
**A REVIEW OF PRESIDENT MUHAMMADU BUHARI'S FOREIGN
POLICY OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY****By****Adeshola Oguntola (MSc Candidate)****Department of International Relations & Strategic Studies,
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This study examined Nigerian Foreign Policy under Muhammadu Buhari Administration. Foreign policy is set of tools which are used to pursue and attain country's national interests. Foreign Policy of Nigerian state has continued to change under various governments and leaders, and the lack of continuity of these policies has affected the country's development. This research work made use of qualitative source of data, through which data were gathered using journals, reports, articles, newspapers, treaties, textbooks, and various statutes which was obtained from online sources. The findings showed that, Nigeria's foreign policy under President Muhammadu Buhari regime had both positive and adverse effects on Nigeria's development. Under President Muhammadu Buhari, Nigeria encountered a lot of challenges such as insecurity that adversely affected sub-regional cooperation and domestic economic crisis. The study recommends that the government should give adequate attention to the growing rate of unemployment in the country, which has increased the country poverty and crimes rate in Buhari administration.

Keywords: *Foreign policy. National interest. Nigeria. Administration. qualitative source*

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Introduction

An essential tool for determining how nations interact with other states and non-state players in the international system is foreign policy (Levy, 2013; Aning, Abdallah & Kofi, 2017). The foreign policy is a collection of instruments used to advance and realize a nation's national interests. Under a variety of regimes and leaders, the Nigerian state's foreign policy has persisted in transition. This is typically impacted by the country's political system and to a large part by the personality of its president (Levy, 2013; Fawcett, 2016; Musa, Bashir & Bello, 2017).

Bello, 2017).

In order to protect its national interests and achieve its objectives within the context of international relations, a state would choose self-interested foreign policy strategies.

As seen by those who make foreign policy decisions, it is the totality of a nation's national interests that emerge from the interaction of internal and external forces (Yakubu, 2016). The methods are strategically applied to engage with other nations. However, in recent years, relationships and interactions between state and non-state players in the international political sphere have been known to occur as a result of the intensifying level of globalization and transnational activities (Abegunrin, 2014). Many foreign policies between nation states have been shaped by these interactions in different ways.

Every nation in the globe has some sort of connection to another nation. No country can avoid participating in international politics in the modern world, but participation must be organized and based on specific principles (Aja, 2014). In other words, states must act in a certain way toward one another. Since a state without a foreign policy is like a ship without a rider that may drift aimlessly and be carried away by a storm of current events, it is essential for a modern state to engage in international policy. What a state intends to do is determined by its interests; what it is actually able to accomplish depends on its military, economic, and diplomatic prowess. Despite the fact that Nigeria's foreign policy has changed significantly since 1960 and is still guided by the same basic concepts (Gambari, 2015).

On the other side, national development can be defined as the general advancement of a country or nation in its socio-economic, political, and religious spheres. The best way to do this is through development planning, which may be characterized as the nation's collection of strategies that the government has laid forth. A policy intervention called national development aims to increase peoples' well-being. Economic development, according to Seidman (2012), can be defined as the process of generating better and broadly shared economic well-being and quality of life for a community or area through the creation and utilization of physical, human, financial, and social assets. According to Greenwood and Holt (2015), indices of growth like per capita income do not always correlate with gains in quality of life, and that national development is a broadly based and sustainable rise in the total standard of living for individuals within a society. The concept of national development is broad and includes qualitative components. Economic development entails both economic growth and gradual improvements in certain significant factors that affect how well off a population is, such as health and education.

From independence, Nigeria had pursued a radical foreign policy on national development under Muritala Mohammed and Olusegun Obasanjo 1975-1979, which was geared at liberation of African states from clutches of apartheid and colonialism and reducing the influence of Western capitalist countries. Sani Abacha 1993-1998 choose to pursue an isolation foreign policy which meant Nigeria had limited engagement with outside world.

Olusegun Obasanjo 1999-2007 decided to re-open Nigeria to the world after isolation of Sani Abacha government, his foreign policy was hinged on shuttle diplomacy which was geared at economic development. Umaru Musa Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan 2007-2015 foreign policy was opened and encourages relations with other countries around the world, and its policy was hinged on citizen diplomacy.

This indicates that since independence, all governments have used various tactics to pursue the same goal and objective. The goals of Nigerian foreign policy have stayed same from Sir Balewa's First Republic administration to Dr. Goodluck Jonathan's administration. It is accurate to say that the emergence of Nigeria's foreign policy may be linked to the moment the nation became an independent sovereign state. Nigeria, which became independent in 1960, made the liberation of Africa the centrepiece of her foreign policy and took the lead in the struggle against South Africa's apartheid government (Ebegbulem, 2019). Ebegbulem went on to say that in the 1970s, once Nigeria emerged from its civil war united, her foreign policy was put to the test as she rapidly joined the liberation movements taking place in the Southern African sub-region.

Since gaining independence, Nigeria's foreign policy has been characterized by an emphasis on Africa and adherence to a number of core values. African unity and independence, peaceful conflict resolution, nonalignment and non-interference in other countries' internal affairs, and regional economic cooperation and development are among them (Ebegbulem, 2019). Through membership in and involvement in the United Nations Organization (UNO), the Commonwealth of Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of African Unity (now the AU), and the Economic Community of West African States, Nigeria intended to accomplish the aforementioned goal (ECOWAS).

Therefore, it is accurate to state that, notwithstanding the ups and downs of Nigeria's political fortunes, successive administrations starting with the Balewa administration have articulated the essential tenets of Nigeria's foreign policy within the context of the African agenda.

