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Nigerian Foreign Policy under President Muhammadu Buhari: A Reflection

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Abstract

President Buhari, on assumption of duty, inherited a battered Nigerian foreign policy and national imagery. The recurring issues of terrorism, kidnapping, banditry, and more prevalently, national corruption dealt the Nigerian foreign policy and external relations a great blow. The culmination of the implications of the aforementioned national issues and contradictions for Nigerian foreign policy came in the wake of most developed states' refusal to sell ammunitions to the Nigerian government in its counterinsurgency and anti-terrorism campaigns. Relying on descriptive qualitative research technique, this study critically examines the extent to which the prevailing internal national paralysis had affected Nigerian foreign policy and external relations under President Muhammadu Buhari's administration between 2015 and 2019. Findings elicited through In-depth and Key Informant Interviews and analyzed thematically through content analysis, further reveal that Nigerian foreign policy under President Muhammadu Buhari has been heavily counter-productive as exemplified in previous administrations. The issues of national insecurity occasioned by the multiplicity of Boko Haram Insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, separatist insurrections coupled with rising economic inflation, rising food prices have all combined to negatively affect the effectiveness of Nigerian foreign policy under President Muhammed Buhari's administration. A thorough and pragmatic resolution of the prevailing internal national problems would ultimately emplace Nigerian foreign policy on the path of efficiency and effectiveness.

Keywords

Foreign Policy, National Imagery, External Relations, President Muhammadu Buhari, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Foreign policy is an essential instrument for nations to interact with other states and non-state players in the international system (Levy, 2013: 301). Foreign policy is a set of measures used to stimulate and accomplish the national objectives of a country. Nigeria's foreign guiding principle has advanced over time under various administrations and individuals, notwithstanding its missed results. The style of governance and, to a large extent, the disposition of the country's leader

influence this (Fawcett, 2016). From independence, when Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa pursued a non-aligned foreign policy with a mix of Afro-centrism, the country had been atrophied by the Nigerian civil war under Yakubu Gowon between 1966-1975. As expected and in continuation of the policy of Afro-centrism, the Muritala Mohammed and Olusegun Obasanjo's regime between 1975 and 1979 pursued a radical foreign policy aimed at emancipating African states from the clutches of apartheid and colonialism (Aning, Abdallah & Kofi, 2017: 237). During Ibrahim Babangida's regime from 1985 to 1993, the country's foreign policy took a sharp turn by being primarily pro-western, which led to the acceptance and the domestication of the International Monetary Fund-led Structural Adjustment Programme and economic diplomacy in Nigeria. On the other hand, Sani Abacha chose to pursue an isolationist foreign policy from 1993 to 1998, resulting, ultimately, in Nigeria's trifling engagement with the rest of the world. Olusegun Obasanjo's regime from 1999-2007 decided to re-open Nigeria to the world after the isolationist policy of the Sani Abacha government's military junta. Olusegun Obasanjo's foreign policy was hinged on shuttle diplomacy which was aimed at economic relations, shared development and cooperation. On the other hand, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan's (2007-2015) foreign policy was open, and encouraged harmonious and liberal relations with other countries around the world. Their strategy was also complemented by the efficacy of citizen diplomacy. Muhammadu Buhari's foreign policy between 2015 to 2019 was also hinged on improving relations with neighbors and maintaining ties with the United States and China among other countries in the world. As a Head of Government under a military government, General Buhari pursued a radical foreign policy which led confrontation with Nigerian neighbours. President Buhari assumed shuttle diplomacy with several different states immediately after assuming office in 2015. He was referred to as "Jet-Setting President". This was attributed mainly to the fact that he spent a quarter of his first 100 days in office in different states across the world. The president, upon inauguration, assumed the obligation of being Nigeria's chief diplomat and foreign policy officer in order to re-launch Nigeria into the international community. This is mostly attributed to the international environment Buhari found himself. This situation was characterized by dwindling oil prices, terrorism and counter-terrorism wars, nuclear deals and neoliberalism among others (Aning et al, 2017: 238). It is on premises of the aforesaid that this study seeks to understand the change of foreign policy direction of president Muhammad Buhari civilian regime between 2015 and 2019. And, more specifically, it attempts to understand the nature of Nigerian foreign relations under president Muhammadu Buhari's civilian administration between 2015 and 2019; the purpose Nigerian foreign policy under president Muhammadu Buhari's civilian administration between 2015-2019; Nigerian strategic relations with other states; and, finally, the positive and negative outcomes of Nigerian foreign relations under President Muhammadu Buhari's administration within the period under study.

