

DOMESTIC ENVIRONMENTAL VARIABLES AND FOREIGN POLICY ARTICULATION OF THE BUHARI ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC

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Introduction

The foreign policy behaviour of a state is a function of the underlying principles of the national interest. However, the approach towards achieving the aims and objectives of the national interest is conditioned by variables within, and external to the state. While the internal determinants can be shaped by the authorities, there is limited influence by any state to determine the external variables of the foreign policy arena. Like all other states, the approach to Nigeria's foreign policy has always been guided by conditions in the two environments. For the Buhari regime, the character of the domestic environment is the driving force of the foreign policy pursuits. This paper therefore undertakes an assessment of the domestic environment against the purpose of Nigeria's foreign policy under President Buhari. In addition, the paper highlights the need for the Buhari administration to play a visible leadership role in Africa in order to keep alive, Nigeria's silent aspiration of achieving the status of Africa's hegemon.

For analytical convenience, the paper is divided into seven parts, commencing with the introduction before a framework that highlights the importance of both the internal and external environments for the purposes of foreign policy initiation and articulation. The remaining analyses dwell on establishing the linkages between the dominant issues in the domestic environment and the Buhari administration's foreign policy agenda.

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Framework of Analysis: Domestic and External Environments Nexus

Despite the various transformations that have occurred in the nature of relationships, the state remains the basic actor in the international system. With the advent of globalisation, the relative rigidity of power, applied by realist scholars as the basis of international relations, continues to loosen, hence, the realisation of a more liberal nature of relationships within the international system. Even within the context of globalisation, the state continues as the main focus of analysis in international relations. Central to a state's international life however, is a coherent and presumably well thought-out foreign policy agenda.

Foreign policy can be described as the purposive activities of government, informed by both circumstances at home and abroad, but aimed at gaining advantages in the international system. Wilkenfeld et al. (1980, 22) elaborates further:

(...) foreign policy may be viewed as those official actions (and reactions) which sovereign states initiate (or receive and subsequently react to) for the purpose of altering or creating a condition (or problem) outside their territorial-sovereign boundaries.

The main objective of foreign policy is to project, promote and protect the national interest of the state. In order to actualise the mandate, there are usually underlying principles that highlight the substance of the national interest. A number of these principles are generally fixed, with possibilities of infrequent reappraisal that may be caused by remarkable changes for or around the state. For instance, the post Second World-War guiding principles of the US national interest was reappraised after the cold-war, in order for the US to pursue a foreign policy agenda that is relevant to the emergent unipolar New World Order.

For a respectable status in international relations, a state must conduct its foreign policy against the backdrop of influences from two critical environments. The foreign policy environment is "occupied by a range of significant actors, issues and interests, all of which give it a dynamism and life" (Webber and Smith 2013, 30). Wilkenfeld et al. (1980, 40) poignantly notes: "It has become a virtual truism to point out that an actor's foreign policy actions and reactions are linked to a complex structure of internal and external factors". In effect, the environment is made of a two-edged sword driven by the circumstances around both the domestic and external environments

of states (Breuning 2007, 117; Modelski 1962, 106). On a general note, the crux of foreign policy activities is to serve the purposes of the state essentially at the domestic level and in its interactions with the rest of the world. Both environments play key roles in determining the actions and inactions to be taken in serving the primary constituency (the domestic environment). It is however imperative that states place higher premium on the influences from the external environment because of the limited capacity to control conditions out there. In contrast, it is relatively easier to direct the domestic environment in favour of the government, thus, leveraging on conditions in the domestic environment for the pursuit of foreign policy agenda.

There are numerous variables that impact on the conditions of the internal environment of foreign policy making. These include; psychological factors, socio-political and economic conditions of the state, the foreign policy machinery at the level of bureaucracy, military capability, character of informed public, among others. The psychological factor deals essentially with the quality of leadership at the helm of decision-making. In most governmental systems, this is composed of a large pool of an admixture of professionals and political office holders that deliberate, and presumably decide on the best policy options for the state. However, within the large pool, the personalities of the Head of the Foreign/External Ministry (Minister/Secretary of State) and the Head of State (President, Prime-Minister, etc) are crucial in very many circumstances. The idiosyncrasies of the Head of State, especially with the executive powers attached to the office, play a massive role in the country's foreign policy direction. The Executive Order signed by President Trump shortly after assumption of office relating to immigration in general, and the status of the citizens of some select majority Muslim states in particular, is a clear exhibition of the import of leadership idiosyncrasy on foreign policy direction.

Of equal importance is the issue of domestic political, social and economic conditions, in respect of foreign policy initiatives. The extent of the impact of these conditions are most felt when a state does not measure to acceptable standards among the comity of nations. Hypothetically, a state contending against issues of political instability, social disharmony and economic underdevelopment, would not have the capability to extract concessions and make meaningful impact on the international system. This is the situation with perpetually war-torn countries of South Sudan and Central African Republic (until recently), whose capacity for equality in the international system has been greatly diminished by the subsisting conditions of their domestic environments. In effect, a state's status on the international arena is largely a function of the domestic conditions.

