

NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND REGIONAL SECURITY UNDER PRESIDENT MUHAMMADU BUHARI'S ADMINISTRATION

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Abstract

This study examines Nigeria's foreign policy and its contributions to regional security in West Africa under President Muhammadu Buhari's administration from 2015 to 2023. Anchored on the African Centrepiece doctrine and the Concentric Circle Model, the study explores how Nigeria's foreign policy priorities security, economic development, and anti-corruption shaped its engagement with regional security challenges. The research adopts a qualitative approach, drawing on secondary data and existing literature to assess policy direction and outcomes. Findings reveal that Nigeria maintained its traditional leadership role within the sub-region but adopted a relatively cautious and less interventionist strategy compared to previous administrations. Emphasis was placed on diplomacy, multilateral cooperation through ECOWAS, and the use of conditional sanctions in addressing political instability, particularly in response to military coups in West Africa. However, Nigeria's effectiveness was constrained by domestic challenges, including economic downturn, rising insecurity, inadequate funding of diplomatic missions, and delayed foreign policy decisions. The study further highlights the evolving nature of regional security, encompassing both traditional military threats and non-traditional issues such as terrorism, transnational crime, and socio-economic instability. It concludes that while Nigeria contributed to regional stability, its capacity to fully exert influence was limited by internal weaknesses and shifting global dynamics. The paper recommends strengthening domestic governance, improving institutional capacity, and enhancing proactive regional engagement to sustain Nigeria's leadership in West African security architecture.

Keywords: *Nigeria's Foreign policy, Regional Security, Buhari's Administration.*

Introduction

Nigeria's approach to sub-regional security has been largely influenced by the national role conceived for it in international relations by its leaders. This role conception has become the defining paradigm for foreign policy engagement. According to this paradigm, Nigeria is the natural leader of Africa with a manifest destiny and even with the responsibility to promote and protect the interests of Africa and black people everywhere in all ramifications. They also believe that the country's security is tied to that of other African states because of cultural and historical experiences, and because of transnational security issues which are defined by the way in which the security of a nation is affected by what happens in contiguous countries around its neighbourhood. As Ate (2011) argues, Nigeria must treat this sub-region as a natural base from which to project its national interests and regional influence (Alli, 2023; Yoroms, 2010; Ate, 2011).

The adoption of the Concentric Circle Model for the nation's foreign policy in the mid-1980s tried to prioritize foreign policy objectives but still putting emphasis on West Africa (MFA;2011). However, under President Obasanjo, since 1999, Nigeria shifted from concentricism to globalism following the argument by Lamido Sanusi, Minister of Foreign Affairs (1999-2003) that Nigeria stands to benefit from globalism as thrust of its foreign policy.

Another foreign minister, Ambassador Adeniji argued that the Concentric Circle Model should be constructive and beneficial, and be predicated on a tripod of complementary strategies: articulation of Nigerias interests within a given concentric circle, articulation of appropriate techniques for promoting and defining such interests within that concentric circle and evolving techniques that will make the Nigerian people the first beneficiaries of such a foreign policy (Akinterinwa; 2004:454).

However, considering all the problems facing West African states, there is a need to establish a security regime in the area if the sub-region and the component states are to develop. Importantly, a hegemon is required to propel the security regime and Nigeria fits into that description (Danjuma; 2003). But there are still other problems because Nigeria is yet to develop the capacity and legitimacy to influence the sub-region and fail sometimes to convince other states to follow its lead on vital political and security and economic issue.

Drawn from the foregoing, this paper examines Nigeria's foreign policy and regional security under late president Muhammadu administration in order to assess how it has contributed to regional security stability in West Africa.

Nigeria's foreign policy trajectory has witnessed twists and turns in implementation so as to national objectives for national interest. There remains a notable gap in research specifically focused on the intricate relationship on examining the direction of Nigeria's foreign policy decisions during President Muhammadu Buhari's administration and what have been achieved on regional security stability (2015-2023).

Three essential instruments can be combined as framework for assessing Buhari's foreign policy. They are the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; the All Progressive Congress (APC) Constitution (the constitution of the party President Buhari belongs to) and the tripod campaign watchword of President Buhari namely, security, economy and anti-corruption war (The Nation, June 3, 2018:19). Indeed, the traces of all these can be seen in the externally directed actions of Buhari's Administration.