CONCEPTUAL EXPLICATIONS

The Concept of Foreign Policy

Foreign policy, according to Khan et al. (1970), entails the prescription and construction of a set of objectives, priorities, and processes that guide a state's behavior in its external relations. It is, according to Akinbobola (1996), "a state's course of action towards the external environment geared at achieving certain goals for the advancement of the state's national interest." In the words of Ayeni-Akeke (2008: 348), Foreign policies imply "well researched objectives (including tactics to realize them) that are drawn up by a sovereign state to direct her interactions with other states in the international arena." Adeniran (1993) further opines that the best way to describe foreign policy is to explain it as what it is. He argues that foreign policy is made up of three components. First, it is a state's overall orientation, intentions and course of action toward another, and secondly, it is the goal or objective that a state seeks to achieve in its relations or interactions with other states, and finally, it remains a means by which that goal or objective is achieved. In light of this view, Olusanya and Akindele (1986) concludes that the primary goal of Nigeria's foreign policy from independence has been to sponsor and safeguard her national interests in her interactions with other states in the global system.

National Interest

The pursuit and safeguarding of national interests is the ultimate goal of the foreign policy every sovereign state. According to Obiozor (1998), national interest is both the foundation and the end of a state's foreign policy. It is used to designate, explain, or assess the origins or efficacy of a state's foreign policy. It can also be used to justify, criticize, or propose policies to be adopted by a state. It further entails determining what is best for the state. What is best in this case involves adopting the best foreign policy for the state. The notion is grounded on the significance of national ideals. Every state in the international system has its own set of necessities and priorities. As a result, it employs a set of belief systems and ideas to analyze and explain its foreign policy in order to normalize its relations with other states (Yakubu, 2001). Accordingly, every state's foreign policy is a mirror of its home situation (Yakubu, 2001: 4).

Similarly, in his address to the conference of Nigeria's foreign policy held at Kuru in 1986, former President Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida aggregated the conception of Nigeria's national interest as thus:

"Nigeria's national interest can be identified as predicated on the nation's military, economic, political and social security. Anything that will enhance the capacity of Nigerians to defend their national security must be seen as being in their national interest. Anything that promotes Nigeria's economic growth and development is in the national interest. Anything that will make Nigeria politically stable is also in the national interest. (Yakubu, 2001: 5)"

Given this position, Nigeria's national interest, in its broadest term, involves her survival, the wellbeing and rights of her citizens, which the Nigerian state as a whole, is constitutionally authorized to defend.

The Concept of Diplomacy

Yakubu (2001: 4) provided a clear description of what diplomacy comprises. For him, Diplomacy is the use of intelligence and tact to conduct official interfaces between governments of sovereign states (Yakubu, 2001: 3). This concept has been questioned for obvious reasons, as not all diplomats are intellectual or tactful, despite the fact that they all partake in diplomacy (Ogunsanwo, 2007: 1). Similarly, negotiation, whether through direct or indirect contact, is usually the first step taken in diplomacy in order to obtain an agreement on a topic. Negotiation may take place informally between the parties, with each party understanding that a move in one direction will elicit a response from the other. Thus, diplomacy becomes the chief technique of states' action or the main instrument for the execution of foreign policy and the principal device by which a state transmits or communicates its desire and designs into the decision-making apparatuses of other states, whether in the form of persuasion or adjustment of one's position through coercion or negotiation, in order to minimize the effect or possibility of a conflict and maximize individual state's chances of realizing its objectives. In the case of Nigeria, according to Ogunbambi (1986: 162), the national interests of Nigeria that the Ambassador should ideally sell and prosecute include political stability, security, export, promotion, access to external resources and technology, foreign aid, the protection of Nigerian citizens abroad, Nigerian cultural and moral expressions, and a fair, effective, and vigorous presentation of Nigeria's point of view on regional and global issues.