At the level of externalities, states may be compelled to fashion their

foreign policy direction in line with circumstances beyond their control. The international system as the external environment of states is a vast space in which both state and non-state actors exist. Indeed, "all states are regarded as being fundamentally captured by the imperatives of the international system" (Clarke and White 1981, 62). Thus, each state may be compelled to respond to stimuli generated by any of the actors in the system. For instance, the phenomenon of international terrorism has informed radical reactions from presumed target states that are determined to protect their homelands. In the case of the United States and some European countries, especially France and Germany, have for sometime beamed their foreign policy searchlights on ISIS and all other terrorist organisations around the world. Similarly, Nigeria has intensified cooperation with other members of the Lake Chad Basin Commission in order to end Boko Haram terrorist activities. Another example is the Brexit vote of 2016, which triggered a reassessment of relations with Britain by a number of states in the light of the development, and how this would impact on the overall relationship with the European Union. The hazy nature of both conditions in, and the consequences of foreign policy actions on the external environment poses grave difficulties for decision-makers. As noted by Weber and Smith (2013, 13):

The attempt to influence behaviour across national boundaries where there are none of the supports provided by national law, culture or habits of obedience, where knowledge is restricted and where the consequences of actions are very difficult to estimate, gives a fundamental element of delicacy and risk which is absent from any other areas of policy making.

For foreign policy decision-makers therefore, the two environments play critical roles in foreign policy formulation and implementation. According to Webber and Smith (2013, 30):

One of the key tests of an effective foreign policy is thus the ways in which the foreign policy makers can appraise the shifting array of forces in the arena, respond to those forces and use the opportunities they create.

Nigeria's case has been a tortuous journey of juxtaposing the underlying principles of the national interest, against the demands of internal and external pressures on foreign policy formulation and implementation.

Historicising Nigeria's Foreign Policy

Nigeria came into the world stage with a relatively intimidating stature.

With the country's numerical preponderance over all other states in Africa, and the quantity of natural resources within the state, it was presumed that Nigeria had the potentials to dominate global politics in favour of Africa in general, and for its own benefit in particular. Kolawole (2005, 873) elaborates on this position thus:

By her resources and size, Nigeria was expected to be at the front seat of Africa providing with others, the necessary leadership and weapons to fight the clutches of colonialism, neo-colonialism, under-development, poverty, famine and racial discrimination.

From the benefits of hindsight, Nigeria's foreign policy record is a mixed bag of successes and failures, dynamism and moderation.

During the First Republic which lasted between independence in 1960 and early 1966, "the Nigerian government pursued modest foreign policy aims" (Meierding 2007, 6). While some remarkable actions were taken to announce that Nigeria had come of age with its independence and sovereignty, there were also some other pressing issues that received pacifist and moderate reactions from the Nigerian government. The Nigerian government was a core member of the Monrovia Group that embraced the gradual approach to African unity, while some other states, led by Ghana were vociferous in their belief in the immediate political unification of African states (Kumssa and Jones 2015, 16). The Nigerian policy position has variously been attributed to the Prime-Minister's personal idiosyncrasy. The pacifist and gradual orientation of the Prime-Minister was however curtailed from robbing off entirely on the foreign policy agenda of government. For instance, the informed public was instrumental to the 1961 action of the Nigerian government over the French detonation of atomic bombs in the Sahara (Stremlau 1977, 11).

Military incursion in Nigerian politics, starting from January 15th 1966 opened a new vista for the country's foreign policy behaviour. Under the circumstances, the nature of military dictatorship put paid to the hitherto democratic processes of foreign policy formulation. The political arrangement privileged the military Head-of-State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces with the executive powers, and indeed, he could cause the initiation and implementation of policies with minimal recourse to individuals or state institutions. It meant a massive reduction in the influence of both the institutions of government and the articulate public in respect of foreign policy positions. However, the impact of the new orientation was not immediately felt because the political instability caused by the two coup d'état and the subsequent civil war of 1967-1970, left little room for foreign policy adventures. For most part, the government's focus was the military security aspect of the nation's foreign

policy. At war end however, Nigeria maintained her indissolubility, thereby remaining numerically preponderant, and had also become a major producer of crude-oil, in addition to other natural resources that abound on its territory.

Thus, the post-war conditions provided the military leadership the leverage to turn Nigeria's potential greatness to real greatness through the foreign policy machinery. Nigeria's position as a leading member of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) became even more pronounced; a platform that the Nigerian government used to maximum effects in the pursuit of the commitment and dedication to the cause of the black race anywhere in the world. Furthermore, Nigeria emerged as "the undisputed political leader of its sub-region" (Meierding 2007, 4). Under the Gowon administration, Nigeria worked with other West African states to ensure the establishment of a viable regional organisation that would be to the benefit of all. The Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) emerged in 1975 as a result of the Nigerian government's diplomatic exertions (Anigekwu 2002). The commitment towards the emancipation of the black race continued to feature prominently in the foreign policy agenda of the succeeding Muhammed/Obasanjo regime. The personalities of the two leaders, in addition to the immense resources that accrued from the sale of crude-oil to the international market gave Nigeria the impetus to play an impressive foreign policy role at this time. After the death of General Muhammed and the assumption of office of General Obasanjo as the Head-of-State, Nigeria's foreign policy received increased momentum. The period between 1976 and 1979 is rightly described as the 'Golden Age' of Nigeria's foreign policy (Inamete 2001, 103). Landmark decisions were made, not just for Nigeria's interests, but for the interest of the black race. The Afro-centric focus of Nigeria's foreign policy was quite pronounced during the period. For instance, Nigeria nationalised the assets of British Petroleum (Genova 2010) and Barclays Bank (Osaghae 1998, 107) as a response to the British government's clandestine sale of oil to the government of former Rhodesia. In summary, "the Muhammed/Obasanjo administration (1975-79) pursued a purposeful, focussed and positively aggressive foreign policy for Nigeria" (Kolawole 2005, 873).