The global obstacles encountered by Nigeria's foreign policy under former President Muhammadu Buhari's administration between 2015 and 2023. The US-China Trade War, Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic, African coups, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 created new security challenges for Nigeria. The inquiry pertains to the manner in which the government of President Buhari deliberately modified Nigeria's foreign policy in reaction to a sequence of unparalleled global occurrences, including the signing of US-China trade war, the Covid-19 epidemic, and regional coups.

All the objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy as provided for in the 1999 Constitution and in the APC's Constitution- the governing party's constitution-can be reduced or approximated to these core values and watchword of the Administration namely security, economy and anti-corruptions war. It is against this backdrop that this paper randomly highlights examine Nigeria's foreign policy direction and how that contributes to regional security and stability.

Objectives of the Study

This study broadly examines Nigeria's foreign policy and contributions regional security under president Buhari's administration. The specific objectives are:

1. To examine Nigeria's foreign policy direction under president Buhari's administration on regional security

2. To assess how Nigeria foreign policy under president Buhari's administration contribute to regional security

The main features of Nigeria's West African policy both from the African Centre-piece perspective (Adedeji, 1975; Garba, 1988) and the Concentric Circle model (Gambari, 1989; 2022) and Beneficial Concentricism (Akinterinwa, 2006; Adeniji, 2006) are as follows:

- a) Anti-colonialism, anti-apartheid and antiracism;
- b) Cooperation with immediate neighbours;
- c) Cooperation with other ECOWAS states;
- d) Promotion of peace and security in the sub-region and across the world.

The 1999 Constitution, in Section 19, projects a dynamic foreign policy for Nigeria, through the promotion of economic development, integration and unity, peace and security in Africa and the world. Accordingly, Nigeria's involvement in West African security affairs and any role it might have played in the past few decades have been the result of strongly held opinion by its successive leaderships, generally a role about the nations responsibility for Africa, and which the public has come to accept, even though with reservation over the years. This was the basis for Babangida's famous declaration in a 1985 speech, as quoted by Ajulo (2009; 18) that Africa's problems and their solution, should constitute the premise of Nigeria's foreign policy. This idea was also echoed by President Jonathan, who, while declaring open a National Conference on the Review of Nigerian Foreign Policy organized by the Presidential Advisory Council (PAC) in August, 2011, President Jonathan (2011) noted that:

In the era of globalization, at a time of grave challenges to national and international security such as we face from terrorism and transnational criminal networks, our commitment to regional and international peace and security must remain as strong as ever.

In line with this, the Federal government vision 2020 prescribes an elaborate mandate for the Nigerian Foreign Service including ensuring that Nigeria's leading role in Africa and in the West African sub-region is sustained and safeguarded.

Security threats could be of two kinds the conventional security threats, which are associated with a foreign element or government and is usually responded to according to conventional practice and doctrine following laid down pattern (Bassey;1993). The second typology of security threats have been defined as new or emerging security threats and are generally nongovernmental, dynamic, random and driven by variety of causes and forces. These are of two types. In the first place are the political security threats. The political fall out of the democratization process in the age of globalization has brought a high degree of political uncertainty and instability, defining the overarching security situation in the sub-region in a special way. In the second place are the threats caused by socioeconomic issues. The dynamics of global economic changes, brought about by the growing power of market forces leading to the withdrawal of social provisioning, deregulation of national economies, privatization and withdrawal of subsidy, and as result high level of unemployment, poverty and migration which pose by themselves specific security problems. Generally, most member states of ECOWAS are socio-economically and politically distressed

Conceptual Clarification

Foreign Policy

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).

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. For Celenk (2015), foreign policy enables states to identify certain political, economic and military interests of concern and pursue them through different channels. Chibundu (2003) says it’s a State’s external action which can be friendly or aggressive, casual, intense or complex. To Hill (2003), it is about mediating a two way flow between internal and external dynamics and cannot be detached from the domestic where it springs from. Ayam (2004), Dokubo and Oluwadare (2010), Alao (2011) also attest to this relationship between internal and external dynamics.

Foreign policy could be based on economics, politics, military, morality, culture or establishment of relationships and cooperation with the rest of the world. While Kisangani and Pickering, (2015), Preble (2010) attests to this military approach/intervention, Sanders (2017) in his address at Westminster College affirms that foreign policy is not just tied to military but directly connects with economics, taking into account the outrageous income and wealth inequality that exists today, global peace and security and should be employed to prevent an oligarchic form of society where a few exert influence over the economic and political life of our world.

