

**FOREIGN POLICY DYNAMICS AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA:
AN ASSESSMENT OF PRESIDENT BUHARI'S ADMINISTRATION**

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Abstract

This paper examines foreign policy dynamics and national development under the former President Muhammadu Buhari's administration 2015-2023. The objectives of the paper are; to assess how the implementation of foreign policy contributed to national development in Nigeria and to identify the challenges that undermines the expected outcomes. The paper argued that Buhari's foreign policy was implemented by the use of concentric cycle approach. The Shuttle Diplomacy was used to achieve the concentric cycle objectives of security and good neighborliness. The paper employed the qualitative research method and used document and content analysis systematically. The paper relied on secondary sources of data accessed from journal articles, government official documents, books, and online resources. The paper was anchored on Rational Actor Model (RAM) as a theoretical framework of analysis. The finding of paper reveals that foreign policy implementation is dynamic, complex, and not static. The inconsistency in foreign policy objectives or pursuance by Nigerian political leaders is subject to the political expediency and preferences of the successive governments. The paper concludes that Buhari has achieved a lot in the areas of security by defeating Boko Haram insurgency, weakening IPOB but largely could not flush-out the bandits and kidnappers who were on the prowl. Moreover, the fight against corruption was aggressive and timely but achieved less prosecution due judicial process bottlenecks and manipulations. The paper recommends consistency in line with the national objectives in implementation of Nigeria's foreign policy, cooperation, and collective security to deal with external aggression.

Keywords: Concentric cycle, foreign policy, national development, rational choice model

Introduction

The existence of foreign policy as a platform in the conduct of relations between nation-states in the international system dates back to 1730s in Great Britain. Foreign policy is not always homogeneous but covers wider issues inter alia; national history, ideology, and events in the international politics which shapes nation-states foreign policy. The struggles of Nigeria's nationalists for the attainment of independence in 1960 set in motion the foundation of Nigeria's foreign policy goals and objectives. Nigeria's national identity, values, domestic politics, and the ideological divides between super-powers would later influence and guide Nigeria's foreign policy direction (Gambari, 1980; Saliu, 2016; Leira, 2019).

The first era of Nigerian foreign policy witnessed the creation of unit in the Prime Minister's Office for the conduct of external relations. The speeches delivered by Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa to the National Assembly in August, 1960 and October 1960 at the United Nations shortly after the attainment of independence served as the cornerstone of Nigeria's foreign policy (Gambari, 2008).

Following the speeches and policies of the Balewa's government six major principles of Nigeria's foreign policy were identified; Africa as the center-piece of Nigeria's foreign policy, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, legal equality of states, non-alignment, preference for peaceful means in resolving international conflicts and multilateralism. The First Republic was the pace setter for recruitments and trainings of personnel as the hallmark of the era. It was largely successful in manpower development and ideological focus. However, later development by successive governments could not largely built on the achievements recorded. The reasons for that was the two major undermining factors that killed meritocracy in foreign policy were Quota System and Federal Character Principle (Olusanya & Akindele, 1986; Gambari, 2008; Saliu, 2016).

Nevertheless, Nigeria's foreign policy has been dynamic in implementation and achieved a lot in its objectives in the areas of decolonization, Africa's unity, peace keeping operations and contributions to political stability globally. The golden era of Nigeria's foreign policy was recorded under Murtala/Obasanjo military regimes 1975-1979 when Pan-Africanism was promoted, ideological contest as its highest point during the cold war. Subsequently, regime priority and global political economy challenges affects the conduct of a robust and pragmatic foreign policy. It is important to note that British values and largely foreign policy priorities influences Nigeria's foreign policy mandate. Hence, Nigeria benefited from British competence and efficiency in her foreign policy development (Garba, 1987; Akinyemi, 1989; Jega, 2010; Mohammed, 2018).

The existence and conduct of Nigerian foreign policy under the three different military rule 1983-1999 (Buhari, Babangida and Abacha), have brought about a lot of challenges. For instance, the Alhaji Umar Dikko kidnap saga, the Annulment of June 12, 1993 Presidential elections, and the execution of the Ken Saro-Wiwa/Ogoni Nine battered the image of Nigeria. The Second Republic did not achieve much and last longer and Third Republic could not fly but aborted by Babangida's military intervention.

Drawing from the above, after its inauguration on May 29th 1999, the Obasanjo administration engaged in remaking of the Nigeria's battered image internationally. The administration achieved much in economic diplomacy with cancellation of \$18 Billion Dollars debt relief by Paris Club and the re-absorption of Nigeria into Commonwealth of Nations. Former President Obasanjo used shuttle diplomacy to influence quick re-imaging of Nigeria on the international stage. The coming of President Yar'Adua on May 29th 2007 signaled a new vista of foreign policy direction. The government announced citizen diplomacy as the thrust of Nigeria's foreign policy. After the death of President Yar'adua the policy has to be continued by former President Jonathan. The citizen's diplomacy achieved very little in promoting, protecting, and projecting Nigeria's international image and national development. The situation calls for new approach in the policy choices and conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy.