By 1979, a civilian government emerged at the end of a commendable transition to civil rule programme. By all accounts, the Shagari administration continued with the predecessor regime's policy of making Africa, the centre piece of Nigeria's foreign policy. However, there is a consensus that the Obasanjo regime's achievements in foreign policy pursuits pales the Shagari regime's efforts into irrelevance. It is however imperative to consider the differences in both the domestic and external settings of foreign policy making under both administrations. In the case of the Shagari presidency, there were many

more domestic variables that impacted on foreign policy making. Essentially, the dynamics of civilian politicking is distinct from conditions under military dictatorship. While decisions may be taken with fiat and under minimal consultation under military dictatorship, a democratically elected government would have to contend with numerous domestic factors (political parties, parliament, informed public, civil society organisations, etc) before arriving at the most acceptable interpretation of what stands for the national interest. The challenge was compounded under the Shagari administration by the state of the national economy. Ihonvbere (1987, 268) notes that the Shagari administration came into governance on the heels of “an economy and society that was badly distorted, disarticulated and crisis-ridden. The state, in spite of the ‘benefits’ of the civil war, was as unstable, pre-hegemonic and weak as ever”. Furthermore, “foreign policy in the Second Republic was influenced by the high level of instability generated by cut-throat and bitter politicking, waste and misplaced priorities at the centre and states, corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency and ineffectiveness” (Ihonvbere 1987, 270). In the final analysis, Nigeria’s foreign policy profile declined terribly during the period of the Shagari administration (1979-1983).

As Shaw (1987, 42) perceptively notes: “With the inevitable bursting of the bubble in the early 1980s the rentier state became a debtor state and the soldiers returned to abort the second Shagari presidency”. The return of the military in 1984 signalled the return of repression and dictatorship. Based on practical evidence of records of despoliation of the state, the Buhari administration focussed most attention on revamping the economy and changing the orientation and the value system of Nigerians. Although the Buhari regime of 1984-1985 was regarded as brutal and uncompromising in the execution of its domestic policies, it cannot however be accused of shying away from making difficult foreign policy decisions. For instance, in a repeat of the Shagari administration’s position of expelling illegal aliens (most of which were West African citizens), the Buhari military regime equally adopted a protectionist move by expelling illegal migrants, mostly citizens of neighbouring West African states in 1985 (The Associated Press 1985). One of the remarkable decisions of Nigeria’s foreign policy during the Buhari administration was the declaration as *persona non grata* and expulsion of the British High Commissioner to Nigeria, following developments after the ‘Dikko Affair’ (Akinsanya 1985).

By August 27th 1985, a new government came into existence through a palace coup d’état that ended the Buhari regime. The Babangida regime ranks perhaps amongst the most ambitious in its handling of Nigeria’s foreign policy. Though both the internal and external settings were quite distinct, yet the Babangida regime was determined to re-enact the glorious days of Nigeria’s

foreign policy by deepening Nigeria's Africa centred foreign policy agenda, and by extension, the survival and well-being of the black race. The foreign policy agenda was positioned to align with the challenges within the domestic arena. The reversal of the downward slope of Nigeria's economy received tremendous attention and formed the basis for a very strong relationship with the West. The foreign policy thrust at this time was 'Economic Diplomacy' which was essentially tied to a programme of developing the domestic economy (Salami 2014). The Babangida administration also undertook some ambitious foreign policy adventures such as, the "Technical Aids Corps Scheme" (Adebanwi 2011, 12) and the "Concert of Medium Powers" (Salami 2013). However, one of the most daring foreign policy steps of the government was the initiation of the idea, and the provision of human and material resources for ECOWAS' intervention in war-torn Liberia. The Nigerian government in partnership with other ECOWAS states, through the activation of the Protocol on Mutual Defence Assistance of 1981 set up an ECOWAS Military Observer Group, called the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to intervene for the purpose of restoring order in Liberia (Pitts 1999). This move, and others such as supporting Nigerians in their bid to take up international responsibilities, like Rilwanu Lukman as OPEC Chairman, Joe Garba as President of the General Assembly of the United Nations, and Emeka Anyaoku as the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth of Nations, all projected Nigeria's image positively on the global stage. In a dramatic twist, all the gains recorded on the foreign policy arena were frittered with the ambition of the Military President to continue his stay in power by truncating the highly expensive and long-drawn transition to civilian rule programme. With the unsuccessful attempt at the elongation of the regime, the Babangida administration only succeeded in battering the image of the military, and indeed, the image of the government of Nigeria.