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.

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 conceived 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.

Regional Security

However, if the issue of international security of a state is considered in the regional context, it is worth noting the specific two-planeness. First of all, it concerns the external aspects of national security, related to establishing and remaining in two - or multilateral relationships with other participants of international relations in the region, for example other countries, regional institutions, military alliances, integration organizations, etc. Further, it will be also linked to the international system as a whole (Kuzstal, 2017).

The concept of "regional security" a considerable challenge, especially in light of the rapid transformations at both horizontal levels (in terms of the widening scope of security threats) and vertical levels (in terms of the structural depth of political and economic transformations). On one hand, we find that security studies have significantly expanded with the evolution of the nature of security risks and threats. They are no longer limited to traditional military threats but now encompass new and unconventional threats, such as international terrorism, transnational organized crime, cyber security, and climate change. These security developments have added new dimensions to the understanding of security, necessitating a reevaluation of what "security" means at the regional level. Sub-regional security involves security cooperation between geographically proximate countries within a larger region, focusing on common threats like terrorism, organized crime, and border insecurity, often through organizations like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This approach emphasizes tackling root causes such as unemployment and poor governance, fostering community resilience, and integrating military efforts with socio-economic development to achieve sustainable peace and stability.

The intellectual roots of regional security studies can be traced back to geopolitical writings from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. During the Cold War, regional security and stability were largely defined in terms of the geographic position occupied by the region within the strategic perspective of the United States or the Soviet Union. Consequently, the context of the Cold War imposed standards and requirements on the concept of regional security. The contemporary focus on regional security reflects a convergence between the ongoing importance of traditional geopolitical considerations and the emergence of new security

challenges that have redefined the content and scope of regional security in the contemporary international system. The rising significance of regional security and regional security systems across all dimensions of interaction has led to the generation of a large number of formal international arrangements that vary in scope, complexity, and strength. Before addressing regional security, it is essential to discuss the concept of the region and its types (Darkwa, 2011).

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Key Aspects of Regional Security

- **Cooperation between States:**
Regional security is built on partnerships and dialogue between neighboring countries within a specific geographic zone.
- **Shared Security Frameworks:**
It establishes a framework for assessing and addressing security threats that affect multiple states, such as resource scarcity or cross-border conflicts.

- **Regional Organizations:**

Intergovernmental organizations like the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU) are established to manage security issues, foster integration, and provide institutional mechanisms for peace and cooperation.

- **Broader Scope:**

The concept has evolved from focusing on traditional military security, like defense and border disputes, to encompassing nontraditional challenges such as peacekeeping, human rights, environmental issues, and humanitarian intervention.

- **Mechanisms for Prevention and Response:**

Regional security includes developing instruments and mechanisms for conflict prevention, peacekeeping, post-war reconstruction, and the resolution of disputes among member states.

Literature Review on Foreign Policy and Regional Security

Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy

The interconnection between a nation's internal political dynamics and its external relations has long fascinated scholars, resulting in a diverse array of theoretical approaches and empirical investigations. This body of work has evolved significantly over time, offering increasingly nuanced perspectives on how domestic factors shape foreign policy outcomes. One seminal contribution to this field is Putnam's (1988) "two-level game" theory. This framework conceptualizes foreign policy decision-making as a simultaneous negotiation process occurring at both domestic and international levels. Leaders must strategically balance the demands of domestic constituencies with the constraints and opportunities presented by the international system. Putnam's work has inspired numerous case studies and theoretical refinements, such as Moravcsik's (1997) liberal theory of international politics, which emphasises the primacy of societal actors in shaping state preferences. Building on these foundations, scholars have explored various specific domestic factors that influence foreign policy. Economic conditions, for instance, have been shown to play a crucial role. Mansfield and Milner (2012) demonstrated how domestic economic interests shape a country's stance on international trade agreements. Their work highlights how leaders must navigate competing economic pressures from different sectors of society when formulating trade policies. Political institutions also significantly impact foreign policy decision-making. Democratic peace theory, as articulated by Russett (1993), posits that democratic nations are less likely to engage in conflict with one another due to institutional constraints and shared values. This theory has sparked extensive debate and research on how different political systems affect foreign policy outcomes. Public opinion represents another critical domestic factor. Historically according to Gambari (1989) asserted that Nigeria's foreign policy has been farmed to be in three levels; national, regional, and international where he stated thus;

Concentric circle of interests." "... at the epicentre of these circles are the national economic and security interests of Nigeria which are inextricably tied up with the security, stability and economic/social well-being of our immediate neighbours, ... whom we share identical goals of regional stability and peace" (Gambari, 1989).