Nigerian Foreign Policy

Foreign policy is an outline that directs a state's exchanges with other states. It is, for Obiozor, a spectrum of acts and a set of strategies adopted by sovereign states in the international system (Obiozor, 1998). At any instance, the ultimate goal of every foreign policy is to attain long or short-term goals that reserve the sovereign state's survival and all of its valued ideals. Nigeria's foreign policy objectives have been consistent in both aspiration and implementation since 1960 with, although, different twists and turns, mostly in direction. The Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, established certain critical objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy in a speech to parliament on August 20, 1960, the most imperative of which is the progression of the federation and citizens' interests (Ogunbambi, 1986: 164). This principally signposts that Nigeria's foreign policy, at any material time, is to be seen as a reflection of her national interests.

Unfortunately, what constitutes Nigeria's national interest was not unmistakably defined, and the Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's government, as well as the two succeeding regimes of Ironsi and Gowon, constructed their foreign policies solely on their acuties of Nigeria's interests in the world. The broad-stand of Nigerian national interests were not adequately addressed till the beginning of the Murtala/Obasanjo's government came on board in 1975. The Murtala/Obasanjo's administration, in June 1976, acknowledged the rudiments of national interest that constitute the objects of Nigerian foreign policy as follows:

- The defence of Nigerian sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity;
- The creation of the necessary political and economic conditions in Africa and the rest of the world which will facilitate the defence of the independence and territorial integrity of all African countries while at the same time, fostering national self-reliance and rapid economic development;
- The elevation of equality and self-reliance in Africa and the rest of the developing world;
- The advancement and the defence of justice and respect for human dignity especially the dignity of the black people;
- The defence and advancement of world peace (Aluko, 1978).

While the stated objects define Nigeria's national interest, as Aluko points out, some of them have remained unattainable. The second and third objects, for example, appear to be beyond Nigeria's competency. This expounds why General Obasanjo accentuated three broad objects as being vital to Nigeria's interests: territorial integrity, independence, and prompt economic development. It also outlines the trifling changes made to the Nigerian foreign policy and Articles of the Nigerian constitution. Under the essential objects and directive values of state policy, both sections 19 of the 1979 constitution and section 20 of the 1989 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria visibly endorse the essential objects of Nigeria's foreign policy. Sections 19 and 20 of the Federal Republic of Nigeria's constitutions from 1979 and 1989 provided that, "Nigeria's foreign policy aims are numerous, but the tools to achieve them are rare (Yakubu, 2001: 4)."

THEORETICAL EXPLICATIONS ON NIGERIAN FOREIGN POLICY

The social constructivist framework of analysis is considered for this study. The focus of social constructivism, according to Jackson and Sorensen (2006) is on human awareness and consciousness and their place in world affairs. In other words, they argue that the international system exists as an inter-subjective awareness among people in the sense that the system is constituted by ideas or a system of ideas and constructs, not by material forces Jackson, R. & Sorensen, 2006: 164). For them, we can obtain knowledge about the world, but it will always be subjective knowledge in the sense that whatever knowledge that is obtained, it will only be filtered through human consciousness. Thus, human beings rely on the understanding of each other's actions by assigning meaning to them.

Another essential fact is that the population of a state is a key indicator of its power potential. It is also a source of influence on the foreign policy of a state. The idea of a state's human resources therefore provides another source of impact on the foreign policy of a state in one way or the other. The people's ability to express themselves or otherwise poses consequences on the type of foreign policy judgments states make on some sensitive matters. Thus, citizens with better levels of comprehension of foreign affairs and stronger readiness to influence government's decisions on such matters are more enlightened and useful to the state in the making of her foreign policy (Olusanya & Akindele, 1986: 5). In light of this, the constructivist theory investigates how state goals and identities are interwoven, as well as how identities are shaped or changed by interactions with other states. Power, politics, anarchy, and military force, according to constructivists, cannot fully explain change, but institutions, regimes, norms, and changes in identity have become constant variables in the constructivist orientation and understanding of the workings of a state's foreign policy. People act towards objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that the objects have for them or they have glimpsed from the interaction (Weber, 2005: 65).