President Buhari earned the nickname "Jet-Setting President" due to his shuttle diplomacy between various nations shortly after taking office in 2015. This was primarily due to the fact that he spent 25 percent of his first 100 days in office traveling to different nations to advance the national economy. Following his inauguration, the president took on the role of the nation's top diplomat and foreign policy representative to reintroduce Nigeria to the world. This is mostly due to the worldwide climate in which Buhari found himself; this environment was marked by falling oil prices, terrorism and counterterrorism, nuclear accords, and neoliberalism, among other things (Aning, et al., 2017). Maintaining positive relations with Nigeria's neighbours while pursuing economic development has become President Muhammadu Buhari's top priority when it comes to foreign policy.

The effectiveness of President Buhari's foreign policy has improved various aspects of the nation's development, including the counter-insurgency campaign that decimated Boko Haram, relations with the United States and China that have helped to foster economic development by providing necessary infrastructure, the nation's information technology, and the implementation of sustainable development.

Based on the foregoing, the goal of this research is to evaluate President Muhammadu Buhari's foreign policy and the nation's growth during his civilian administrations in order to comprehend the change in foreign policy's course under his leadership and how these foreign policies have affected the nation's development.

Concept of Foreign Policy

Like many other topics in the social sciences, foreign policy lacks a single definition, leading to a variety of interpretations among academics. Ade-Ibijola (2016) defines foreign policy in this context as the goals that a nation seeks to achieve in its dealings with other peoples of the world. These goals are the objectives that make up a comprehensive strategy. In order to avoid navigating the waters of international relations aimlessly, Ade-Ibijola (2016) asserts that every country creates a strategy with a few primary objectives that it tries to realize in its dealings with other states in the international system.

According to Goldstein and Pevehouse (2014), foreign policy refers to the tactics used by the government to direct its operations on a global scale. Carlsnaes (2016) provided a more thorough explanation of what foreign policy is. Carlsnaes (2016) asserted that foreign policy consists of actions taken by governmental representatives acting on behalf of their sovereign communities and expressed in the form of explicitly stated goals, commitments, and/or directives, and directed toward objectives, conditions, and actors both governmental and non-governmental that they want to affect and that lie outside of their territorial legitimacy. This merely implies that foreign policy needs to be well defined, well-thought out, and have a direction in order for countries to interact to one another effectively.

According to Adeniran (2012), understanding foreign policy is best accomplished by defining it. According to Adeniran (2012), foreign policy consists of three components. The first is the "overall orientation and policy intents" of a particular country toward others. The "goal" that a country intends to achieve in its connections or transactions with another country is the second component. The "means" by which the specific goal or set of objectives will be achieved make up the third component of foreign policy.

According to Nwankwo (2018), foreign policy is a collection of clear goals with regard to the world outside the boundaries of a certain social unit as well as a collection of techniques and methods used to accomplish those goals. This understanding supports the identification of plans and specific tactics for putting those plans into action. It is idealist because it ignores the realities of the international system, namely the unpredictable nature of how other countries will operate.

The driving force for Nigeria's interactions with other countries is how Ade-Ibijola (2016) summarises Nigerian foreign policy. He added that it was the stated purpose of a state. Simply reconstructing this notion of foreign policy to read as the stated objectives of a state toward other states will suffice.

Concept of National Interest

The precise definition of "national interest" is not generally agreed upon. However, it is widely accepted that governments and statesmen behave in the manner they do in their relations with other nations in order to protect the proclaimed aims of the state. Foreign policy analysis typically views national interest as a contentious idea. Scholars have frequently questioned whether there is something that can be referred to as national interest in light of the variety of prevalent personal, class, group, and sectional interests in a state. The cause is the absence of a comprehensive policy or a unifying framework that might be utilized to reconcile all the competing interests inside the state. Thus, some consider the national interest of any state to be the interest of the state's leadership or ruling class, which may have historically or constitutionally had the authority to make decisions on behalf of the state's other residents (Rosati, 2006). The state's leadership frequently uses national interest as a smokescreen to defend localized individual, class, or group interests.

Foreign policy experts generally agree that "national interest" is the most important driving force behind foreign policy, despite the fact that there is no agreed-upon definition of what constitutes national interest or what actions statesmen should take to realize or maximize it. National interest is regarded as the easiest way to comprehend or justify why and how countries operate in the ways they do when they take part in international action. (Eminue, 2013) While Hans Morgenthau (1973) conceptualizes national interest in terms of power, Henderson (2005) views national interest as the collective desire of a state in its interactions with other nations in the international system. "Statesmen conceive and act in terms of interest defined as power," he claimed (Morgenthau, 1973). In his writing, Morgenthau went further to show that "a foreign policy led by moral abstractions, without regard of the national interest, is certain to fail" (Morgenthau, 1973). National interest, according to Rosenau (1969), is "the key to any explanation of goal-seeking behaviour," and as a result, its application in politics "will long continue to be a datum requiring examination." "National interest examines not just the worth of foreign policy but also explains why states do what they do when they engage in international affairs," according to Obiozor (1999). What Obiozor is saying here, is that national interest explains or rationalizes states' behaviour in international relations. According to Sondermann (1979) cited in (Emimue 2013), the concept of "national interest" is predicated on two assumptions:

- (i) There exists an objectively determinable collective interest which all individual members within a given society share equally; and
- (ii) That this collective interest transcends any interest that a particular sub-set of these individuals may share with individuals in other societies.

From Vital's point of view, another paradigm of foreign policy arose (2015). According to Vital (2015), the term "foreign policy" actually refers to a sphere of connected but separate activities and issues, in which neither foreign policy exists nor can exist. According to Vital (2015), the realities of state behaviour require that decisions and policies are developed in several independent structures and issue areas, often as a result of urgent pressures and events. Therefore, in light of developments in the contemporary global political order, Frankel's (1978 and 1989) notion of foreign policy as a dynamic process of interaction between changing domestic demands and changing external conditions is appropriate.