According to Gambari (2022) since the coming into power the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari has maintain a clear mindset and belief in the management of Nigeria foreign policy. Gambari further stated, thus;

the defining feature of his policies was concentric circle of Nigeria's foreign policy. That our interests, our efforts, will be concentrated on promoting Nigeria's interests in concentric circles at the epicenter; the defense of Nigeria's integrity, the prosperity, the welfare of its people. But next is the neighboring countries, then West Africa, then Africa, and then the rest of the world (Premium Times, 2022).

It is against the backdrop of the above context that this paper will examine former President Muhammadu Buhari's administration foreign policy direction, priorities and assess how its promote national development in Nigeria. The paper is divided into seven sections. In section one, the general background of the paper is provided. The section two covers the concept of foreign policy and section three looks at national development as related to foreign policy. Section four, presents Buhari's foreign policy imperatives and section five is on major achievements. The section six identifies and reviews challenges of foreign policy under the Buhari's administration. The section six discusses the major findings. Finally, section seven wraps up the paper with conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual Clarifications

The Concept of Foreign Policy

According to Diaz (2022) Foreign policy is the mechanism national governments use to guide their diplomatic interactions and relationships with other countries. A state's foreign policy reflects its values and goals, and helps drive its political and economic aims in the global arena. This goes to cover many priority areas; security and defense, economic, political, cultural, sports, ideology, and technological among others.

Morgenthau (1973) no nation can have a true guide as to what it needs to do in foreign policy without accepting national interest as a basic guide. Hence, national interest defines a nation's foreign policy objectives. This view is somewhat encompassing and explicit in the context of national interest and survival of states in the international system that is anarchical and chaotic.

In his view Nnoli (1978) conceived foreign policy as a nation's reaction to the external environment involving the organization of both domestic and external relations. Mohammed (2018) avers that foreign policy refers to what a State wants to achieve in her relations with other nations. It covers wide areas and goals to be pursuit through diplomacy especially in security, economy, political, and social transformation

Foreign policy is the rational pursuit of a set of national objectives. "Pursuit" suggests action, steps, and roles that will delineate the attitude or behavior of a state in the external context. Foreign policy may be like a wedding ring with which the domestic context of a nation solemnizes its union with the international community. Such political "marriage" is underlined by the ambitions and desires of state; hence foreign policy is a means to an end for states (Folarin, 2017).

Therefore, foreign policy decision making process guides the direction of every state in the international system. This process includes three stages: foreign policy initiation, formulation and implementation. The initiation stage is when political leaders (more probably the Head of State) and foreign policy bodies led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Department of State

conceive of foreign policy ideas: They are premised on national interest, perceptions, preferences, choices, options and capabilities.

Adeniran (1982) infers that foreign policy can best be understood through an explanation of what actually is. Foreign policy consists of three elements. One is the overall orientation and policy intentions of a particular country towards another. The second element is the objectives that a country seeks to achieve in her relations or dealings with other countries. The third element of foreign policy is the means for achieving that particular goals or objectives.

According to Legg and Morrison (1971) “foreign policy is a set of explicit objectives with regard to the world beyond the border of a given social unit and a set of strategies and tactics designed to achieve those objectives”. This understanding subscribes to the designation of plans and clear cut strategies for actualization of those plans. It is idealist because it fails to take cognizance of the contingencies in the international system in terms of the unpredictability of behaviors of international actors. The most important thing is that it is a universal challenge for all states in the international system.

Frankel’s (1984) conception of *foreign* policy “as a dynamic process of interaction between the changing domestic demands and the changing external circumstances” is apt in the light of occurrence in contemporary global political order.

Nigeria was a British creation after over a century of colonial domination and exploitation. The evolution of Nigeria’s foreign policy can be understood in the context of colonial and post-colonial epochs. Nigeria’s foreign policy is lauded for strengthening its position and power sub-regionally, regionally, and internationally. Its objectives are enshrined in the 1999 Constitution (as amended), and include:

- i. The promotion and protection of the national interest
- ii. The promotion of African integration and support for African unity
- iii. The promotion of international cooperation on for the consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect among all nations, and the elimination of discrimination in all manifestations
- iv. Respect for international law and treaty obligations, as well as seeking settlement to international disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, and adjudication
- v. The promotion of a just world and economic order (FGN, 2011)

The Concept of National Development

According to Sphor and Silva (2017) when analyzing foreign policy’s role in promoting development, one has to acknowledge the state’s relevance in this process. Bearing this in mind, one can divide foreign policy into two large areas through which it influences the country’s development, namely economy and politics. These can be further divided into lines of action specifically related to enhancing a country’s economic growth and reducing its inequality levels, which is usually not a priority to most policymakers.

The foreign policy of a state is directly associated with its national interest and national power. The national power of a state is based on the quality of government’s policies and strategies.

The national interest is an indispensable component of foreign policy but it also based on the vested interests of state with diplomatic strategy to develop the relationship with the foreign world. So, if the national interest and national power are not parallel to each other, the foreign policy will never be good (Khan, 2020).

There are three main lines of action that can openly affect the country's development strategy and it can be differentiated when dealing with the economic field of foreign policy. The following are lines of action:

- a. promotion of trade and commerce;
- b. investment and venture policy; and
- c. agreements on diplomatic, strategic, financial and commercial matters.