When the constructivist thesis is juxtaposed with the realities from Nigerian foreign in the sense that when a state is able to construct a perception of itself for another state to view, it modifies the character of relations in the international system, Social Constructivism serves to provide a platform for such a justification. In other words, if Nigeria can cultivate a favorable image of itself in the eyes of the rest of the world in the context of social relations, the way the rest of the world views Nigeria would improve (Olusanya & Akindele, 1986: 4). To this purpose, President Muhammadu Buhari, has continually attempted to focus its foreign policy on a strategy that prioritizes the wellbeing of its citizens over other factors. The principle of reciprocity guided with good national imagery has been the driving motivation for the new foreign policy focus dubbed diplomacy of consequences. It is a foreign policy that urges the world community to accept responsibility for their actions, whether positive or negative, toward Nigerians. Furthermore, it is based on making a well-known issue better by pointing out its areas of weakness in order to strengthen it if well observed and acknowledged (Agubamah & Moveh, 1986). It further focuses on critiquing and altering the actions of states as a whole, as opposed to traditional theories, that focus solely on comprehending or explaining states' actions. Using information from the social sciences and humanities, this approach emphasizes the thoughtful appraisal and critique of nations and their cultures. Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, and Erich Fromm are among the proponents of this philosophy (Joseph, 1960). In both the broad and narrow senses, however, social constructivism provides the descriptive and normative underpinnings for social inquiry aimed at decreasing dominance and enhancing freedom in all its manifestations, in accordance with Nigerian foreign policy under President Muhammadu Buhari (2015-2019). The suffix implies that Nigeria's relations with the rest of the world would need to be undertaken in the country's best interests (Horkheimer, 1993).

DATA AND ANALYTICAL TECHNIQUES OF THE STUDY

This section attempts to ascertain and project the various levels of consequences in Nigeria's strategic ties with other states in the international system, as a result of both the domestic and international approaches to Nigerian foreign policy. It further outlines the many stages and phases that were followed in the study's data collection and analysis. That is, it includes a plan for data collection, measurement, and analysis. Most decisions about how the study was carried out and how respondents were contacted, as well as when and how the research was finished, are detailed here.

This study used a descriptive qualitative design method. We used this design in order to describe or present a picture of the problem under study. The target population of this study is forty participants that were purposively selected from different segments of the society including; academics, diplomats and the civil society. Each of these participants were asked to respond to the questions that sought to illuminate the subjects under investigation. Data were elicited through administration of In-depth and Key Informant Interviews with participants. The participants were drawn from the academia and the civil society. The collected data were, therefore, checked for any possible errors in the entries or values whilst thematic and content analytical techniques were used to analyze the results of the interviews. In order to ensure the confidentiality of the participants, no reference was made to the identity of the participants in the entire body of work.

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Here, data presentation, interpretation and discussion within the following thematic contexts are presented.

Foreign Policy under President Muhammadu Buhari (2015-2019)

Findings from the field study suggest that the nature of Buhari's foreign policy is more of Afro-centric rather than global since Nigeria has made Africa the center piece of her foreign policy under president Buhari, especially through economic incorporation within the auspices of ECOWAS. During his campaign for election to the presidency, Muhammadu Buhari promised to confront head-on three primary issue of insecurity (Boko Haram Insurgency and Banditry), corruption and economic underdevelopment. Prior to his election as president, Boko Haram had taken over large areas of Nigerian land, declaring an Islamic state within the country's borders. Apart from Nigeria, Boko Haram terrorism has taken on a transnational dimension with its presence in Nigeria and other neighboring states. The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which was tasked with combating the Boko Haram insurgency in the Lake Chad region has been fairly effective despite its efforts to limit Boko Haram's activities in Nigeria. With Multinational Joint Task Force member states launching attacks on the group, Boko Haram quickly turned its attention to the neighboring states for daring to