In an effort to manage the international environment to achieve predetermined national objectives, Ota and Ecoma (2015) define foreign policy as a plan that is adequately formulated and designed in a coordinated manner by institutionally designated decision-makers. According to this notion, nations can use foreign policy as a tool of power to respond to events occurring on a global scale by taking or refraining from taking action in order to further their own domestic objectives. According to Ukwuije (2015), foreign policy is an outgrowth of public policy and is necessary for the full and appropriate implementation of some parts of domestic policy. According to this claim, domestic policy is accomplished on the international front via foreign policy, which suggests that public policy supersedes foreign policy. Eze (2010) simply stated that a state's foreign policy is the basis for its interactions with other nations or entities covered by international law, such as international organizations. The notion of foreign policy is implicit in the fact that national interest serves as a guiding principle for states in the formation and implementation of their international policies, according to Barika (2014), who supports this viewpoint. However, Barika (2014) asserts with confidence that the creation of foreign policy is constrained by the requirements of international law, treaty obligations, and the leadership roles and responsibilities in international organizations that the state has taken on with due consideration for the foreign policy of other states. The importance of international law, non-state entities, and, most significantly, other states' foreign policies are all incorporated into these conceptualizations by Eze (2010) and Barika (2014). Their stance on the matter is that when states start to formulate or restructure their foreign policies, they should do so taking into account the requirement to align with international law statutes, their obligations in regional or international institutions, and the nature of foreign policies of other states, especially the neighbouring countries. In addition to allowing the state to pursue its national interests in a way that is compliant with international law, meeting these conditions will also provide it the ability to respond to the acts of other governments across the world or in the region.

National interest as a concept, therefore, underscores the fact that the primary interest of a state is to obtain or retain an optional position on world affairs. This they do by taking action on issues that would improve the political situation, the economic and social well-being, the health and culture of the people as well as their political survival.

“They are being urged to take action that will improve the lot of their people rather than pursue policies that will subject the people to domination by other countries.” (Adeniran, 1983).

Political realist and Marxist views were both used by Asogwa (2009) in his analysis of the idea. He makes the following claim: From a political realist standpoint, the term "national interest" has been used to describe a nation's wise use of power to advance its crucial interests overseas. The underlying presumption was that national decision-makers identify what is in their country's best interests, which are often constant and unchanging. 2009 (Asogwa).

In the international system, a state's objectives and aspirations are generally referred to as its national interests. These objectives may be cultural, political, economic, or military. Although we have seen that several attempts have been made by scholars and practitioners of international relations to define national interest, these attempts all converge on one idea: what makes up a state's national interest is the perception of its leaders' foreign policy.

We cannot disregard the fact that a state's national interest is frequently defined in significant part by the form of governance that state has. Autocratic and dictatorial governments define their national interests with less consideration for input from domestic interest groups, whereas governments of Western-style democracies, for example, frequently take into account the wishes and desires of various interest groups that wield domestic political power. However, different people and groups define the national interest of the state in different ways inside every state, whether it be democratic or authoritarian. Despite the fact that the concept of national interest is not universally understood, experts concur that it is a helpful concept that gives them a tool to comprehend the objectives of nation states in their interactions with one another in the international system. According to Eminue (2013), "national interest is seen as the simplest means of understanding or explaining how and why nations do what they do when they engage in international activity," this is further supported. In light of the fact that "nations do what they do in order to satisfy their best interest, it is argued that by describing national ambitions so satisfied, analysts could use the concept of national interest as a tool for explanation or analysis" (Rosenau, 1968). In addition, Rosenau notes that "no list of the difficulties in analysing foreign policy objectives would be complete without mentioning those that invariably attempt to employ the concept of national interest" (Rosenau, 1968).

Every state in the international system, irrespective of size, economic status, ideological orientation, or culture, has some form of interests or goals defined as national interest. Scholars and political analysts have different perceptions of the concept of national interest in line with their understanding of the subject matter. There have been debates among scholars over who determines the national interests of states. Is it the leadership or the citizens that determine a state's national interest? It is the responsibility of the leadership of the state to control the affairs of the state for positive change and good standard of living, while the citizens in that state are directly affected either positively or negatively by the derivable of national interest. National interest is seen by Morgenthau, (1989) as an aim to promote the image, prestige and aspect of a state both at home and abroad. On his part, Olukoshi (1992) identifies what constitute the core of national interest to include: national security, political independence, territorial integrity, promotion of economic interest of the state and world peace.

Determinants of Nigeria's Foreign Policy

The Nigerian situation since the assumption of power in 2015 by President Muhammadu Buhari has gone through twists and turns which has been unsettling. As foreign policy is a function basically of domestic policy, President Buhari's foreign policy is not devoid of domestic thinking and course of action. In the past, Nigeria's foreign policy was "Afrocentric", making "Africa the centre-piece of the country's foreign policy". This raised the image of Nigerian government and people highly in the international community, particularly its focus on decolonization of the whole of Africa and the end of apartheid in South Africa.

Since that time, Nigeria's influence in Africa may not be as obvious as it once was, but President Buhari has unquestionably cemented the country's sub-regional dominance in West Africa. Here, we'll look at the international component of his three-point plan, which includes dealing with insecurity and seeking out global collaboration to combat it, combating corruption and pursuing the return of looted assets from Nigeria, and attempting to resurrect the economy with the help of trading partners. President Buhari took advantage of Nigeria's power in the area to intervene in the political crises in the Gambia, Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, and Guinea Bissau, bringing about a measure of calm and political stability. It is important to recognize President Buhari's courageous actions in preventing Morocco from joining ECOWAS as its 17th member state. Morocco, after all, is a member of the Magreb and Arab North African sub-region and does not, physically speaking, belong to the West African sub-region of Africa. It is commendable that Buhari advocated for a dramatic reduction in the number of ECOWAS commissioners from 15 to 5, as part of the organization's recent virtual Extraordinary Summit. He argued that each EU member state should foot the bill for its commissioner because Nigeria carries the financial burden of ECOWAS and provides more than half of its revenue.