Nigeria is the biggest market in the African continent with huge potentials in trade and commerce. As the biggest market it is also a place for foreign direct investment for multi-national companies in Africa and beyond to invest. More so, Nigeria have entered into international bilateral, multi-lateral, and conventions on many diplomatic and strategic partnerships, and financial institutions.

Theoretical Framework of Analysis: Rational Actor Model

This paper is anchored on Rational Actor Model (RAM) of decision making in foreign policy analysis. A rational approach extensively used in foreign policy analysis today, expected utility theory (EUT) sprang from the work of von Neumann and Morgenstern in the 1940s (Anderson, 1975). The approach has its roots in microeconomics. The decision maker is assumed to be able to rank preferences "according to the degree of satisfaction of achieving these goals and objectives" (Sage, 1990).

The rational actor model treats foreign policy choices as products of the following idealized sequence. Given some problem, a rational decision maker takes into account the foreign policy goals of the nation and determines which ones take priority over others. States do not act. People do. States do not make decisions. People do. States do not have goals. People do. Almost invariably, in order to analyze any sort of question in international politics, we would have to deal with individuals engaged in decision making. That is, individuals who are engaged in evaluating options, choosing among alternatives, and perhaps implementing their decisions. Ultimately, we would have to know how, given a particular environment with options, constraints, and information, people can analyze the alternative course of actions, and how they choose among them (Slantchev, 2005; de Mesquita, 2010).

Since the end of World War II, foreign policy thinking has been dominated by a realist (or neorealist) perspective in which states are taken as the relevant unit of analysis. The focus on states as the central actors in international politics leads to the view that what happens within states is of little consequence for understanding what happens between states. Therefore it follows that they have strong normative incentives to promote democratic reform around the world. Rational choices approaches have also helped elucidate new insights that contribute to our understanding of foreign policy. Some of these new insights and the tools of analysis from

which they are derived have significantly contributed to the actual decision making process (de Mesquita, 2010; Anderson, 1975)

The assumptions of the RAM. There are three basic assumptions; the actor, the environment, and the outcomes.

The actor: An actor has two attributes: preferences and beliefs. To say that an actor has preferences means that it can rank order different outcomes according to some criterion or criteria. The actor is the political leader is a rational actor who act based maximizing benefits and to achieve goals for the realization of national interest objectives. The actor design institutions, learn from mistakes and make intelligent choices. Instrumental rationality ensures actors pursue means to an end.

The Environment: Is the international stage where politics is played among nations. An environment is composed of actions that are available to the actors and an information structure. The second component of the environment is its information structure. That is, what the actors can know and what they have to infer from observable behavior of others. This is related to beliefs because that information available in the environment determines in part the beliefs that the actors will hold.

The outcomes: Represent the result of the action of the rational actor whether positive or negative. In this case, whatever the outcomes the actor will evaluate and make informed decisions going forward to amend or alternatively change cause of action.

Critique and limitations of the model. The rational actor model hypothesizes that people are rational in the sense that they choose actions that somehow help them achieve their goals or self-interests. This may not look controversial. However, one may well wonder about the ability of the actors to relate means to ends in an effective way. This is the individual limitation critique. Another problem with model is that sometimes actors do not have control over the implementation of their decisions, the so-called principal-agent problem, or the organizational critique. This arises in situations where the decision maker, the principal, has to delegate to an agent the execution of the policy.

In other words, you want certain goals achieved but your agent (who is usually better informed about the implementation details) is the one who actually has to do it. If your preferences are perfectly aligned with those of the agent, there is no problem. On the other hand, very often the preferences may be different, perhaps drastically different. The agent may simply sabotage your goals, or may implement the action in a way that thwarts other goals you want to pursue.

Application of the theory is based on the fact that successive governments, policy makers, and political actors always take decisions based on what seem to them as rational, important, and struggles to maximize benefits for the Nigerian state. These policy makers and government officials pursue expected utility of strategic benefits. By and large, note that usually the choice for a cause of action is entirely based on the political actors' preference not the likely outcome negative in some cases for all the citizens. For instance, the re-imaging campaign of Nigeria's with the slogan "*Good People, Great Nation*" was pursued differently by different government

in the Fourth Republic. This is evidence in the way and manner the different government plan and pursue policy objectives for national development from different sectors.

Achievements on Nigeria's Foreign Policy and Diplomacy under Buhari Administration

Buhari did not clearly made foreign policy or diplomatic reforms as his core campaign promises in 2015 and 2019. However, there were achievements recorded in different areas. These achievements were identified and explain based on Buhari's initial campaign promises on anti-corruption fight, security and wealth creation and economy. In 2018, the Next Level campaign document identified 5 key priority areas for Buhari's re-election that include; jobs, infrastructure, and business entrepreneurship development, human capital enhancement services in healthcare and education and political inclusion.

In analyzing the achievements of Buhari's administration 2015-2023 we have merged his initial 3 key campaign promises with other areas of diplomacy and international appointments. Hence, we first look at the security that focus mainly on fight against insurgency by the Boko Haram. The other dimension covers the fight against separatist movements like Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) and Yoruba Nation agitators led by Nnamdi Kanu and Sunday Ogbobo respectively.