The above quotes implies good neighborliness and at the same the manifestation of Nigeria's national interests in the dynamic concentric cycle. The Buhari/Idiagbon (1983-1985) and

Buhari/Osinbajo (2015-2023) pursued same concentric models without much staging and awareness.

Holsti's (2004) comprehensive study of American foreign policy illustrates how public sentiment can constrain or enable certain policy choices. In an increasingly interconnected world, the role of public opinion in shaping foreign policy has only grown more pronounced, particularly with the rise of social media and instant global communication. Domestic security concerns also profoundly influence foreign policy. Farnham's (2004) research on the impact of political context on foreign policy decision-making demonstrates how internal threats can lead to more aggressive or isolationist foreign policies. This dynamic is particularly relevant in countries facing insurgencies or separatist movements.

Regional Security

There is a growing body of literature on the general phenomenon of regionalism in world politics, particularly the 'new regionalism' that has emerged since the 1950s. Both 'region' and 'security' are widely used but vague and contested terms. In world politics the term region has become most closely associated with the different continents of the world: Africa, the Americas, Asia, Oceania and Europe. Subcontinents (e.g., South Asia) and the areas surrounding seas (e.g., the Baltic and the Caspian seas) are sometimes also referred to as regions. An additional distinction may be drawn between regions and sub-regions, with the latter understood as geographically distinct sub-areas of continents, although the two terms are often used interchangeably and the difference between them is sometimes blurred.

Geography alone, however, does not define regions in world politics. Regions are political and imagined constructs just as nations are: they are shaped both by local countries' concepts of identity and connections and by the way outsiders view and react to them—vide the use of the names Near East and Far East at a time when Eurocentric imperialist visions were dominant. The recognition or willed construction of regional and sub-regional systems, interstate groupings and organizations is similarly driven by historical and cultural factors and by a range of subjective perceptions and preferences as much as by any objective logic. Regions can be 'made' as part of a conscious policy programme, as happened with European integration in the 1950s, and as some observers see happening now in regions like Latin America and East Asia in an effort to balance potential US hegemony. A similar interplay of motives determines the definition and the aspects of security that a given set of countries will select for their activities (Baile & Cottey, 2005).

All these explanations are needed to understand why real-life regional ventures sometimes leave out countries that seem geographically to belong to the region or take in additional countries; why several security-related groups with different memberships and agendas can coexist on the same territory; why sub-regional groups form in some regions but not others and often lack an obvious geographical basis; and why a region as defined in security terms may not have the same boundaries as it does for economic, climatic, cultural or other purposes. This chapter's subject of study is necessarily those regions and sub-regions that governments have created and deemed to exist and which can directly or indirectly shape security-related policy. How can regional security cooperation be conceptualized and understood? At least four models of regional security cooperation have *prima facie* relevance for the 21st century: alliances, collective security, security regimes and security communities. Alliances are one of the oldest forms of international cooperation, designed for both defence and attack (typically by military

means) against a common external, or even internal, threat or opponent. They use cooperation as a means to an end rather than a good in itself, and an alliance's membership necessarily excludes the enemy. These relatively zero-sum characteristics are matched by the often negative practical impacts of the alliance method on international security: even a purely defensive alliance may heighten its members' threat consciousness more than it eases it, may exacerbate tensions and entrench dividing lines, and may take part in competitive arms acquisition (Baile & Cottey, 2005).

Alliances that turn on internal enemies (whether aberrant states or religious or ethnic groups) can also radicalize the latter and encourage them to seek external backers. On the other hand, an alliance should at least reduce the likelihood of war between its members by promoting confidence, encouraging dispute avoidance and resolution, and perhaps triggering cooperation in other non-security areas. Both ASEAN and NATO may be seen as examples of this type of dynamic. Despite the ending of the classic East–West confrontation in 1989–90, NATO and (albeit much less intensely) a number of other groupings continue to fulfil at least some of the roles associated with alliances (MacGregor & Burton, 2005).