All of the countries involved, including Nigeria, were negatively impacted by the land border restriction between Nigeria and the ECOWAS countries for more than eight months. The closure of the border prevented the entry of people, goods, and services into Nigeria, including the inputs needed by commerce and industry, which is a typical illustration of how domestic policy has both direct and indirect effects on foreign policy. As a result, the price of goods and services in the nation skyrocketed. Even though the policy's goal was to prevent the importation of foreign rice and small guns and ammunition into the country in order to decrease instability and promote domestic rice production, respectively, smuggling persisted because of the country's weak borders. The border shutdown caused more harm to the nation than expected since it made the recession there worse. Other contributing factors included the COVID-19 outbreak, the ensuing lockdown, and the decline in oil prices.

Under President Muhammadu Buhari, bilateral ties between Nigeria and its neighbours, particularly Ghana and the Benin Republic, suffered a setback as a result of the border restriction, which Ghana held against Nigeria as retaliation. The border was opened in early January 2021, and it is certain that this would help to promote the necessary reconciliation and improve ties between Nigeria and the ECOWAS member states. The opening of the border should also put an end to claims that Nigeria was violating ECOWAS, the World Trade Organization, and the African Continental Trade Organization rules governing the free flow of people, goods, and services throughout the subregion. Nigeria should obviously uphold its duties under international treaties. President Buhari began his official international travels by first traveling to Niger and Chad, followed by Cameroun, Guinea, and Benin Republic to rekindle the brotherly ties and, in particular, to ask for their support in the fight against international terrorism, which includes the Boko Haram insurgency in the north-eastern region of Nigeria. Although the Chadians were extremely successful in driving Boko Haram from their territory into Nigeria, coordination within the Multinational Joint Task Force may have allowed other states' troops to join the Chadians in completing the total liberation of the Lake Chad Basin, which is where Boko Haram's headquarters are located in the theatre of war. The Nigerian forces would have been alerted and in a condition of readiness to support the Chadian President's efforts if President Buhari and the Chadian President had been on the same page. Without a doubt, member states should properly support institutions developed for the mutual interest of the involved countries. Let's hope that with the recent change in command in the Nigerian armed forces, the new service chiefs would take lessons from the past and work with other troops from member states of the Multinational Joint Task Force in a concerted effort to defeat Boko Haram and other security threats. (2021, Jaiye et al.)

President Buhari has made significant progress in his quest for international cooperation against terrorism by convincing former American President Donald Trump to sell Tucano aircraft to Nigeria in order to continue the fight against Boko Haram, in contrast to President Obama's refusal to do so for reasons that are best known to him. The arrival of the Tucano aircraft will undoubtedly improve the performance of the Nigerian army. However, as is now being reported, employing the aircraft without enough cooperation with the ground forces would continue to hamper military success. Joe Biden was recently chosen as the new president of the United States. One can only hope that the new administration will have a foreign policy that is more supportive of Nigeria. However, in light of firstly Nigeria's experience with former President Donald Trump, who imposed visa restrictions on Nigerians, made life difficult for the nation during Dr. Akinwunmi Adesina's re-election campaign, and stalled the election of a WTO Director-General position that Nigeria's Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was best positioned to win, as well as Trump's disparaging remarks about Africans, and secondly former President Obama. However, personalities undoubtedly do differ. It is encouraging to see that the Biden administration has dropped its objections to Okonjo-WTO Iweala's job application. One plus for Buhari is that this occurred within his administration.

To overcome the numerous obstacles Nigeria faces, as outlined in President Buhari's three-point plan on corruption, insecurity, and the economy, a lot more assistance from the U.S. is required. Along with training some of our military personnel, the U.S. is also providing the Tucano aircraft that have not yet been delivered. However, in accordance with the pertinent bilateral agreement, Nigeria should be given more strategic advisers with military background, particularly those with Gulf War experience, to share their expertise and experience in counterterrorism.

Buhari's Foreign Policy Thrust

The election of retired general Muhammadu Buhari marked Nigeria's first handover of power from the government to the opposition party. The three pillars of his campaign platform—combating corruption, insecurity, and the economy—as well as job creation—were mirrored in his foreign policy. Buhari began an ambitious travel schedule that included meetings with the G-7, other Western nations, China, the G-20 Summit in Germany, and the African Union Summit in South Africa (Schneider, 2015). Buhari gained the trust of the West, who assisted him in recovering roughly \$230 million from the Swiss Bank, thanks to his well-known personal honesty (Onyeama, Foreign Affairs Minister 2016 in Salau, 2016).

Buhari reaffirmed his commitment to the fight while traveling to nearby nations that are impacted by boko haram. Due to mistrust over minor border disputes dating back to the 1980s, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which has been in effect since 1998, has not produced many results. The terrorists had an easy time taking it over since intelligent sharing was inhibited.

Therefore, the opportunity for clear choices regarding the cooperation to combat boko haram was increased by the visit (Schneider,2015). By recognizing China, Taiwan, and the Mainland, Buhari's administration ensured a one-China policy and inked further agreements with China. China as one State of China decreased the activities of the Taiwanese Embassy and moved it from Nigeria's Federal Capital, Abuja, to Lagos (Yusuf, 2017, in Bello et.al, 2017; Mama, 2016).