Security Cooperation on War Against Insurgency

The Buhari administration mobilized international support for the war against Boko Haram, forging strong partnerships with key countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Germany, ECOWAS, the AU, the UN, and others. After years of stalemate, the United States finally agreed to sell and is selling weapons to Nigeria (fighter aircraft). Nigeria initiated the formation of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) comprising troops from Nigeria and Chad, Niger, Cameroon and Benin. Buhari visited Niger, Chad, and Cameroon as Nigeria's allies and neighbors for the war against Boko Haram which helped degraded Boko Haram capacity to carry-out attacks in the Lake Chad Basin. Moreover, Nigeria rejoins United Nations International Peacekeeping Missions, ten years after pulling out, with a deployment to the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) in March 2023 (The Cable, 2024)

Anti-Corruption Fight through Global Initiatives

In 2016 Nigeria signed an Agreement on the identification and repatriation of Illicit Funds with the United Arab Emirates during President Buhari's visit to that country. A total of US\$622 million in looted Abacha funds repatriated to Nigeria in two tranches in December 2017 and April 2020. The first tranche (\$322m) disbursed as part of the Buhari Administration's Social Investment Programme interventions, while the second tranche (\$311m) is being invested in the Presidential Infrastructure Development Fund (PIDF), managed by the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA). More Abacha Loot has since been identified for repatriation (The Cable, 2024).

The designation of President Buhari as the African Union (AU) Anti-Corruption Champion for 2018. The establishment of a Global Forum for Asset Recovery (GFAR), hosted by the governments of the US and UK in December 2017, to focus on assisting Nigeria and three other

countries to reclaim their stolen assets. The signing, in August 2016, of an MoU with the UK Government on modalities for the return of Nigeria's stolen assets in the UK (FGN, 2019).

Economy and Wealth Creation

Implementation of a Chinese Yuan (CNY) 15 billion Currency Swap Agreement between the Peoples Bank of China and the Central Bank of Nigeria that was later halted. Similarly, during the Future Investment Initiative (FII) in 2019, President Buhari met separately and held extensive talks with the King Salman bin Abdulaziz, and his son, the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, (MBS), as well as the leadership of ARAMCO and the Saudi Sovereign Wealth Fund.

One of the outcomes of the Saudi Visit was the agreement by the two governments to set up a joint Saudi-Nigeria Strategic Council, made up of government officials and businessmen from both countries, and which will focus on economic growth and development, investments in oil and non-oil sectors, and security cooperation.

Diplomacy and Bilateral Relations

Re-establishment of Nigeria's position and influence in the regional and global arena. Fragile/broken relations with the United States, United Kingdom, South Africa, and with neighbouring countries. As Nigeria's president Buhari visited 43 countries in 8 years. Officially Buhari travelled 53 times as President including his medical trips. In total Buhari spent 431 days outside Nigeria (Ugbodaga, 2023).

Drawing from the above, Buhari has established bilateral relations with countries on different matters of national development including energy, security, corruption, infrastructure development and partnerships. Billions of dollars in concessional infrastructure funding for critical road and rail projects. President Buhari's April 2016 official visit to China has unlocked billions of dollars in infrastructure funding, primarily for road, rail and port projects. According Ships and Ports (2017) Chinese investment in Nigeria hits US\$ 9.5 billion. Other countries include Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirate, Morocco, India, Brazil, United Kingdom, and Germany, France among others.

Nigeria joined the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in 2016 and developed a National Action Plan, which is already being implemented. The designation of President Buhari by ECOWAS Heads of State as West Africa's Covid-19 Champion in 2020. President Buhari's assumption, in 2021, of the presidency of the Pan Africa Agency of the Great Green Wall. President Buhari's interventions have helped restore and strengthen democracy in The Gambia and Guinea Bissau. He authorized the deployment of troops, fighter jets and warships to The Gambia during the impasse that followed the December 2016 Presidential elections. Successful evacuation and repatriation of more than 10,000 Nigerian migrants from Libya, with the support and partnership of the International Organization for Migration (FGN, 2022).

Nigeria's International High-Profile Appointments in Decades

The positions of Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations in 2017 (Amina Mohammed), Director-General of the World Trade Organization in 2021 (Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala), Secretary-General of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries in 2016 (OPEC)

Barkindo Sanusi Mohammed, African Development Bank in 2015 (Adesina Femi Akintunde), and African Export–Import Bank in 2020 (Benedict Oramah) are all currently held, or have recently been held, by Nigerians. Prof. Tijjani Bande was elected President of United Nations General Assembly at the UN Headquarters in New York in 2019. All the positions were supported by the Buhari who worked devoid of party and other primordial interest to ensure that Nigerians were appointed/Elected on these high-profile positions in the country’s history like never before (FGN, 2022).

Digitization of Diplomatic Service

Other administrative achievements include the launch of the Diplomatic Service Digitization Initiative (DSDI) which comprises a new business matching platform, Nigeria Global Business Match (NGBM), developed to make it easier for Nigerian businesses to access foreign markets and also to promote foreign direct investment into Nigeria (FGN, 2021).