When a contrived Interim National Government (ING) was inaugurated in 1993, the international community was already displeased with the Nigerian government and all its creations. It was apparent that the world would only deal with a Nigerian government that emerged from the will of the people through the ballot box. Thus, Nigeria's relationship with the rest of the world, especially the traditional friends in the West only got worse when on 17th November, 1993, General Abacha sacked the ING and took over the reins of governance.

Arguably, Nigeria suffered the worst period of her foreign policy during the regime of General Abacha. The hostility from the international community made the government assume both a combative and defensive posture in the pursuit of its foreign policy agenda. Surely the period is remarkable for the highest regime of sanctions imposed on Nigeria, and particularly the members

of the Nigerian military by the international community (Onoja 2006, 117). The Abacha regime was determined to relate with the rest of the world on its own terms, thus, courting opprobrium for itself across the globe and eventually turning Nigeria to a “pariah state” (Ajayi 2005, 54). The government refused to budge under the pressure mounted by the West, essentially in respect of the withdrawal of the military from politics, and the handing over of government to the presumed winner of the June 12, 1993 Presidential Elections (Obadare 1999). While the face-off lasted, the Abacha government continued to pursue a core agenda of Nigeria’s foreign policy. Under the Abacha government, Nigeria made remarkable strides in peacekeeping efforts around West Africa; reinstalling the democratically elected President of Sierra Leone and intervening in the Liberian crisis, through the provision of human and material resources at the disposal of ECOMOG (Vann 1998). Nigeria was still in the state of foreign policy uncertainties when General Abacha died on 8th June, 1998. Based on records of the immediate past, the international community continued to treat the Nigerian military government with apprehension and suspicion. The succeeding General Abubakar regime had the unenviable burden of winning back the confidence of the rest of the world, starting with Nigeria’s traditional friends. For this purpose, revolutionary and unprecedented steps were taken to stabilise the domestic political arena. In this regard, most political prisoners were freed; a step that provided the enabling environment for the enthronement of democracy. On May 29th, 1999 a new democratic government was sworn-in to commence the journey of the fourth republic.

The Obasanjo administration was in office for two-terms of eight years (1999-2007). As a consequence of Nigeria’s battered image, one of the government’s first major responsibilities was a rebranded foreign policy attitude. According to Alao (2011, 6): “The desire to balance the domestic and external necessitated an initial foreign policy that required extensive outreach diplomacy during the early years of the Obasanjo administration”. Banking on the President’s immense goodwill around the globe, the era of a dynamic, flamboyant and adventurous foreign policy had surely returned to Nigeria. On the basis of domestic conditions, the government based its foreign policy thrust on four main pillars. These were; debt cancellation, recovery of stolen wealth, reintegration of Nigeria into the comity of nations, and the attraction of foreign direct investment. These policies were vigorously pursued through ‘Shuttle Diplomacy’ anchored by a peripatetic President. This agenda did not however take away from Nigeria’s regional interest and the Afro-centric focus of the country’s foreign policy. Before the end of the first term of office of the Obasanjo regime, there were impressive results from these exertions. Nigeria had once again become an important player in global politics; substantial amount of sto-

len funds were being returned to Nigeria from where they were stashed, Nigeria's debt overhang was reduced by international creditors, and foreign direct investments became visible sights in Nigeria. Similarly, Nigeria continued to play its big-brother role in the sub-region, first by helping to avert political crisis in Togo after the death of Gnassingbe Eyadema (Ebeku 2005, 22), and restoring the democratic elected government of Sao Tome and Principe to power (Mordi et al. 2003). In addition, Nigeria continued to play its self-assigned role on the continent by cooperating with other states to facilitate the transformation of the erstwhile OAU to the African Union. Furthermore, the cooperation between the two aspiring regional hegemonies led to the creation of the Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Indeed, it was obvious that a new administration would have a big task in maintaining the tempo created for Nigeria's foreign policy under the Obasanjo regime.

On May 29th 2007, Umaru Yar'Adua was sworn-in as the President of Nigeria. The initial jittery steps occasioned by the uncertainty of legitimacy did not help the direction of governance until the Supreme Court affirmed Yar'Adua's election as the President of Nigeria (Shehu and Benjamin 2008). The foreign policy thrust of the Yar'Adua administration was 'Citizen Diplomacy' (Dickson 2010). In effect, this was interpreted as the unalloyed commitment of government towards the safety and protection of Nigerian citizens anywhere in the world. This focus was prompted by the outcry against the poor treatment of Nigerian citizens in Diaspora. This thrust did not however disrupt the exercise of Nigeria's traditional responsibilities at the regional and continental levels. Upon Yar'Adua's untimely death in 2010, Vice-President, Goodluck Jonathan assumed office as the President for the duration of their joint-ticket. At the expiration of the first-term, President Jonathan contested and won the Presidential Election in 2011, and thus, presided over Nigeria till 2015. Under the Jonathan administration, Nigeria made a reasonable showing on the global stage. Specifically, the administration based its foreign policy endeavours on improving the domestic challenges. The attainment of the objectives of the regime's foreign policy was embedded in the attainment of the domestic policy thrust 'Transformation Agenda' (Jaji and Ayotunde 2016). The government reached out to the rest of the world in seeking assistance for the development of the local economy. Also, strong positions were taken in respect of issues concerning the region and the continent as a whole. Nigeria sided with the West in respect of the political crises in Cote d'Ivoire (Stearns 2011) and Libya (Kalu 2011). Similarly, the government worked assiduously to ensure the delisting of Nigeria from the US terror list (Odiogor 2011). On the downside though, the inability of the government to crush the Boko Haram insurgents cast a dark cloud on the Jonathan

administration's domestic and foreign policy agenda.