assist Nigeria in the fight against them, thus, giving the Boko Haram operation a worldwide dimension (Akinrinde, 2020). The Boko Haram sect, afterwards, overran the MNJTF's stronghold in Baga, Borno State, and went on to commit one of the most horrific crimes against humanity when it killed the residents of Baga town and took charge of the town's economy. On June 3, 2015, President Muhammadu Buhari made his first abroad trip after taking office, to the Niger Republic. The president of Cameroon also attended the conference, which was part of an Anti-Boko Haram summit aimed at discussing the regional operation against the terrorist group. President Mahammadu Buhari of Nigeria pledged his country's commitment to assisting Nigeria in combating the mounting challenges posed by Boko Haram, which has continued to undermine regional peace and stability. It was also agreed that the MNJTF headquarters be moved from Nigeria to N'Djamena, Chad, and that a Nigerian would be appointed as the organization's commander. On June 4, 2017, the conference was followed by a visit to Chad, which was followed by a bilateral meeting with President Paul Biya of Cameroon. Despite the fact that the Benin Republic has not been directly affected by the Boko Haram's insurgent activities, Buhari paid a visit to the country, which was reciprocated by Benin President Boni Yayi, who pledged troops to the MNJTF to combat terrorist activities in the country. According to Onapajo and Waddington (Onapajo, 2017: 61), President Buhari's shuttle diplomacy with his West African neighbors played a critical role in limiting Boko Haram's ability to strike in Nigeria and retreat to these neighboring countries as a shield against Nigerian forces. This diplomatic relationship between these ECOWAS states has considerably helped to curtail Boko Haram's activities. President Muhammadu Buhari made it a cardinal objective of his foreign policy to pursue Nigeria's national interest by maintaining good relations with its immediate neighbours (Kora & Darboe, 2017). As a result, Nigerian foreign policy on counter-insurgency under President Buhari's presidency has considerably improved, resulting in the technical containment of the activities of Boko Haram to the Lake Chad region only as against what it used to be before the rise of Buhari's when the terrorist acts of the organization had extended to Nigeria's Federal Capital.

The purpose of Nigerian Foreign Policy under President Muhammadu Buhari (2015-2019)

Findings from the field in this study have also revealed that Nigerian foreign policy under President Muhammadu Buhari has had some aim and motives. Despite the various political interests and social dynamism of Nigerian foreign policy, particularly in relation to Nigerian socio-political problems that have caused the country to remain in a state of perpetual unrest in economic, political, security, and other social aspects of life, the major goal of Nigerian foreign policy, according to Akinbolola (1996), has been to promote her National Interest. 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. The main goal of President Buhari's foreign policy is to improve relations with neighbors in order to jointly fight Boko Haram, which has taken on a multinational or transnational dimension, to partner with the US and other world powers in order to support the government in fighting terrorism by providing needed manpower and intelligence, and, most importantly, to improve the economy and fight corruption.

Bilateral and Multilateral Relations under President Muhammadu Buhari (2015-2019)

Findings have further revealed that President Muhammadu Buhari's electoral success can be ascribed, partly, to the prior government's failure to maintain serious bilateral and multilateral relations with other state across the world. The recent political and democratic progress of Nigeria can be linked to President Buhari's condition of obligating bilateral and multilateral relations. 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. The Buhari administration began relations between the two states with a high-level diplomatic encounter between Obama and Buhari at the Oval Office on July 20, 2016. President Barack Obama pledged that the United States will support Nigeria's government in combating Boko Haram's growing danger and combat violent extremism. President Buhari also asked the Obama administration to help the government fight corruption, which has continued to plague the country. He also asked for help in rebuilding the economy, which included energy sector reforms to prevent oil theft. The meeting was followed by a meeting with Vice President Joe Biden, during which it was agreed that the US would assist Nigeria in fighting corruption, ensuring economic stability, and developing policy, with a special focus on Nigeria's northern region, which is the epicenter of the Boko Haram insurgency. The trip also afforded President Buhari opportunity to meet Treasury Secretary, Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch and Bob Work the Deputy Defense Secretary (Abegunrin, 2003).

With regards to the fight against corruption which forms part of President Buhari's foreign policy, nothing appears to have changed as the United States Department of Justice had filed a civil case for the seizure of \$144 million related to corrupt proceedings by former Nigerian petroleum minister Diezani Alison-Madueke. According to reports, the Department of Justice has charged the former minister and two collaborators, Olajide Omokore and Kola Aluko, of fronting for the former Minister through oil lifting contracts that were handed to them without proper procedure. The Department of Justice is seeking confiscation of these assets in order to help the people who have been victimized by this corrupt activity. According to Campbell (2017), US government officials saw Buhari's victory as a way to boost the government's anti-corruption efforts and, to a larger extent, enhance bi-lateral relations. This action is tied to a cooperative agreement between the Buhari government and the US Department of Justice (DOJ) undertaken to fight corruption and also aid Nigeria in recovering loot held in the US and other western countries. Although, the Donald