Challenges of Nigeria’s Foreign Policy under Buhari Administration

According to Akinyemi (2023) granted an interview where he expressed his opinion on why Nigeria is not taken seriously by other nations in the international community stage on foreign policy matters is because of the “*Number one reason of non-consistency*”. He further stated that;

“You, then, cannot say that you blame the people who didn’t take us seriously, if we were not serious taking ourselves seriously. Furthermore, secondly, Nigeria still have the problem defining what our national interest is, and this goes back all the way back to the 60s.

Nigeria has faced the worst record on security provision under Buhari administration. The major challenge facing Nigeria is insurgency despite the remarkable achievements made by the Buhari regime on the idea that Boko Haram was technically defeated. The insurgency was weakened but other security challenges like kidnapping and farmers and herders, and banditry sprouted. According to Sakue-Collins and Mohammed (2023) once upon a time, not quite long ago, when being safe as a Nigerian citizen was guaranteed by the state and cherished by all. The situation changes dramatically:

But, now, alas, the state can no longer guarantee citizens’ security because the state is under attack by anti-state forces. The non-state actors like bandits, kidnappers, IPOB and the incessant clashes of farmers-herders has undermined the security provision and management that classified Nigeria into the categories of weak states (Sakue-Collins & Mohammed, 2023).

The many cases of attacks by IPOB, ISWAP and Boko Haram particularly on prisons, schools, churches and motor parks have exposed the weaknesses of Nigeria’s security architecture. The high-profile violent attacks include Abuja prison attack in Kuje, the Owo Church in Ondo State and Abuja-Kaduna train attacks points to deteriorating security situation (Human Rights Watch, 2023; Amnesty International, 2022). The security atmosphere impacted on functioning of local businesses and foreign direct investment prospects of the country.

Human Rights Violations and Nigeria's Image

According to Amnesty International (2015) the Nigerian military have extra-judicially executed more than 1,200 people; arbitrarily arrested at least 20,000 as suspected members of Boko Haram insurgents and citizens mostly young men and boys and have committed countless act of torture. Moreover, the clashes of Shiates the (Islamic Brotherhood of Nigeria) with the Nigerian army in Zaria, Kaduna State left hundreds of their members killed. The #EndSARS protest was another event that made Nigeria to face international pressure on its handling of the protesters particularly the Lekki Gate scenarios.

Fight Against Violent Extremism and Boko Haram Insurgency

Nigeria's fight against violent extremism, particularly Boko Haram, involves a multi-faceted approach combining military operations, regional cooperation, international support, and efforts to address the underlying socio-economic factors that fuel extremism. While significant progress has been made with the establishment of Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in weakening Boko Haram's territorial control, the group and its offshoots like ISWAP continue to pose a threat through sporadic attacks and suicide bombings (ACLED, 2024; CFR, 2024).

High Foreign Debt, High Inflation and Low Growth

According to the Budget Office, between 2016 and 2022, the Buhari government raised total revenues of N26.67tn and expended N60.64tn, leaving a deficit of N33.97tn. The gaping hole was financed with FG domestic debt, which rose from N8.84tn as of December 2015 to N44.91tn as of June 2023, while external debt rose from \$7.35bn in December 2015 to \$37.2bn in June 2023. This excludes support provided by the Central Bank amounting to N25tn. Ultimately, President Buhari moved Nigeria's debt profile from N42tn to N77tn. This has had attendant effects on debt servicing, which rose from N1.06tn in 2015 to N5.24tn as of 2022. In fact, under President Buhari's administration, the debt-service-to-revenue ratio grew from 29% to 96%. (BudgiT, 2023).

Moreover, budgiT (2023) further stated that during the administration of President Buhari, the Central Bank extended beyond its monetary policy remit, having a firm grip on fiscal policy with its outsized role. In fact, CBN policies increased the money supply from N18tn in 2015 to N55tn in 2023. While it provided unrestrained liquidity to the Federal Government, the apex bank abandoned its primary mandate of price stability. It continued to apply blunt tools by raising the Monetary Policy Rate from 12.5% in 2015 to 18% in April 2023. This did not taper the inflation rate, which has risen to 22.5%, while food inflation galloped to 24% as of April 2023. Food inflation has continued to rise despite over N800bn spent by the Central Bank on the Anchor Borrowers' Program, which has been touted to have repayment challenges. Unemployment rose from 10.4% in 2015 to 33.4% in 2020 under President Buhari's watch as the clumsy exchange rate management with a wide difference between the official and parallel market rates made it difficult for businesses to thrive. Buhari also prevaricated on the subsidy removal, which his administration spent at least N10tn to service. While Buhari's government planned to have the subsidy removed as the price of crude rose; it failed to act and continued a wasteful venture that only required firm commitment to implement.

While his administration wound up, it had the chance to seize another round of oil windfall with skyrocketing oil prices reaching \$114 per barrel (April 2022) but with little incentive to do so, as CBN “printing presses” continued to flood the system with liquidity. Nigeria’s oil production slipped below one million barrels per day at a time when oil economies skyrocketed to an unprecedented fortune. The attendant effect is that the non-oil share of public revenues grew rapidly from 44.6% in 2015 to 59.4% in 2022. However, Nigeria’s spending was untargeted as several Budget analyses continued to show that the Nigerian budget performing below par, with agencies spending public funds without the mandate to do so, foreclosing any chances of fiscal consolidation (budgiT, 2023).