The concept of collective security emerged in the 20th century in response to the ambivalent effects of older-style balance-of-power politics and alliances. First attempted in the framework of the League of Nations and again in the United Nations (UN), a collective security system aims to prevent or contain war by assuring a response to any act of aggression or threat to peace among its members. To work as intended, any such system must include all states in a region or the world, and it directs its attention inwardly at their actions. Apart from the global UN, some larger regional entities—such as the AU, the OAS and the OSCE—may be viewed as institutions that explicitly or implicitly aim at, and at least partially produce, collective security.⁵ Notoriously, however, no such system has ever been made to work perfectly because of the evident problem—which is more difficult the larger the membership—of arriving at a common judgement and common will to act against offenders. Experience shows that the approach works well when there is consensus among the major powers but fails when faced with the largest dangers, including when the major powers come into conflict. The lessons here may indicate some limiting factors for the security aspirations of regional groups as well (Jervis, 1982).

A third type of regional security cooperation is a security regime.⁶ Regimes are a common phenomenon in such non-security dimensions of international relations as the regulation of international trade and transport. They define norms—of a cooperative and generally positive nature—for states' behaviour and often provide ways to implement, support and verify these norms. A security-related regime may cover broad prescripts for behaviour such as the non-use of force and respect for existing international borders, or may more concretely regulate certain types and uses of weapons or activities like military movements and transparency. Several regional constructs, notably the OSCE and some Latin American initiatives, may be understood as security regimes, as may regional arms control measures such as nuclear weapon-free zones or the 1990 Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty.

The value of all such constructs depends on how well their norms are respected, and there is much debate on what features—in terms of internal power patterns, institutionalization, incentives and penalties—are needed to ensure observance. It should be noted that regimes with functional security goals may not need, or lend themselves to, a geographically contiguous membership. Indeed, some would argue that using limited groups to handle tasks like export

control has zero-sum overtones and that certain regimes work best when fully global. A security community has been defined as a group of states among which there is a 'real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way'. The concept was developed by Karl Deutsch in the late 1950s to reflect the particularly far-reaching goals of post-World War II European integration, which in turn placed Europe in a larger security community of the world's industrialized democracies. A security community implies more intense, sustained and comprehensive interaction than any of the above models. Starting by removing the risk of conflict within the group, it can develop strengths that are greater than the sum of its parts for security tasks going well beyond the prevention of specific ills (Jervis, 1982).

Ambitions to build such communities have recently been displayed also in several non-European regions, but the nature and effects of regional integration in the security domain remain poorly understood. The EU experiment has eliminated conflict between but not within its states (vide Northern Ireland and the Basque region). The tendency of security communities to weaken internal frontiers potentially means that they can be more quickly affected by 'transnational' threats (e.g., terrorism, criminal traffic and disease). Their open-ended agendas tend to lead them to confront new security challenges as soon as old ones are settled and, in particular, to feel an impulse to start 'exporting' their surplus of security to others, notably in the form of peace missions (on which more below).

These four models can help in understanding the nature of, prospects for and limitations of particular forms of regional security cooperation; but they use a language that is rare today in the actual public discourse or decision making of the regions concerned. They also suffer from being relatively static, revealing little about why regional groups change their membership or agenda and why they may mutate from one form to another. Various alternative ways of categorizing regional structures could be mooted, for example in terms of their institutional or governance characteristics (i.e., their degree of institutionalization, the nature of any fixed decision-making procedures, their collective organs and funds, the depth of involvement of non-state and local actors, and so on). This would not, however, directly lead to judgments on security utility since experience shows that different institutional forms can be appropriate for different types of security task in different environments. For instance, when several security institutions exist in the same region, this could be because states prefer to address various aspects of security in a variety of procedural styles. The most straightforward way to approach a new understanding of regional groups is through the functions they perform in terms of security as such. Hence, ECOWAS is both economic and security community that is very important for regional stability.