Former President Jonathan lost the presidential election to Major General Muhammadu Buhari in 2015. In similar circumstances to former President Obasanjo, President Buhari now contends with issues that did not hinder foreign policy pursuits while he was a military Head of State between 1984 and 1985. Constrained by series of factors within the domestic environment, the President has limited powers to personalise the domestic or foreign policy agenda. Despite the limitations imposed by the prevailing democratic arrangement, the Buhari government has so far demonstrated the capacity for a robust foreign policy agenda. On the basis of the campaign promises, the administration's foreign policy agenda is structured to assist in the fight against Boko Haram, galvanise the domestic economy for attracting foreign direct investment, and court global cooperation in the fight against corruption.

State of Nigeria's Domestic Environment under the Buhari Administration

The Buhari administration gained political power during one of the most critical times in Nigeria's history. The government is confronted with challenges built up by decades of mismanagement and maladministration (Omale 2016). Indeed, it appears that 'the chickens have come home to roost', because at this time, Nigeria is facing perhaps, the most difficult internal security problem in its history, coupled with the challenge of the worst economic recession in twenty-five years (Ishiekwene 2016). Furthermore, the challenges are compounded by limited resources, especially as a result of overdependence on income from the sale of petroleum products which is currently experiencing low prices at the international market. The problems are multiplied by the pressures exerted on the state by various groups; political, economic, religious and ethnic, struggling to attract government's attention. On the basis of these, the Buhari administration had its work cut out for it from the outset. The major thrusts of the administration's domestic policies are; revamping the domestic economy, ensuring the protection of lives and properties as a response to the spate of security issues across the country, and lastly, ending corrupt practices (prosecuting corrupt cases and preventing the art of corruption at the highest level).

On assumption of office of the Buhari administration on May 29th, 2015, the Nigerian economy had become the biggest economy in Africa (Vanguard 2016). Despite this accolade though, the conditions of the critical sectors of the economy are debilitating, causing untold hardship for the generality of

the people, who have to face rising inflation, while the purchasing power continues to reduce drastically. The Buhari administration had to contend with a great external shock induced by the heavy drop in global oil prices. As a result, "the Nigerian government faces a budget deficit of more than \$11 billion" (Scott 2016). This was compounded by the activities of 'economic saboteurs' who disrupt the flow of oil production thereby causing reduction in the daily production of Nigeria's major income earner; crude-oil. With a huge deficit inherited from the Jonathan administration (Tukur 2015), it is no surprise that the Nigerian economy entered into recession for the first time in twenty-five years. Government is unable to meet up with its obligation in terms of recurrent expenditure, while being unable to embark on capital projects. These problems have led to soaring inflation, unemployment and reduction in the purchasing power of ordinary Nigerians.

The security challenge of the country has an international dimension. The Boko Haram terrorist insurgency in the North-Eastern part of the country brought global attention to Nigeria through both its activities in Nigeria, and other countries within West Africa. Dating back to 2010, the Boko Haram group continues to unleash terror and mayhem on institutions and individuals across the northern part of the country. Prior to the commencement of the Buhari administration, the country was besieged by the criminal activities of the group, among which was the sacking of, and hoisting its flag in Damboa community, the bombing of the Police headquarters in Abuja, the attack on the UN office in Abuja, and other daring bombings of 'soft' targets (Smith 2014). Perhaps the dominant discourse in the activities of the group so far, is the brazen act of insolence with which the group invaded and abducted two hundred and seventy-six secondary school girls in a night at Chibok, Bornu state in April, 2014 (BBC News 2016). Despite the global outcry against this action, the group keeps majority of the school children in captivity more than two years after. All attempts by the Nigerian government to rescue the school children have so far failed. This is the unenviable burden inherited by the Buhari administration from the Jonathan administration. Based on its campaign promises, the Buhari administration immediately swung into action to address the Boko Haram menace upon assumption of office. In relative terms, the Buhari administration's success in the short-term has surpassed whatever was achieved under the Jonathan administration. While majority of the Chibok girls are still in captivity, there is however a noticeable reduction in the capacity of the Boko Haram group to wreck havoc. On record, the group has been chased out of its fortress in the Sambisa Forest of the North-East part of Nigeria. Whatever capacity remains for the group is now expended on low-level attacks against 'soft' targets in Nigeria and neighbouring countries (Vandiver 2016).