ECOWAS Protocol of 1998 on Free Movement of Goods and Services

Brown (1998) avers that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocol of 1998 on the free movement of people and goods could be one of the reasons for the clashes when foreign nationals illegally came into Nigeria in the guise of grazing animals by the nomads. This conflict will continue to linger as long as the ECOWAS Convention remains unchanged by the member-states.

Violent conflicts involving farmers and herders have become a major source of instability in the Western Sahel and Lake Chad Basin (LCB). The livelihoods of both farmers and herders are dependent on reliable access to land and water. While farmers tend to be sedentary, traditional nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralists graze their cattle in line with the seasonal migrations and search for water and pasture that will sustain their herds, often crossing national boundaries in fulfillment of these needs. As pastoralists migrate in search of water and pasture, they occasionally encroach on farms, insecurity, and other population centers that block traditional grazing routes, statutory grazing reserves, and water points (Kwaja & Smith, 2020). The Protocol has created a big security problem in the West African sub-region that threatens the entire Africa due to arms trade and violence.

The Problem of States’ Collapse in Africa

The political instability in some African countries like Libya, Somalia, Mali, Chad, Niger, and Cameroon brought about a mass exodus of migrants into West Africa and Nigeria. The situation has adverse effects on border security and governance that triggers internal strife. This is caused by the availability of Small and Light Weapons (SLW) in the hands of people and criminals. These armed non-state actors (ANSA) perpetrate violence, killings, and abductions and complicate the farmers-herders’ crisis in Nigeria. In April, President Muhammadu Buhari, while speaking with the Archbishop of Canterbury in London, attributed the “farmers-herders” clashes to an influx of arms and gunmen from Libya, following its former leader’s demise:

The problem is even older than us. It has always been there but is now made worse by the influx of gunmen from the Sahel region into different parts of the West African sub-region. These gunmen were trained and armed by Muammar Gaddafi of Libya. When he was killed, the gunmen escaped with their arms. We encountered some of them fighting with Boko Haram. (Premium Times, 2018).

Discussion of Findings

President Muhammadu Buhari's government was anchored on three pronged areas which have both National and International policy implications; tackling insecurity (Boko-Haram Insurgency), corruption and economic development. The discussion of findings will begin with the security components of Buhari's foreign policy.

Findings has shown that before the Buhari was declared as president, Boko-Haram had taken over parts of some States in the Northeast-Nigeria and declared an Islamic State within the Nigeria territory and as well took a transitional dimension by spreading across Cameroon, Niger and Chad. President Buhari through diplomatic shuttles, was able to secure the establishment of a Multinational Joint Taskforce (MNJTF), which was charged with the responsibility of rooting out Boko-Haram Insurgency in the Northeast and Lake-Chad Basin. However, findings revealed that MNJTF was not effective as Boko-Haram in one of their attacks, overran its base in Baga, Borno State, and went ahead to commit one of the most heinous crimes against humanity when it massacred hundreds of locals both men and women in Baga town (Audu, 2023).

Buhari's foreign policy dynamics was based on concentric cycles by collaboration especially among neighboring countries so as to evolve joint efforts tackling the insurgency. As Onapajo, (2017) and Waddington (2015) have argued, the shuttle diplomacy by President Buhari to his West African neighbors played a decisive role in limiting the capabilities of Boko-Haram to strike in Nigeria and recede to these neighboring countries as shield against Nigerian forces. This diplomatic relation between these ECOWAS countries helped to curtail the activities of Boko-Haram. Apart from using foreign relations to tackle Boko-Haram insurgency, President Buhari also played key role as Chief Mediator in resolving the political and constitutional impasse in Gambia, when President Yahaya Jammeh initially refused to give up power to democratically elected President Adama Barrow. President Buhari was tasked by ECOWAS to lead the negotiation with Jammeh who eventually accepted to handover to President-elect Adama Barrow, they averting violence which could have leads to aid war and possible humanitarian crisis in the ECOWAS sub-region (Audu, 2023). President Buhari made it a cardinal objective of his foreign policy to pursue national interest by maintaining good relations with its immediate neighbors. The result of this foreign policy dynamics was an improvement in the area of counter-insurgency was which led to the decimation of Boko-Haram violent attacks.

Findings also reveal that Nigeria-US relations under Buhari administration improved significantly. Unlike his predecessor, President Buhari enjoyed somewhat better and robust relations with the US government. The poor handling of Boko-Haram insurgency especially the Kidnap of Chibok girls and human rights abuses alleged to have been committed by the military was what strained Nigeria-United states relations under Obama administration. Scholars (Audu, 2023) have argued that, relations between both countries under Buhari administration started with a high-level of diplomatic engagement between the two leaders, with a meeting held as oral on the 20th July, 2016. One of the fallow of that meetings was the

commitment from President Barak Obama to assist the government of Nigeria tackle the growing incidence of Boko-Haram and countering violent extremism (Audu, 2023). Buhari's foreign policy changes towards Western collaboration continued even under Donald Trump in the area of fight against corruption. For instance, the US department of justice filed a civil complaint for the forfeiture of \$144 million, which was said to be corrupt proceeds from Nigeria's Minister of Petroleum, Diezeni Alison Madueke, in fact, the US government law the election of Buhari as an avenue to aid the government anti-corruption drive and to also improve bilateral relations. Further agreement was signed between Buhari administration and Department of Justice (DOJ), under Loretta E. Lynch for collaboration to fight corruption and assist Nigeria to recover its looted funds domiciled in the US and other Western countries (Audu, 2023).