Trump's administration also showed support towards Buhari's administration in the fight against Boko Haram by proposing military equipment shipments to Nigeria, Nigeria had previously been blacklisted under President Jonathan, which resulted in a request for military equipment being denied. Twelve Embraer A-29 Super Tucano aircraft were included in the proposed deal. Senators in the US Congress have also approved the proposed arms sale, which were previously banned by the Obama administration, citing the Leahy statute, which prohibits the US from supplying guns to countries whose military has committed human rights violations (Gional, 2017: 29). Nigeria and China, on the other hand, have a bilateral relationship under President Muhammadu Buhari. Nigeria has been attempting to establish a balance of power in economic and diplomatic relations with China, which has been dubbed the world's fastest expanding economy and second largest economy in the world. Both countries are important demographically and geographically in their respective continents. With China's aggressive expansion in commercial, technological, and economic affairs, Nigeria has emerged as a key factor in Africa in light of China's new strategic expansion. Nigeria is regarded as a major market due to its large population. Nigeria and other African countries, on the other hand, see China as a development partner because of the infrastructure loans it gives at cheaper interest rates than those offered by Bretton Woods institutions (World Bank and International Monetary Fund). A wide spectrum of analysts and scholars have underlined China's prominence. Although, it has been argued that while the United States is the most important nation on the global arena, China is the de-facto leader of the global economy in the twenty-first century (Aja, 2012). President Muhammadu Buhari visited China less than a year after taking office, after an invitation from Chinese President Xi Jinping. The purpose of the visit was to strengthen trade, diplomatic, and economic ties between the two countries. The visit resulted in the signing of a framework to improve infrastructural development and industrial activities in Nigeria between China's National Development Reform Commission and Nigeria's Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment. In the aftermath of the visit, a number of loans were granted to Nigeria specially to finance the deficit of 2016 budget, infrastructure loan for trains, among others.

The rail project was intended to address the country's infrastructure deficit, as well as offer the much-needed jobs for the population and, most significantly, stimulate the Nigerian economy. By signing a contract that allows Chinese currency Yuan to be used for transactions in Nigeria, the government took a major step toward undermining the hegemony of the US dollar in the market. This will make it easier to include Yuan in the country's foreign reserve, as well as enabling banks to accept Yuan transactions from both foreign and domestic investors. Aliko Dangote was also given \$2 billion by the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China to help fund his cement factories. Apart from their economic ties, Nigeria and China harbour good diplomatic ties. China recently expressed its full support for Nigeria's bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. Chinese parliament speaker Zhang Dejiang stated this during a meeting with his Nigerian counterpart Yakubu Dogara, as part of an effort to reform the UN and accommodate countries from other regions.

On the matter of Taiwan, which China refuses to recognize as a separate country but rather as a province of China, President Muhammadu Buhari recently reassured China's foreign minister of the country's commitment to the "one China policy." This policy assures that there is only one country known as China, and that Taiwan and mainland China are inextricably linked. In line with this approach, the Nigerian government ordered the Taiwanese embassy to relocate from Abuja to Lagos, thus downgrading diplomatic relations with Taiwan. It does, however, maintain minor economic and consular links with Taiwan, which will be based in Lagos. The minister of foreign affairs, Geoffrey Onyeama, made a policy statement, stating that "Taiwan will cease to enjoy any privileges because it is not a country recognized under international law." When asked about the country's justification for a trade relationship, the minister stated that "the Chinese Government does not oppose trading with Taiwan as long as there is no formal contact with the government that suggests recognition of Taiwan as a sovereign country" (Ayobolu, 2016: 1). The decision of Nigeria can be justified in the sense that Taiwan has less economic clout than China. Nigeria-Taiwan economic contacts, which include seafood, industrial equipment, natural gas, and other food products, totaled \$800 million in 2016, compared to \$6.4 billion in Nigeria-China trade relations in the first half of 2016 (Ayobolu, 2016). Finally, it may be said that under President Muhammadu Buhari, Nigeria-Sino relations have reached new heights, with bilateral commercial and diplomatic relations between the two nations refining dramatically.