Asides from the high incidences of kidnapping and other regular challenges of insecurity, the Buhari administration was equally faced with the activities of economic saboteurs from the South-South geo-political zone of the country. The Niger Delta Avengers is the umbrella body of disgruntled elements in the South-South bent on causing government's attention to bear on the economic, environmental and social conditions of the area. The group's method is to disrupt oil production by blowing up pipe-lines that serve as conduit in the production of crude oil for the international market (Hinshaw and Kent 2016). This act of economic sabotage continues to cost Nigeria the much needed revenue, especially at a time when the world is witnessing great reduction in the prices of crude-oil in the international market. Concerned about the negative implications of their activities, the government continually makes efforts to 'pacify' the group by focussing attention on the development of the area. For instance, a reversal of the despoliation of their lands is being undertaken through the 'Ogoniland Clean' project (Alike 2016). As the administration engages the Niger Delta people in the solution to the problems in the area, there is a noticeable reduction in the negative activities of the Avengers, with direct impact on oil production, and positive implications on revenue accruing to government.

Deriving from the President's publicly declared hatred against acts of corruption, the administration made the fight against corruption a pivotal part of its domestic policy. With a focus on the investigation and prosecution of corruption cases, the Buhari government deploys the anti-corruption institutions of state; the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) to handle corrupt cases, while putting machinery in motion for blocking loopholes used for corrupt practices. Remarkably, numerous corrupt practices of government officials under the erstwhile Jonathan administration have been uncovered, and the processes of prosecution are ongoing.

These three critical issues; economic revival, provision of adequate security, and the fight against corruption have formed an appreciable part of the basis upon which the Buhari administration has engaged the rest of the world since inception.

Nigeria's Foreign Relations under President Buhari

The Buhari administration was under no illusion that it could solve the multiplicity of problems confronting Nigeria without concrete engagement with the international community. Though not comparable in terms of frequency and number of times as was with President Obasanjo in his first term of office, nonetheless President Buhari equally embarked on high-power 'Shuttle

Diplomacy' in his first year of assumption of office. The purpose of the shuttles, which have been at both bilateral and multilateral levels are tied to solving the domestic challenges of economic recovery, insecurity and fight against corruption.

Shortly after assumption of office, the President undertook a tour of member-states of the Lake Chad Basin Commission in West Africa that are equally affected by the activities of Boko Haram. For the purpose, the President also visited France because of France's interest in West Africa, as a result of the close affinities with her former colonies. The visits were meant to seek collaboration, cooperation and the assistance of the various governments in tackling the Boko Haram menace. In line with the government's determination, the Boko Haram terror issue featured prominently in the president's discussion with the US authorities on his official visit to America. In the final analysis, the contacts made with various governments yielded result in the mould of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) (Assanvo et al. 2016). At present, the Boko Haram terrorist group has been seriously decimated (Somorin 2016), with its existence hinged only on attacks on 'soft' targets.

In the attempt to tackle Nigeria's economic problems, the president has been visible on the world stage, attempting to sell Nigeria as a haven of business opportunities to governments and corporations around the world. Indeed, the president has left the space wide open by not discriminating against any part of the world, either on the basis of ideology or religion. In the search for FDI, the president has made both bilateral and multilateral visits to Europe (France, Germany, Britain), the US, China, United Arab Emirate, Saudi Arabia, amongst many other countries. Some of the efforts have generated visible results, for instance, "the secured commitments for investments worth \$6billion from the Chinese government and private companies most of whom signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with the Nigerian government as well as private companies" (Akwaya 2016). While the economy is still in a terrible state, especially in the period of recession, there are signals that with the monetary and fiscal policies of government, in addition to the giant strides the government has made in establishing contacts and building the confidence of foreign investors, the Nigerian economy is on its way to recovery in a relatively short while.

Finally in this regard, the Buhari administration aggressively sought the commitment and cooperation of the international community in fighting high-level corruption at home. Specifically, the government continually canvasses and lobbies foreign governments, especially in the West where most monies carted by Nigerian government officials are stashed. The cooperation of the foreign governments are sought in the area of refusal to provide safe havens for stolen wealth from Africa. Furthermore, the government is on an aggressive campaign of repatriation of stolen wealth that are already stashed abroad. The

president's trips abroad are meant to win the loyalty of the foreign governments in this regard. One of such shows of support came from the government of the United Arab Emirate as demonstrated in the signing of a bilateral agreement that details the willingness of the UAE to "facilitate the extradition of wanted persons, and seizure of stolen assets among others" (Akwaya 2016). In the quest for a corruption-free Nigeria, the president played a visible role in the London 2016, Anti-Corruption Summit, where emphasis was laid on erecting a strong global coalition against corrupt practices (Wakili 2016).

While the Buhari administration displayed elements of determination and commitment in deploying foreign policy to solve the various challenges at home, the government has equally been alive to its responsibility to the sub-region, in line with the underlying principles of the national interest. This is evidenced in the material and technical support provided for the following countries during their elections; Benin Republic, Burkina Faso, Chad and Guinea Conakry. Most recently, the Nigerian government played a significant role as a leading member of ECOWAS to solve an impending political imbroglio in Gambia. The group ensured that the recalcitrant former President Yahya Jammeh vacated office for the democratically elected President Adama Barrow. From all indications, Nigeria, Senegal, Liberia and Ghana, under the auspices of ECOWAS, would have implemented a forceful removal of Yahya Jammeh from office (Freeman 2016).