To further enhanced this diplomatic breakthrough with the United States under Buhari administration. Trump administration who demonstrated efforts to aid Buhari administration in his fight against Boko-Haram by approving sale of military equipment's to Nigeria, a gesture which was rejected under President Goodluck Jonathan's administration. The proposed sales included 12 Ember A-29 Super Tucano Aircraft, the proposed arms sell also got the approval of senators in the US congress who had earlier blocked the sales under Obama administration, citing lychee law which prohibited the US from selling arms to countries where their militaries have cases of human rights abuses (Audu, 2023).

Buhari's diplomatic shuttle greatly enhanced Nigeria-China relations on a sale never witnessed before. Scholars have argued that China being that fastest growing economy in recent times, and the second largest in the world, Nigeria stands to benefits from the relationship. Nigeria and China both share demographic and geographic significance in their continents. China's continuous aggressive expansion regarding commercial, technical and economic expansion has made Nigeria to become an important player in Socio-African relations especially in the area of trade relations. This analyst has argued as due to Nigeria's large population which is considered as a market for Chinese investment, while on the other hand, due to poor infrastructural deficits, Nigeria and other African countries consider China as a partner in development due to its infrastructure loan facilities which China provides at interest rates lower than what is obtainable from Bretton Woods Institutions (Arapau, 2020). This growing importance of China in world economic relations in recent times has made scholars to assert that the United States of America is the most significant nations on the world stage, but China is the defacto leader of the global economy in the 21st Century (Audu, 2023; Akpan, 2020; Ekemakolam et al, 2023).

Ekemakolam et al (2023) have expressed their view that the exchange, visit by President Muhammadu Buhari and Chinese President Xi Jinping were aimed as solidification of both countries trade, diplomatic and economic relations between both countries. The visit led to the signing of the framework for infrastructural development and industrial and technological transfers between Nigeria and China's National Development Reform commission and Nigeria's Ministry of Trade and Investment, especially in the area of technological and scientific cooperation between both countries (Enokela Ogunkola, 2023).

Findings reveals that in the aftermath of the visits, a number of loans were granted to Nigeria specially to finance, the 2016 budget deficits, loans for railway infrastructure amongst other. A deal was also signed to allow the use of Yuan, which is a Chinese currency in place of the US dollars which has been the dominant exchange in trade relations globally, (Audu, 2023). However, the implementation of the agreement did not take place up to the time Buhari administration ended, it has been described as a bold step taken by the two countries to enhance economic and business transactions (Ojo, 2022).

China's Industrial and Commercial Bank also provided \$2 billion loan facility to Aliko Dangote to finance his cement factories. Apart from economic relations between both countries also enjoy good diplomatic relations leading to China publicly expressing support for Nigeria's permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council. On the issue of Taiwan, President Buhari resolved to adopt "One China Policy" and in keeping with this policy, the Buhari government ordered the Taiwanese embassy out of the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria, which means downgrading of diplomatic relations with Taiwan and its relocation to Lagos (Audu, 2023; Akpan, 2020).

Nigeria's action against Taiwan is justified in the sense that Taiwan possessed less economic value compared to China. For example, Nigeria-Taiwan economic relations which is mostly in the area of sea-food, industrial equipment, natural gas, and other food products, stood at \$800 million in 2016, compared to \$6.4 billion trade relations between Nigeria-China in the first half of 2016. On the basis of the foregoing, it should be noted that, under President Buhari administration, Nigeria-China relations have been taken to the greater heights with improvements in bilateral agreements in the area of economic and diplomatic relations between both countries.

On the issue of Buhari administration and border closure with Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger, findings revealed that Nigeria's economy needed to be protected from rampant smuggling activities, the decision was not without pains especially with Benin Republic, and cast aspersions over the newly signed agreement removing restriction on trade among African countries (Audu, 2023). Campbell (2019) argued that, the closure was beyond governments' efforts in tackling smuggling, but also to encourage the growth of domestic agricultural industry. It is in the light of the above that, the administration further ensured closure of all Nigeria's borders by restricting the trade of all goods across the borders. It is imperative to note that imports into Nigeria are not just through land border closure does not affects Nigeria's oil exports.

Scholars have argued that, part of the reason for the border closure was to encourage local farmers so that they can prosper. The countries of the world that prospers did not use their country as dumping ground for smugglers. They made sure that their people produced what they eat. The border closure was to ensure more of Nigeria's commodities coming into the markets. If we allow our own people grow things, our people will prosper and economic prosperity for the people will be achieved. The only way our people can prosper is if we let them use the opportunity that they have such as farming, fishing and others (Emefiele, 2019).