When he took office on May 29th, 2015, macroeconomic data between that date and 2017 showed a double dip downturn, which later turned into a recession. With GDP growth of 2.57 percent by the second quarter of 2015, the largest economy in Africa experienced its poorest performance in 25 years, falling to a historic low of 0.36 percent. From 9% in May 2015 to 13.72 percent in April 2016, inflation increased. In order to increase productivity and economic growth by 7.8 percent by 2020 and generate jobs for more than 15 million Nigerians, the government created the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) (Chima, 2016; Parmar, 2017Country Profile, 2017). Foreign investors, however, have limited faith in the current Central Bank leadership and foreign equity portfolio flows due to the Central Bank's role in setting the exchange rate rather than the market flow and the foreign exchange strategy (Bekkali, 2017).

The administration has carried out its foreign policy in accordance with international humanitarian law, although there is political instability and contradiction everywhere. Similar to Jonathan, Buhari criticized the US for not giving enough weaponry to combat insurgency, so unintentionally supporting boko haram (Akinterinwa, 2017; Schneider, 2015). Buhari and Ghana protested to Morocco's re-admission into ECOWAS and commissioned additional studies to ascertain the benefits and drawbacks for ECOWAS. On the other hand, Buhari's administration reestablished ties with Morocco as a result of His Majesty Mohammed VI's visit. An agreement to jointly develop regional gas pipeline connecting both states was signed (Canada Newswire, 2016). (Canada Newswire, 2016).

Following the expulsion of the ambassadors chosen by the previous administration, the government failed to designate diplomatic heads in a timely manner. Out of the approximately 112 Missions, the administration provided the Legislative Arm of Government with a list of 47 for screening in accordance with the Constitution, and the missions were commissioned in 2017. This did not reflect well on Nigeria when the substantive ambassadors of nations like Russia, the United States, Canada, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the Czech Republic were present in Abuja. Many Missions were struggling financially owing to tight budgets, and some lacked qualified staff with the necessary skills and expertise because most appointments are based on politics rather than merit (Akwaya,2016; Vanguard Newspaper, 2017).

Instead of a federal character, the Buhari administration's violations of human rights, nepotism, and clannish approach to governing produced greater dangers to the unity of the country, including emboldened boko haram militants, pastoral disputes, and Biafran-IPOB agitators.

Many people question the government's ability to run a contemporary democratic society in light of the injustice and unfairness shown in its treatment of IPOB activists and Shiites, especially the leader's ongoing arrest (Akinterinwa, 2018). Following the suspension of the Presidential Amnesty Program, militants from the Niger Delta made new threats to obstruct oil operations by returning to the creeks, which had an impact on the government's oil exports and earnings as well as electricity supplies. Unlike in the past, there are now more IDP Camps in Nigeria, and many Nigerians are refugees in several West African nations. They are also a part of the migration over the Libyan border to Europe.

Nigeria-African Union (Au) Relations Under Buhari

Nigeria's relationship with the African Union (AU) has been a key aspect of the country's foreign policy objectives. As one of the founding members of the AU, Nigeria has played an active role in shaping the organization's agenda and promoting regional integration in Africa. This paper aims to provide an overview of Nigeria's relationship with the AU from 2016 to 2022, highlighting key events and developments, with in-text citations to support the analysis.

Active Participation in AU Summits: Nigeria has been an active participant in AU summits, which serve as a platform for African leaders to address pertinent issues and make decisions on matters of regional importance (Eze, 2017). For instance, in January 2017, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari attended the 28th AU Summit held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. During this summit, Buhari emphasized Nigeria's commitment to regional peace and security, urging member states to work together to combat terrorism and violent extremism (Eze, 2017).

Leadership Roles in AU Institutions: Nigeria has also held key leadership positions within the AU. In February 2020, former Nigerian Finance Minister, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, was elected as the Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), a position that holds strong implications for Nigeria's economic interests within the AU (Anifowose, 2021). This appointment not only solidified Nigeria's influence within the AU but also showcased the country's capability to produce competent leaders for international institutions.

Contributions to AU Peacekeeping Efforts: Nigeria under the Buhari regime has been actively involved in AU peacekeeping missions, demonstrating its commitment to peace and security in Africa (Udoeye, 2020). Nigerian troops have participated in various AU peacekeeping operations, including the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) Nigeria has been actively involved in peacekeeping missions in Somalia and Darfur for several years. The Nigerian peacekeeping contingent has been part of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) since its inception in 2007.

In Somalia, Nigeria has deployed troops to help restore peace and stability to the country, which has been plagued by civil war and insurgency for many years. Nigerian troops have been involved in various operations, including combating the extremist group Al-Shabaab and supporting the Somali government in its efforts to establish governance and provide essential services to the population till date. In Darfur, Nigeria has also contributed troops to the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). The peacekeeping mission was established in 2007 to protect civilians and support the peace process in the war-torn region. Nigerian peacekeepers have played a crucial role in these missions, conducting patrols, protecting civilians, and assisting in the delivery of humanitarian aid. They have also faced significant challenges, including attacks by insurgents and armed groups till date. Nigerian Intervention in Sierra Leone (2014-2018) President Buhari's administration continued Nigeria's commitment to peacekeeping efforts in West Africa by contributing troops to the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). Nigerian peacekeepers were sent to Sierra Leone to support efforts to consolidate peace and foster stability following a decade-long civil war. They were involved in activities such as security sector reform, training and mentoring the Sierra Leonean armed forces, and supporting the government's efforts towards sustainable development.