Regional Coups and Political Instability in Africa

Between 2015 and 2023, there was an increase in regional coups in Africa, endangering the stability of governments. Military coups occurred in Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Chad, and Burkina Faso (Musavengane & Zhou, 2021). Colonel Assimi Goita ousted Mali's President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita and acting President Bah Ndaw in August 2020 and May 2021, respectively. Colonel Mamady Doumbouya ousted President Alpha Conde in Guinea, who had secured a disputed third term in 2020 (Moses & Ige, 2023). There were also coups in Gabon, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Niger which Nigeria considers to be a risk to regional stability (Amoateng, 2022).

Nigeria responded to these coups through adaptive foreign policy stance which included that of noninterventionism, a focus on regional cooperation, and the use of conditional sanctions. In contrast to earlier periods, especially from 1990 to 2000, when Nigeria adopted a more assertive foreign policy in Africa, the years 2015 to 2023 witnessed a change in the degree of direct involvement, with Nigeria shifting its foreign policy to more of condemning coup leaders instead of removing them (Mojeed, 2017).

An exception to this was Nigeria's response to the coup in The Gambia in 2017, when the country sent troops under the codename ECOMOG NIBATT 1, which included 200 soldiers from the Navy and Air Force to the 7,000-strong joint force under the command of Senegalese Commander General Francois Ndiaye, with its headquarters located in Dakar (Jeremiah, 2018). Through ECOWAS, Nigeria took action against persons in Mali and GuineaBissau and other West African nations that had experienced coups.

Challenges of Nigeria's Foreign Policy

The government did not appoint diplomatic Heads on time upon removal of the Ambassadors appointed by the last administration. Out of the about 112 Missions, the government presented a list of 47 to the Legislative Arm of Government for screening as required by the Constitution and the commissioning was in 2017. This did not speak well of Nigeria as Missions like Russia, United States, Canada, Italy, United Kingdom, including Czech Republic were left without ambassadors while the respective countries had their substantive Ambassadors in Abuja. Many of the Missions were facing challenges in terms of funds due to lean budgets and some lacked quality personnel in terms of relevant skills and experience since most appointments are based on political considerations rather than merit (Akwaya, 2016; Vanguard Newspaper, 2017).

One of the major challenges of the Buhari's Administration was the economic down-turn the Administration inherited in 2015. The decline in government revenue for instance, inhibited the proper funding of Nigeria's missions and embassies abroad. Indeed the Senate raised the alert of threats by host countries to evict Nigerian officials in her missions and embassies abroad as a result of the inability of the country to pay rent for residence, chanceries and other staff official quarters; inability to pay several months arrears of salaries and allowances owed officers and paucity of funds to meet other obligations. In a related development, the Administration had to withdraw from 90 international organizations out of the 310 international organizations it belonged to. The government attributed this to the need to save Nigeria from embarrassment or opprobrium that the accumulation of arrears of subscription fee could bring. As at that time, Nigeria was said to be paying \$70 million annually as membership subscription and was owing many international organizations. Apart, the economic crunch also led the country into seeking more international financial succor from its bilateral and multilateral partners such as China, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This trend not only heightened the country's debt burden which stood at N22 trillion in 2018 as against N12 trillion it inherited in 2015, (The Punch, July 3, 2018:20 and The Nation, July 1, 2018:40-41) but will in the foreseeable future constrain the country's ability to assert itself on the world stage.

Another challenge to Buhari's foreign policy was the challenge of insecurity posed by the Boko Haram phenomenon, farmers/Herders clash, cattle rustling, and ethnic agitations, kidnapping and armed robbery among others. These security issues have escalated and have become overwhelming for the Administration. They have indeed constituted huge distraction to the

government in the conduct of the country's foreign policy. Without peace at home, hardly can government pay attention to foreign policy issues. The personality traits of President Buhari also affected the speed and the orientation or direction of Nigeria's foreign policy. In terms of personality traits, the President has been perceived as slow, rigid and too uncompromising. These traits have equally affected Nigeria's foreign policy. This impact can for instance be seen in the slow reactions of the Administration to Morocco's move in the ECOWAS (The Nation, 2017, September 25) and the country's hesitation to sign the African free Trade Area Agreement. More specifically for example, it was in October, 2018 that the President inaugurated a Committee to study the risks for Nigeria's signing of the Agreement, clear seven months after the agreement had been signed by about 50 African countries.

Theoretical Framework

The work of von Neumann and Morgenstern in the 1940s on rational choice. 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" (Anderson, 1975; 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).