Despite several challenges that confronted President Buhari's administration, findings have indicated that Buhari's foreign policy engagements made some significant achievements, chiefly amongst them are:

First and foremost, it has been observed that within the two years of the administration, the government was able to improve its foreign relations with Nigeria and neighbouring countries. These also helped the government achieved some level of success in the fight against Boko-Haram insurgency which had taken international dimension.

Secondly, Buhari administration was able to improve diplomatic and economic relations with China in a manner never experienced before with positive impacts on the Nigerian economy. These relations provided the country with needed funds to address infrastructural deficits as well as increased foreign direct investments in Nigeria from \$6.4 billion in first half of 2016 to \$15.3 billion and there are more than 200 Chinese companies operating in different sectors (Nigeria's Investment Promotion Council, 2017). China's investment in Nigeria has had a significant impact on the Nigeria economy, dominating many sectors, including oil, manufacturing, textile, agriculture and construction (Chen et al 2016).

Thirdly, as the international scene, Nigeria gained respect under Buhari Administration, due largely to his personality and commitment to fight against corruption and insecurity. This was evident at the invitation of President Buhari to its meeting immediately after he was sworn in. President Buhari was also appointed champion of Anti-corruption fight in Africa by the African Union (AU). All of these impacted positively on the image of Nigeria at the global level had increased the level of economic and diplomatic relations between Nigeria and other countries of the world (Audu, 2023; Akpan 2020: Campbell, 2019). Apart from that President Buhari's leadership style recognition led to his assumption of leadership in negotiating for the peaceful return of democratically elected government in Gambia. Unlike his predecessor, President Buhari was able to improve relations between Nigeria and the United States which led to improved collaboration in the fight against Boko-Haram and corruption which had become endemic in the country.

Conclusion

The paper foreign policy dynamics and national development in Nigeria under former President Buhari administration underscores the goals and interests of the political actors and other key stakeholders in pursuing Nigeria's policy direction. Despite, the public outcry on the regular international travels of the president many positive things have happened. The first political decision taken by President Buhari was to visit the Nigeria's neighbors to have their cooperation, collaboration for collective security. It aligned with his concentric cycles mantra of foreign policy direction. It was made possible and achieved through the formation of Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) with the soldiers from Nigeria, Chad, Niger Republic, and Cameroon in 2016. The MNJTF was largely successful in weakening and defeating the Boko Haram insurgents.

The shuttle diplomacy by former President Buhari resulted in an improvement of diplomatic relations between Nigeria and foreign powers especially; United States, United Kingdom,

France, Germany, and Switzerland. This brought to recognition and inclusion in Western and global affairs in the areas of anti-corruption campaigns and Open Government Initiative. More so, within the period under review, relations with Asian power houses China and India received attention and boost. By and large, Nigeria-China relations was more strategic and contributory economic growth and national development. In this aspect, Nigeria benefitted from Chinese loan, currency swap initiative, and foreign direct investments in the areas of banking, mining, defense, construction, COVID-19 drugs assistance and cultural diplomacy.

The border closure meant to fight insecurity and to systematically implement protectionism was largely successful despite resistance from governments of Benin Republic and Niger Republic that Nigeria was violating free trade principle and ECOWAS Protocol of 1998 on free movement of goods, persons, and services. The impact of the policy was that it has encourage Nigeria farmers especially rice farmers to produce more. These saved Nigeria billions of Naira from rice imports from overseas.

The Buhari's years have witnessed the golden era of Nigeria's international appointments. Buhari visited 53 countries in eight years on official assignment and 36 trips for unofficial and medical trips (Ugbodaga, 2023). The development only succeeded with Buhari's endorsement and advanced lobbying irrespective of any party and sentimental considerations. The appointments of Amina Mohammed (Deputy Secretary UN), Prof. Tijjani Bande (President UNGA), Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (DG WTO), Dr. Akinkunmi Adesina (President AfDB), and Muhammadu Barkindo (Secretary OPEC) among others. Former President Buhari himself was elected Chairman of ECOWAS Head of Governments and has won many awards for anti-corruption, COVID-19 Champion, and recognitions by other international organizations.

Recommendations

Based on the objectives and findings of the paper, the following recommendations suffice:

- i. In order to achieve the objectives and goals of the Nigeria's foreign policy there is the need for consistency. The idea of consistence in this regard signifies respecting commitment Nigeria entered into with other nations on the international political arena and pursuance of the clearly spelt-out goals of agencies and institutions responsible for developing and implementing foreign policy for instance the Nigeria's Institute for International Affairs (NIIA);
- ii. There is the need for Nigeria to ensure strong cooperation and collaboration to achieve collective security to fight violent extremism, smuggling and drugs cartels, global terrorism, and anti-corruption fight and repatriation for the development of the country and remaking of its battered international image;
- iii. There is the need for Nigeria to pursue its aspiration to be permanent member at the United Nations Security Council. Nigeria has contributed to sub-regional, continental and global peace and stability than any other country in Africa. The numerical strength, economic importance and democratic value should be use with intangible elements of national power to realize the dream in the very near future.

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