Nigerian Intervention in Mali (2013-present) President Buhari's administration responded to the crisis in Mali by deploying Nigerian troops as part of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Nigerian peacekeepers were tasked with maintaining stability, protecting civilians, and supporting the Malian government in its efforts to counter the activities of extremist groups in the northern part of the country. Nigerian troops have been actively involved in peacekeeping operations, including patrolling, providing security, and participating in community engagement initiatives.

These contributions have been instrumental in promoting stability in conflict-affected regions and enhancing Nigeria's reputation as a key regional actor (Udoeye, 2020).

Collaboration on Economic Integration: Nigeria has also been engaged in efforts to promote economic integration within the AU. In 2019, Nigeria signed the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement, which aims to create a single market for goods and services across the African continent (Ojo, 2020). This commitment demonstrates Nigeria's desire to enhance regional trade and boost economic growth within the AU.

Xenophobic Attacks and Migrant Crisis: During this time, Nigeria saw instances of xenophobic attacks on its residents in various African nations, particularly South Africa. These attacks strained diplomatic ties and sparked worries about Nigerian residents' safety in other African countries. Additionally, Nigeria experienced a serious migrant problem as many of its residents attempted to relocate to Europe or looked for jobs in neighboring African nation (Agba, E, 2023).

A prime example is President Muhammadu Buhari's multifaceted response to the xenophobic attacks on Nigerians in South Africa, which sought to diplomatically handle the situation while also protecting the safety and wellbeing of Nigerian residents who had been harmed. Here are some examples of how he handled the circumstance:

1. **Diplomatic Engagements:** In order to address the problem and find a long-term solution, President Buhari held diplomatic discussions with the South African administration. He called South African President Cyril Ramaphosa to emphasize Nigeria's worries and to demand that the country take prompt steps to protect Nigerians living there.
2. **Evacuation of Nigerians:** To ensure the safety of Nigerian citizens living in South Africa during the xenophobic attacks, President Buhari ordered the evacuation of Nigerians willing to return to Nigeria. The Nigerian government provided free transportation for those who wanted to come back home and also offered them reintegration support upon their return.
3. **Boycott of World Economic Forum:** As a strong condemnation of the xenophobic attacks, President Buhari withdrew Nigeria's delegation from the World Economic Forum on Africa, which was scheduled to take place in South Africa. This sent a strong message to the South African government and the international community about the seriousness of the situation.
4. **Engagement with African Union:** President Buhari held talks with other African leaders through the African Union (AU) to discuss the xenophobic attacks and find a collective solution. He emphasized the need for peaceful coexistence among African countries and the importance of addressing the root causes of the attacks.
5. **Demand for Compensation:** President Buhari demanded compensation for Nigerian victims of the attacks and for their businesses that were destroyed. This was part of his effort to ensure that affected Nigerians receive justice and proper restitution for their losses.

Managing this crisis and ensuring the wellbeing of Nigerian migrants presented considerable challenges for the Nigerian government.

Nigeria- Ecowas Relations under Buhari

Muhammadu Buhari pledged to address the three major issues of Insecurity (Boko Haram Insurgency), Corruption, and Economic Development head-on during his campaign for the president of Nigeria. Boko Haram had seized control of large portions of Nigerian land before he took office and had established an Islamic state there. By conducting out assaults in Nigeria and dissipating into the neighbouring nations, Boko Haram terrorism assumed a transnational dimension outside of Nigeria. Although it attempted to stop Boko Haram's activities as member nations contributed to the war against Boko Haram in Nigeria, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which was tasked with the insurgency in the Lake Chad region, proved ineffective.

Boko Haram quickly attacked MNJTF member nations as they attacked the group for daring to assist Nigeria in the fight against terrorism, giving the Boko Haram operation a worldwide scope (Bello & Dutse, 2017; Johnson & Enobi, 2016). As Boko Haram even overran its base in Baga, Borno state, and went on to conduct one of the most heinous crimes against humanity by massacring the residents there, it was seen that MNJTF was not functional and efficient (Akinbi, 2015; Oluwadare, 2016)

Shuttle Diplomacy: On June 3, 2015, President Muhammadu Buhari traveled to the Niger Republic for the first time since taking office. The president of Cameroon was also present; he was traveling for the summit to discuss the regional campaign to combat Boko Haram. President Mahamadou Issoufou of Niger vowed to work with Nigeria to combat the mounting challenges posed by Boko Haram, which have continued to jeopardize regional peace and stability. Additionally, it was decided that the MNJTF's headquarters would be moved from Nigeria to N'Djamena, Chad, and that a Nigerian would be named as the organization's commander. The meeting was followed by a trip to Chad on June 4, 2017, and a private meeting with the president of Cameroon, Paul Biya. Although the insurgent actions of Boko Haram did not disrupt the Benin Republic, President Boni Yayi of Benin reciprocated Buhari's visits by committing troops to the MNJTF to fight terrorism in the nation. 2017's (Bello & Dutse)

As argued by Onapajo (2017) and Waddington (2015), President Buhari's shuttle diplomacy to his West African neighbours played a critical role in limiting Boko Haram's ability to attack Nigeria and retreat to these neighbours as a shield against Nigerian forces. This diplomatic relationship between these ECOWAS countries also contributes to the reduction of Boko Haram's activities.

President Buhari was tasked by ECOWAS to lead a negotiation with President Yahaya Jammeh to concede power to democratically elected President Adama Barrow. In addition to using foreign relations to combat the Boko Haram insurgency, President Buhari played a crucial role as the chief mediator in ending the constitutional impasse in Gambia. President Buhari is committed to a peaceful transfer of power and the need to stay away from conflict that could spark a civil war and possibly cause a humanitarian crisis for the ECOWAS region. President Buhari was tasked by ECOWAS to lead a negotiation with President Yahaya Jammeh to concede power to democratically elected President Adama Barrow. In addition to using foreign relations to combat the Boko Haram insurgency, President Buhari played a crucial role as the chief mediator in ending the constitutional impasse in Gambia. President Buhari is committed to a peaceful transfer of power and the need to stay away from conflict that could spark a civil war and possibly cause a humanitarian crisis for the ECOWAS region.