Basic 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. In this the security of surrounding nations means Nigeria will be better at peace. Hence, regional security means national security to Nigeria. The ECOWAS serves this function through its mandate of mutual defense assistance and ECOMOG.

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 Former president Buhari has projected Nigeria's image and national interests in five different ways, thus;

1. Regional security cooperation through war against Boko Haram insurgency and counter terrorism
2. Mediation role in the Gambia
3. Fighting Trans-national Crime and closure of border
4. Training of Security personnel in Nigeria's Defense Academy
5. Peace Keeping operations

Methodology

The paper employs content and documentary analysis of data. It solely relies on secondary sources of data which include books, personal sources, journals, newspapers, websites, government records, etc. Secondary data is known to be readily available compared to primary data. It requires very little research and requires for manpower to use these sources. With the advent of electronic media and the internet, secondary data sources have become more easily accessible (Nnabugwu, 2006).

Qualitative research is a methodology for scientific inquiry that emphasizes the depth and richness of context and voice in understanding social phenomena. This methodology is

constructive or interpretive (Lim, 2023), aiming to unveil the “what,” “why,” “when,” “where,” “who,” and “how” (or the “5W1H”) behind social behaviors and interactions, rather than merely quantifying occurrences. In the exploration of the subjective experiences, perspectives, and meanings that individuals attribute to their social world.

Presentation of Data and Findings

In line with the research question one of the seminar as earlier stated the study present, thus.

1. What are the Nigeria’s foreign policy priority under president Buhari’s administration?

Although, former late president Buhari campaign promises were on security, economy, and fight against corruption his idea of Nigerian foreign policy was never clearly articulated. Hence, this research understood that one has to rely on Nigeria’s 1999 Constitution as amended and the All Progressives Congress (APC) constitution to figure out their contents on foreign policy direction.

The foreign policy of every state is influenced by mainly two determinants; international or external and domestic or internal. The foreign policy direction under president Buhari is dynamic has been largely guided by the concentric cycle paradigm.

The explanations Nigeria’s foreign policy has often been explained in terms of four “concentric circles” of national interest. The innermost circle represents Nigeria’s security, independence and prosperity and is centered on its immediate neighbours – Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger; the second circle revolves around Nigeria’s relations with its West African neighbours; the third circle focuses on Continental African issues of peace, development and democratization; and the fourth circle involves Nigeria’s relations with organizational institutions and states outside Africa (Gambari, 2022; 1989).

Nigeria possesses all attributes of a regional leader: population, natural resources, financial means, and military capabilities. Consequently, the nation has been instrumental in both regional conflict management and shaping the West African security architecture at large. At the same time, Nigeria continues to be faced by manifold internal challenges, which threaten to undermine her hegemonic prerogative. Since 1960, Nigeria’s foreign policy has seen several leadership changes, but its core tenets of non-alignment, Africa as center-piece, a just global economic system, and world peace have remained constant. Former president Buhari through his shuttle diplomacy was able remake the battered image of Nigeria.

2. How does Nigeria’s foreign policy under president Buhari’s administration contribute to regional security?

President Buhari inherited the most deadly insurgent groups and terror activities with Boko Haram as the main target for containment and elimination. “Boko-Haram insurgency had not only led to the closure or abandonment of people’s business activities within the effected regions, but also led to immigration of people from the effected regions. The entire West Africa especially Nigeria’s neighboring countries of Chad, Cameroon, Niger Republic, and Benin Republic have been affected by the activities of Boko Haram insurgents.

Nigeria initiated the formation of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) comprising troops from Nigeria and Chad, Niger, Cameroon and Benin Republic. President 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.

Furthermore, 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). In April, 2018, the Buhari's administration launched the Nigerian Economic Diplomacy Initiative (NEDI). However, the rise in the wave of insecurity posed by the Boko Haram phenomenon, kidnapping, armed robbery, among others, had a negative impact on the policy, following the exit of some major foreign investors to other countries with peaceful and stable economic environments.

Discussion of Findings

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). Furthermore, for instance, after years of stalemate, the US agreed to sell weapons to Nigeria, and the sale of 12 Super Tucare Aircraft by the US government was concluded (Adebisi, 2024).