The Positive and Negative Effects of Nigerian Foreign Policy under President Muhammadu Buhari (2015-2019)

Since President Muhammadu Buhari took office in 2015, the Nigerian internal and external situations have gone through a series of ups and downs that have been disconcerting. As a result, both the positive and bad effects of President Muhammadu Buhari continue to be a significant topic of discussion. President Buhari's international policy is not devoid of domestic thinking and action, as foreign policy is essentially a consequence of domestic policy. Nigeria's foreign policy used to be Afrocentric, with Africa at the center of her foreign policy. This enhanced Nigeria's image in the international community, notably its focus on decolonization of Africa as a whole and the abolition of apartheid in South Africa. Nigeria's influence in the African continent may not be as evident as it once was, but President Buhari's sub-regional overpowering presence in West Africa is undeniable. Here, the international dimension of Buhari's three-point program, which includes dealing with insecurity and seeking international cooperation to combat it, battling corruption and seeking the restoration of Nigeria's looted assets, and efforts to rebuild the economy with the help of trading partners shall be examined. President Buhari has leveraged Nigeria's regional power to interfere in political crises in Gambia,

Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, and Guinea Bissau, restoring relative tranquility and political stability to those countries. President Buhari's foreign policy stance also contributed to the blocking of Morocco from becoming ECOWAS' 17th member state. Morocco, after all, does not belong to the West African sub-region of Africa, but the Maghreb and Arab North African sub-regions. Buhari's position on ECOWAS's recent virtual Extraordinary Summit on structural reform, where he asked for a severe decrease in the number of ECOWAS commissioners from fifteen to five, was equally welcomed and commended. He also informed that each Community member state should foot the bill for its commissioner; after all, Nigeria is the financial backbone of ECOWAS, contributing more than half of the Community's budget. 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. Additional factors included the COVID-19 epidemic and the resulting lockdown, as well as the drop in oil prices. In order to pursue a foreign policy based on goods and services and security for all, President Buhari began his official international trips by visiting Niger and Chad, followed by Cameroun, Guinea, and the Benin Republic, in order to re-energize the brotherly relations and, in particular, to solicit their support in the fight against international terrorism. Following the trips, the Multinational Joint Task Force was formed, with troops from Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. Saddled with the goal of degrading and eliminating the Boko Haram, the battle lingers on in what appears to be no effective synergy among the troops of the Multinational Joint Task Force's member states. The Chadian attack on Boko Haram last year, headed by the Chadian President, was typified by the lack of collective participation among the Nigerian, Niger, and Cameroonian troops.

CONCLUSION

In the four years of Buhari's presidency, from 2015 to 2019, the government has been able to considerably maintain various bilateral and multilateral connections with Nigeria's neighbors and the rest of the world. These have also aided the government in its war against the Boko-Haram insurgency, which, unfortunately, has taken on an international dimension. Conflicts, on the other hand, have accounted for more than half of the issues confronting the Nigerian state, as a pathological situation and dangers to societal cohesion and national security. Farmers-herders' conflicts, violent militancy, the Boko-haram threat, electoral conflicts among political candidates and parties, and a slew of other issues now threaten the Nigerian state's corporate existence, owing to successive governments' failure to adopt pragmatic conflict prevention and management techniques over the years (Akinrinde, 2020: 50). As a result, the Buhari administration's capacity to create critical diplomatic and commercial ties with China, the United States, and a plethora of other countries increasing economic influence in the global economy is hinged on this issue. This relationship has supplied the government with much-needed funding and foreign direct investment to help offset the effects of the infrastructure deficit. Nigeria has acquired more worldwide respect under Buhari's government, which can be ascribed, in part, to President Buhari's charisma, incorruptibility and commitment to fighting corruption and insecurity in the country. This was demonstrated by President Buhari's invitation to the G7 conference shortly after he was sworn in. President Buhari has taken the lead in negotiations for the peaceful return of the Gambia's democratically elected government (Fawcett, 2016). President Buhari was also nominated to lead the African Union's anti-corruption campaign in the region. Unlike his predecessor, President Buhari was able to strengthen relations between Nigeria and the United States, resulting in increased collaboration in the fight against Boko Haram and the endemic corruption in Nigeria. However, there is more to do with regards to the three fundamental challenges that informed the emergence of the Buhari's administration. Since how a state is perceived by others and how much of respects and importance is accorded to it, is a function of the internal dynamics of such a state, the Nigerian state under the President Muhammed Buhari's administration would need to address frontally the challenges of insecurity, corruption and the dwindling economic prospects in the state. Although, considerable efforts had been made so far, they had not been enough to translate to efficacious foreign policy objectives for the Nigerian state. This explains why many states still perceive the Nigerian state is a haven of insecurity, corruption and crimes. It is therefore incumbent on President Buhari's government to mitigate this internal discontentment for better projection of an efficient state-foreign policy.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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