kingdom and France, who ought to have been briefed, and their views considered. National interest must at all times override personal interest.

### **Research Methodology**

To achieve the goal and objectives of this study, the historical and descriptive research design were adopted. Data were collected from secondary sources such as: textbooks, journals, conference materials, and other related literature on the subject matter. Furthermore, data drawn were analyzed qualitatively using content analysis.

### **Evaluation of Research Questions**

#### **Research Question 1: Does America's Withdrawal from Paris Agreement on Climate Change Enhance Cooperation of the U.S Allies in Shaping International System?**

America's foreign policy objectives are not only centered on America alone, but the survival and cooperation of her allies is also part of their national interest. According to Allison and Blackwill (2000), the vital interest of America's foreign policy are to:

- i. prevent, deter, and reduce the threat of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons attacks on the American citizens and its military.
- ii. ensure the U.S allies' survival and their active cooperation in shaping the international system.
- iii. prevent the emergence of hostile major powers around the U.S borders.
- iv. ensure global trade.
- v. achieve productive relations.
- vi. To this end, withdrawal from Paris Agreement on climate change and any other environmental and economic policy that are multilateral in nature, should be pursued in a way that will enhance cooperation of the U.S. allies who have been instrumental in helping to shape international system and order.

In the light of the traditional Republican policy of hostility towards the climate change multilateral regime, it is not difficult to interpret the current U.S policy trend towards climate. It appears that President Trump was more in the norm than suggested by his aggressive rhetoric: his current position echoes George Herbert W. Bush's statement "the American way of life is not negotiable" in 1992, George Walker Bush's withdrawal from the Kyoto protocol, and the constant narrow-minded and climate revisionist attitude of the Senate since de mid-1990s (Mooney, 2011). With his statement of 1<sup>st</sup> June 2017, the Trump administration opted for two options simultaneously (withdrawal and breach), announcing publicly and shamelessly that the U.S would not implement the Paris Agreement. It is a novelty in international relations, since States usually do not officially declare that they no longer follow the 'rules of the game'. The content of his statement violates international law, considering that a state party to a treaty is obliged to respect its international obligations, even if it decides to withdraw.

President Trump's unpredictable decision to openly breach the Paris Agreement is in contradiction with the 'rational choice theory. In sum, the Trump administration seems to be

more worried by the internal consent, than by its level of reputation abroad (America First Foreign Policy). To this aim, he opted for a unilateral foreign policy in several occasion (examples are the air strikes against Syria, the decisions not to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership, to pull out of United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and to impose import restrictions). Paris Agreement on climate change is adjudged to be one of the promising multilateral agreements that would have addressed the issue of food security and depletion of ozone layer. America's withdrawal from the agreement has demoralized her allies and developing countries that look up to them as a determinant of global order. France and Germany were particularly indignant at Trump's decision at a time they thought the agreement is sealed. Instead of boasting the morale of her allies and their cooperation on multilateral issues, the reverse was the case.

### **Research Question Two: To What Extent has President Trump's Negotiation with the Taliban Prevented the Emergence of Hostile Extremists?**

Another aspect of decision making under Trump administration that was met with mixed feelings has to do with his negotiation with a terrorist group (the Taliban), a practice that is frowned at by many American citizens irrespective of political affiliation. President Trump was reportedly frustrated with the Afghan Government's lack of military progress against the Taliban, and he ordered formal and direct U.S.-Taliban talks without Afghan government participation for the first time (Mashal & Schmitt, 2018). Those talks culminated in the February 2020 U.S. - Taliban agreement, in which the two sides agreed to two "interconnected" commitments: the withdrawal of all the U.S. and international forces by May, 2021, and unspecified Taliban action to prevent other groups (including Al Qaeda) from using Afghan soil to threaten the U.S and its allies. The U.S. withdrawal commitment was not explicitly conditioned on the Taliban reducing violence against the Afghan government, making concessions in prospective intra-Afghan talks, or taking other actions. The U.S also committed to facilitating a prisoner exchange between the Taliban and the Afghan government, whose mutual releases of 1,000 and 5,000 prisoners, respectively began in May, 2020.

France and Australia reportedly opposed the release of some specific Taliban prisoners accused of attacks that killed French and Australian nationals (Radio Azadi, August 17, 2020). Before the prisoner release was concluded, some media reports indicated that released Taliban fighters were returning or intended to return to the battlefield, with one June, 2020 report citing a Taliban commander as saying that released fighters would be redeployed (France24, June 10, 2020). Some Taliban prisoners released in 2020 reportedly played roles in the military offensives that led to the Taliban's August, 2021 takeover (Cullison & Shah, 2021). Trump's negotiation with the Talibans did not in any way assuage the rise of fundamentalism in the Middle East and its attendant's effects on global peace. Rather it emboldened the extremists the more.

### **Conclusion**

From the foregoing discussion, it is established that President Trump's foreign policy decisions was not in the overall interest of America and her allies, hence, not in line with their national interest. This is evidence in the widespread public opinion outcry and the dissatisfaction of America's allies in Trump's policy decisions. On the issue of pulling out of the Paris agreement on climate change, Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel, French and German leaders respectively condemned the breach of the agreement as against international law principles of obligation to agreement entered, thereby causing global tension on what the consequences could be. It is also concluded that the U.S.-Taliban peace deal must have been misconstrued by

the Taliban to mean recognition and legitimacy to steer the ship of governance in Afghanistan. This further sends a wrong signal to the international community that has been making efforts to combat terrorism and its attendant effects. Some analysts are of the view that America's popularity and prestige under Trump was on the decline, thereby affecting his electoral fortune in his bid for a re-election. It was not logical for President Trump to have taken a foreign policy posture that further denigrated the place of America in committee of nations. Negotiation with the Taliban and withdrawal from a sensitive convention like climate change did not in any way suggest adherence to America's national interest.

### **Recommendations**

From the above findings, the following recommendations are made:

- i. **Unilateral Foreign Policy Decision should be abolished:** There should be a legislation that clearly forbids unilateral foreign policy decision by the President, to avoid situations where the idiosyncrasies of the person in power override National interest. Stiffer penalty should be meted out to any State that breach multilateral agreement entered into and ratified by the United Nations.
- ii. **Negotiation with Terrorists should be listed as impeachable offence:** Aside from frowning at President's direct negotiation with terrorists, Congress should consider enlisting negotiation with terrorists as impeachable offence in America's legal system to serve as a deterrent to succeeding presidents.

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