Equally important in the foreign policy drive is the extent to which President Buhari is willing to make Nigeria relevant in international politics. In most international forums, the president leads the Nigerian delegation, thereby creating visibility for the office of the President of Nigeria and by extension, enhancing the country's image. In this regard, the President has attended and addressed, the UN General Assembly, the African Union Heads of State and Government meeting, the Heads of State and Government Meeting of ECOWAS, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, the COP21 Climate Change Summit, the China-Africa Conference, the Nuclear Security Summit, among numerous others (Akwaya 2016).

Despite the commendable efforts so far made on the foreign policy arena, especially as they relate to achieving positive outcomes in the domestic policy pursuits, the Buhari administration is relatively weak in terms of the pursuit of a concrete diplomatic agenda. It is an irrefutable fact that diplomacy is one of the most critical instruments of foreign policy, hence, the need to accord high level of importance to Nigeria's diplomatic practice. A recurring albatross of Nigeria's diplomatic practice is the lack of funds experienced by many of the diplomatic missions in various capitals of the world (Aremu 2016, 534). This unacceptable practice hinders the capacity of the missions to carry out their

responsibilities effectively and efficiently, with negative consequences on the efforts made by government from home. The government appears to be addressing the challenge by shutting down some of the diplomatic missions that are considered unviable (Salawu and Echewofun 2016) perhaps so that funds can be made available to the diplomatic missions in capitals presumed to be of strategic importance to Nigeria's national interest. This position may appear logical on the surface, it however impedes government's efforts in taking advantage of opportunities across the globe. With the dynamic nature of globalisation, there is a sense in keeping diplomatic relations with as many state actors as possible, for the possibility of the strategic importance of a state may arise at short notice. Moreover, given the itinerant nature of the average Nigerian, government must be conscious of providing representation in as many countries as possible.

A related development in this regard is the slow pace of appointing Ambassadors and High Commissioners to head the various diplomatic missions. As a critical element of foreign policy pursuit, the diplomatic machinery must be fortified to the highest level. A situation in which the appointment of the country's highest representatives take too long to be finalised does not bode well for the relationship between Nigeria and the country starved of the highest level representative. It is therefore imperative for both the executive and legislature to harmonise the processes of nominating, confirming, and approving Nigeria's highest ranking representatives abroad.

Options for Buhari's Foreign Policy towards Africa

The nature and character of Nigeria's foreign policy towards Africa continues to be a core issue in the country's foreign policy pursuit. The desire to play an active role in Africa was a priority for Nigeria's founding fathers, hence, the notion that Nigeria has a 'manifest destiny' in Africa. It was therefore not unusual that the onerous task of Africa's development forms part of the underlying principles of the national interest. Nigeria's attainment of a leadership role in Africa therefore comes with the aspiration of becoming Africa's sole hegemon. The prospects were evident during the 'Golden Age' of Nigeria's foreign policy in the 1970s, but it all faded with the 'uninspiring' foreign policy pursuits of successive administrations, especially the combative foreign policy posture of the Abacha era (Ogunnubi and Okeke-Uzodike 2016). President Obasanjo made spirited attempts at reinforcing Nigeria's position as Africa's foremost leading nation by collaborating with South Africa on many Africa-centred projects. For instance, the Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) were established at the behest of both Nigeria and South Africa. However, Africa's problems remain

immense, and at this time, the continent beckons on a country like Nigeria to facilitate its growth and development. Here lies the opportunity for Nigeria to claim the position of Africa's hegemon. According to Meierding (2007, 12): "In addition to being conditioned by leaders' personal preferences and by domestic political circumstances, Nigerian foreign policy has also been consistently influenced by prevailing dynamics in the international system". President Buhari's administration must seek a convergence between the aims and objectives of both the domestic and foreign policies. We hereby isolate a critical issue of global importance with which President Buhari can latch unto to elevate Nigeria's status for the position of Africa's hegemon.

There are divisions among scholars and practitioners on the justification (moral or legal) for prosecuting Africa's cases at the International Criminal Court (ICC). The divisions arise from the structure and processes of the ICC and the seeming unfairness and lopsidedness in the subjects of prosecution (Nyabola 2012). The ICC was established on the strength of the Rome Statute which came into effect on 1st July, 2002. Specifically, the ICC is meant to prosecute individuals (essentially at the highest political level) accused of committing any of the following four crimes; genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression. There are one hundred and twenty-four State Parties to the Rome Statute, out of which Africa contributes thirty-four states (that is the highest number of any bloc of states from any region of the world). Despite the preponderance of membership, there is growing discontent within Africa about the logic of membership of the Assembly of State Parties of the Rome Statute (BBC News 2017). The discontent has contributed in building an AU bulwark against the ICC in respect of international criminal justice system in Africa and for African leaders.