Border Disputes and Sub-Regional Integration Challenges: Nigeria faced border disputes with neighboring countries, particularly Benin and Niger. Indeed, Buhari's government was well noted for shutting the country's land borders with ECOWAS countries for over a year to essentially punish its neighbours for allowing massive smuggling of goods into Nigeria which adversely affected all countries.

These issues such as smuggling and illegal trade, strained diplomatic relations, and hindered regional cooperation. Nigeria's temporary closure of its land borders in 2019, negatively impacted on trade and strained relations with neighboring countries (Lartey, 2019). It caused reduced importation in Nigeria leading to scarcity of some commodities resulting in inflationary prices. Several criticisms of the policy were unleashed by ECOWAS, Ghana, and many Nigerians. Bilateral relations between Nigeria and Ghana and Nigeria and Benin Republic suffered setbacks under Buhari due to the border closure. Nigeria was accused of breaching the ECOWAS protocols on free movement, and also the WTO and African Continental Trade protocols.

Still on his threat to the sub-regional integration, Buhari was initially one of the major antagonist of the establishment of the ECOWAS monetary union, the adoption of a single currency in West Africa, called the Eco. The Nigerian government was worried by the adoption of the currency by largely Francophone countries, creating suspicion on its link to France's penetration of all of West Africa using her former colonies.

Nigeria and the West under The Buhari

President Buhari prioritized economic relations with Western countries, recognizing the importance of foreign investment, economic cooperation, and security assistance. This was evident through his various visits to the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, and France, aimed at attracting foreign investment and fostering trade partnerships (Ebizie, 2018). He is regarded as one of the most travelled Nigerian president, visiting over 43 countries of the world, in some cases he travelled more than once to particular countries.

For instance, during President Buhari's visit to the United States in 2018, he met with American investors and business leaders to discuss opportunities for increased investment in Nigeria's key sectors, such as infrastructure, agriculture, and energy (Eze, 2018). This exemplifies the Buhari administration's commitment to deepening economic ties with the West and attracting foreign direct investment.

Under President Buhari, Nigeria's fight against terrorism has taken centre stage in its foreign policy. The West has been an important partner in this effort, especially the United States and European nations. Cooperation in intelligence sharing, capacity building, and military support to battle extremist groups like Boko Haram have been hallmarks of Nigeria's relations with the West.

In order to strengthen Nigeria's security sector capabilities, President Buhari signed a bilateral agreement with the United States in 2014 known as the Security Governance Initiative (SGI) (Neuman, 2018). Through this arrangement, the United States has supported Nigeria's counterterrorism efforts by providing training, equipment, and intelligence sharing.

Compared to his predecessor, Muhammadu Buhari had somewhat better ties, although there was still a rift between the Obama and Goodluck administrations over how they handled the Boko Haram insurgency, particularly the abduction of the Chibok girls and the military's violations of human rights (Abegunrin, 2014).

On July 20, 2016, Obama and Buhari held a high-level diplomatic meeting at the Oval to kick off relations between the two nations under Buhari's administration. President Obama pledged that the US would support the Nigerian government, address the mounting challenges posed by Boko Haram, and combat violent extremism. Additionally, President Buhari asked the Obama administration to help the government fight the ongoing corruption that afflicts the nation. He also asked for help from the government in reforming the economy, which included the energy sector by putting an end to oil theft. After the meeting, there was a meeting with Vice President Joe Biden where it was decided that the US would help Nigeria combat corruption, maintain economic stability, and implement policy, with particular attention to the Northern region of Nigeria, which serves as the epicentre of the Boko Haram insurgency. President Buhari had the chance to see the Treasury Secretary, Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch, and Deputy Defence Secretary Bob Work while on the trip (Abegunrin, 2014; Harris, 2015)

As the US Department of Justice has filed a civil case for the seizure of money (\$144 million) through corrupt proceedings by former Nigerian petroleum minister Diezani Alison-Madueke, nothing appears to have changed under the administration of Donald Trump. According to reports, the US Department of Justice accused the former minister and two accomplices—Olajide Omokore and Kola Aluko—of fronting for the previous minister by securing oil lifting contracts for the pair without following the proper procedures. The US Department of Justice is requesting that these assets be forfeited and returned in order to help the people, which is hurt by this unethical behaviour. According to Campbell (2017) and Page (2016), US government officials believed that Buhari's victory will help the government's anti-corruption campaign and, to a greater extent, enhance bilateral relations. The partnership between the Buhari administration and the US Department of Justice, directed by Loretta E. Lynch, to combat corruption and help Nigeria recover its plunder from the US and other western nations, can be linked to this move. With the proposed sales of military equipment to Nigeria, the Trump administration also showed that it was making an effort to support the Buhari administration in its fight against Boko Haram. Prior to President Jonathan's blacklisting of Nigeria, a request for the purchase of military equipment was turned down. There were 12 Embraer A-29 Super Tucano airplanes ready for sale. The proposed arms sale also received the support of US Senators who had previously opposed the sales during the Obama administration, citing the Leahy statute, which forbade the US from supplying weapons to nations whose forces have a history of violating human rights (Gional, 2017; Iroegbu, 2016).

The importance that President Buhari places on democratic principles and effective government has affected Nigeria's relations with the West. The Buhari administration has worked to support the rule of law, build democratic institutions, and eradicate corruption.