Early in the life of the Administration in 2015, Buhari made it public that the World Bank had pledged \$2.1billion to help the North-East part of the country which had been ravaged by Boko Haram Insurgency. Further still, the Administration also successfully secured Eurobond sales. In 2017 also, Nigeria was invited to the G-8 summit held in Berlin, a development that ushered in a new phase in Nigeria's G-8 relations (made up of 8 most powerful countries in the world, US, Britain, France, Russia(suspended as at 2018), Germany, Japan, Canada and China). Nigeria was able to secure the group's financial succor of \$5million in aid to fight Boko Haram. Nigeria continued to co-operate and play leadership role in the West African sub-region. For instance in 2016, the President led Nigeria along with other countries such as Senegal, Mali and Ghana to play mediatory role in the Gambia when the former President Yahaya Jammeh was hesitant in relinquishing power after losing to the incumbent President, Adama Barrow who won the Presidential election. The intervention of Nigeria along with the aforementioned West-African countries culminated in Jammeh's eventual abdication of power. This leadership role and others led the ECOWAS members to unanimously elect President Buhari as the Chairman of the sub-regional organization in 2018.

The land border closure, for over eight months, between Nigeria and ECOWAS countries adversely affected all countries concerned including Nigeria. This is a typical example of how domestic policy has direct and indirect effects on foreign policy as the closure prevented the flow of persons, goods and services into Nigeria, including input requirements of commerce and industry, leading to hyperinflation of goods and services in the country. Though the aim of the policy was to stop the smuggling of small arms and ammunition and foreign rice into the country so as to reduce insecurity and encourage domestic rice production respectively,

smuggling still continued due to the porous nature of the country's borders (Chigozie & Akpan, 2024)

The government did not appoint diplomatic Heads on time upon removal of the Ambassadors appointed by the last administration. Out of the about 112 Missions, the government presented a list of 47 to the Legislative Arm of Government for screening as required by the Constitution and the commissioning was in 2017. This did not speak well of Nigeria as Missions like Russia, United States, Canada, Italy, United Kingdom, including Czech Republic were left without ambassadors while the respective countries had their substantive Ambassadors in Abuja. Many of the Missions were facing challenges in terms of funds due to lean budgets and some lacked quality personnel in terms of relevant skills and experience since most appointments are based on political considerations rather than merit (Akwaya, 2016; Vanguard Newspaper, 2017).

Conclusion

This paper examines the foreign policy of late former President Buhari's administration 2015-2023 and concludes that his foreign policy is flexible which favored diversification, multilateralism, and good neighborliness. Security was given high priority in tackling Boko Haram insurgency and counter terrorism through regional cooperation and collective defense. The use of concentric cycle and economic diplomacy have helped Nigeria secure some benefits from international cooperation.

As stated earlier, Combating Terrorism, Fighting Corruption, and Improving the Economy were the three cardinal points on which President Buhari based his campaign promises. As previously stated, foreign policy in a democratic government goes through many stages of conception and execution. However, in the sphere of national security Nigeria has failed to provide internal security for citizens but technically defeated Boko Haram insurgency. This irony makes Nigeria seriously insecure and economically vulnerable under late president Buhari. In particular, President Muhammadu Buhari, unlike his predecessor, had somewhat better bilateral relations with the United States, despite the enmity between the Obama and Goodluck administrations over the handling of the Boko Haram insurgency, particularly the kidnapping of Chibok girls and military human rights abuses. He brought back some abducted Chibok girls back home after released by the Boko Haram.

The land border restriction between Nigeria and ECOWAS, which lasted over eight months, had a negative impact on all countries involved, including Nigeria. The shutdown of the Nigerian land borders hindered the movement of individuals, products, and services into Nigeria, including input requirements for commerce and industry, resulting in hyperinflation of goods and services in the country. Despite the policy's goal of reducing instability and encouraging domestic rice production by stopping the smuggling of small guns, ammunition and foreign rice into the country, smuggling remained due to the country's porous borders. The cost of the border closure to the country was larger than the expected advantages, as it deepened the country's economic slump.

Recommendations

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

- i. Nigeria's foreign policy under late president Buhari was directed towards regional stability and global cooperation through concentric cycle. The economic diplomacy aspect should be expanded to benefit Nigeria economically;

- ii. That Nigeria led regional cooperation to fight Boko Harm insurgency and counter terrorism. The alliance should continue by balancing interest and ensure proper funding for sustainability of the Multi National Joint Task Force.

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