One of the issues informing AU's reservations about the ICC as a just and impartial international court for criminal justice deals with an aspect of the processes of investigation and prosecution of cases. According to Article 13 (b) of the Rome Statute:

A situation in which one or more of such crimes appears to have been committed is referred to the Prosecutor by the Security Council acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

It is on the basis of this provision, that the ICC issued an arrest warrant on President Al-Bashir of Sudan over the Darfur crisis in 2005 and the prosecution of the *dramatis personae* in the 2011 Libya crisis. The AU decries such enormous powers being exercised by an undemocratic UN Security Council. Moreover, three of the permanent members of the Security Council, namely;

China, Russia and the United States are not members of the Assembly of State Parties of the Rome Statute. For this purpose, the AU regards the ICC with little respect, and indeed, attempts to frustrate the efforts of the ICC in respect of the arrest warrant issued against President Al-Bashir (Mbola 2010). Specifically, the AU at its 13th Summit of Heads of States and Governments in July 2009 adopted the 'Policy of Non-Cooperation' towards the arrest of President Al-Bashir (Chigara and Nwakwo 2015). A number of African countries, including Nigeria, have been sympathetic towards this cause. Although acting with caution, none of the African members of Assembly of State Parties to the Rome Statute arrested President Al-Bashir in their territory whenever he had reasons to visit.

The AU seems to claim it has no grouse against a system that prosecutes violators of international humanitarian laws, however, the mechanisms, processes and structures must be based on fairness, justice and equity. These are qualities lacking in the ICC as presently constituted. Therefore, the AU within its ranks has proposed to establish its own international criminal justice system. The AU has proposed to expand the jurisdiction of the existing African Court of Justice and Human Rights to cover the grave international crimes of; genocide, war crimes, crime against humanity, and various other transnational crimes. The African Court of Justice and Human Rights was created through the merger of former African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights and the Court of Justice of the African Union, and it is the belief of majority member states of the AU that the court can competently handle cases of international criminal justice.

The discontent about the character of Africa's international criminal justice system provides Nigeria the opportunity to lay claim to the leadership of the African continent. Like it happened under the regime of General Muhammed in the early 1970s, when Nigeria galvanised the rest of independent Africa, under the auspices of the OAU, and indeed, defied the 'instruction' of President Gerald Ford of the US to go all out against the white-supremacist regimes in southern Africa in general, and the apartheid regime in South Africa in particular. Nigeria matched its actions with words with immediate human and material resources extended to the freedom fighters in Angola (Ashaver 2014, 291). This was subsequently followed up with immense support for the various liberation movements, which granted the status of Frontline state to Nigeria.

Nigeria is on the threshold of history, and thus, must cease the opportunity to work with the AU in ensuring the mass withdrawal of African states from the ICC. On the basis of its structure and processes, and in addition, its bias Afro-centric list of prosecutions, the ICC represents a symbol of the West's continued domination of Africa. Nigeria must therefore work assiduously to ensure

the creation, functioning and sustenance of the enlargement of the scope and jurisdiction of the African Court of Justice and Human Rights to include the prosecution of the high-profile international crimes. Just like the Muhammed/Obasanjo regime's efforts of the 1970s and former President Obasanjo's and former President Mbeki's collaboration of the early 2000s, President Buhari must place the African agenda at the core of Nigeria's foreign policy, so that Nigeria can attain the deserving position of Africa's hegemon. Leading the charge for the establishment of a truly African international criminal court of justice is a step in the right direction for the Buhari administration.

Conclusion

From all indications, the Nigerian government is under pressure to fulfil its campaign promises. The foreign policy initiatives of the Buhari administration has been critical in seeking panaceas to the numerous domestic challenges in Nigeria. Nigeria must however not shy away from its responsibilities towards the African continent, because the country's destiny is tied to the growth and development of the continent. It is acknowledged that Nigeria plays a leadership role in West Africa, however, the leadership role must be 'forcefully' extended to the rest of the continent. Literature is awash with Nigeria's enviable role in the political and economic development of Africa in the 1970s, President Obasanjo attempted a re-enactment of the feat in the 2000s, but subsequent regimes did not follow up on the achievements recorded. This is the time for the Buhari administration to step up and be counted.

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ABSTRACT

There is a constant stream of discourses on Nigeria's foreign policy behaviour by scholars and policy makers alike. This owes largely to the unpredictable nature of the country's actions and inactions on the global arena. Over the decades, there have been periods of dynamic foreign policy posturing, as well as the era of moderate foreign policy behaviour, and the combative approach to foreign policy. In large part, the prevailing attitudes are induced by the conditions in the two environments of foreign policy. This paper interrogates the impact of the conditions of the domestic milieu on the foreign policy behaviour of the Buhari administration. The analysis is based on the juxtaposition of variables in both the domestic and external environments of foreign policy. On the strength of data gathered from secondary sources, it is observed that the subsisting domestic conditions have great influences on Nigeria's foreign policy behaviour under the Buhari administration. However, in the overall interest of projecting, promoting and protecting Nigeria's national interest, the Buhari administration must continually balance the scale between domestic and foreign policy pursuits.

KEYWORDS

Nigeria; Buhari; Foreign policy; Domestic policy; Environmental variables.

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