The United States and the European Union are two examples of Western nations that have worked closely with Nigeria to advance democracy and good governance. To ensure transparent and reliable electoral procedures, they have offered technical help, capacity-building programs, and election monitoring aid (Ebizie, 2018).

Nigeria-China Relations under Buhari

Nigeria has been attempting to establish a balance of power with China in economic and diplomatic relations. China is said to have the second-largest economy and the fastest-growing economy in the world. Both nations are significant geographically and demographically within their continent. In light of China's recent strategic development, Nigeria has emerged as a key actor in Africa due to China's aggressive and ongoing commercial, technical, and economic expansion. Nigeria is regarded as having a sizable market due to its vast population. However, because China offers infrastructure loans at interest rates lower than those offered by Bretton Woods organizations, Nigeria and other African nations view China as a development partner (World Bank and International Monetary Fund). Many analysts and professors have underlined the significance of China. CNN claimed that while the US is the most important country on the international scene, China is actually in charge of the world economy in the twenty-first century (Aja, 2014).

President Muhammadu Buhari visited China shortly after taking office; the trip followed an invitation from Xi Jinping, the president of China. The goal of the visit was to strengthen the trade, diplomatic, and economic ties between the two nations. The framework to advance infrastructural development and industrial activity in Nigeria was signed during the visit, which lasted a week, by representatives of the National Development Reform Commission of China and the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Investment of Nigeria. Following the visit, many loans were given to Nigeria, specifically to cover the budget deficit for 2016, infrastructure loans for railways among others.

According to the government, the rail project was intended to address the nation's infrastructure shortfall, as well as to create much-needed jobs for the populace and, most significantly, to boost the economy. By signing a contract that permits use of the Chinese Yuan for transactions in the nation, the government made a bold move to end the dominance of the US dollar in the Nigerian market. This will make it easier to include Yuan in the nation's foreign reserve and permit banks to accept Yuan transactions from both international and domestic investors. Aliko Dangote received \$2 billion from the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China in order to finance his cement mills.

China expressed its full support for Nigeria's bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council during a meeting with his Nigerian counterpart Yakubu Dogara. This was done as part of an effort to reform the UN and accommodate countries from other regions. In addition to their strong economic ties, both nations also have cordial diplomatic ties (Tijani, 2015).

President Muhammadu Buhari reassured the Chinese foreign minister of China's determination to adhere to the "one China policy" in regard to Taiwan, which China has refused to acknowledge as an independent state but as a province of China. This policy makes sure that there is only one country named China, and that Taiwan and the rest of China are undeniably a part of that country. According to this strategy, the Nigerian government ordered the relocation of the Taiwanese embassy from Abuja to Lagos and the downgrading of diplomatic ties with Taiwan. However, it only conducts sporadic diplomatic and commercial exchanges with Taiwan, whose embassy is located in Lagos. The minister of foreign affairs minister, Geoffrey Onyeama made the policy statement stating that, "Taiwan will stop enjoying any privileges because it is not a country that is recognized under international law" stating the country justification for a trade relation the minister stated that, Chinese Government does not oppose trading with Taiwan as long as there is no formal contact with the government that will suggest recognition of Taiwan as sovereign country", (Yusuf, 2017). Nigeria decision can be justified in the sense that Taiwan possesses less economic leverage in comparison to China. Nigeria Taiwan economic relations which cover seafood, industrial equipment, natural gas and other food product stood at \$800 million in 2016, compared to \$6.4 billion trade relations between Nigeria-China in just first half of 2016, (Ayobolu, 2016; Kuo, 2017).

The Buhari's administration as at 2021 had borrowed \$2.02bn as loans from China from 2015, data obtained from the Debt Management Office on Monday showed (DMO, 2021). According to the statistics obtained from the DMO, Nigeria's total debt from China as of June 30, 2015 stood at \$1.38bn. However, as of March 31 same year, the country's debt portfolio from China had risen to \$3.40bn.

According to the DMO, the loans from China are tied to project. The projects, (eleven in number as at March 31, 2020), include the Nigerian Railway Modernisation Project (Idu-Kaduna section), the Abuja Light Rail Project, Nigerian Four Airport Terminals Expansion Project (Abuja, Kano, Lagos and Port Harcourt), Nigerian Railway Modernisation Project (Lagos-Ibadan section) and the Rehabilitation and Upgrading of Abuja-Keffi-Makurdi Road Project.

Economic Setbacks

Under Buhari's watch, foreign investment in Nigeria fell by about 213%. Under his watch figures show that foreign investment dropped from \$1.45bn to \$468.91m. Data from the Nigerian stock exchange showed that many investors withdrew their monies (foreign portfolios investment) running into billions of naira after his re-election (Nigerian Stock Exchange Report, 2022). Under Buhari the country has experienced serious brain drain due to high levels of unemployment and poor governance, with thousands of human capital flight in various sectors in especially the health sector where professionals and resourceful persons are everyday migrating to the United Kingdom, the United States, or Canada.

Conclusion

President Buhari's foreign policy approach had been characterized by mixed policies on regional integration, national security, and economic diplomacy. Buhari's focus on national security led to increased cooperation with regional and international partners, contributing to the fight against Boko Haram. Moreover, his economic diplomacy efforts have yielded positive outcomes in terms of foreign investment and trade diversification but also caused strained relations with some members of in the sub-region. Overall, Buhari's foreign policy agenda reflected Nigeria's aspirations for regional leadership, national security, and economic development.

Under President Muhammadu Buhari, Nigeria's relationship with the West witnessed a renewed focus on economic cooperation, counter-terrorism cooperation, and promoting democracy and good governance. These efforts enhanced Nigeria's standing on the global stage and strengthened its ties with Western countries, elevating its potential for economic growth and security. However, ongoing efforts are required to sustain and further deepen these relationships in the future.

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