

**FOREIGN POLICY AND NIGERIAN NATIONAL
INTEREST; A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF
PRESIDENT GOODLUCK JONATHAN AND
BUHARI ADMINISTRATION**

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Abstract

Historically, the trajectory of articulating and implementing Nigeria's foreign policy has been shaped by both civilian and military regimes. Essentially, foreign policy serves as the dual purpose of defining and

guiding external relations of states or national governments in the promotion and realization of their national interests in the international arena. Foreign policy emphasizes the interaction that consistently goes on between state actors and non-state actors. The modes of interaction in the pursuit of a state's foreign policy objectives have occasionally remained cooperative, conflictual and competitive. The hallmark of foreign policy obviously lies in the fact that it is internally formulated and externally projected and implemented, hence, the national interests of states are paramount in promoting their prestige, image and perception. Again, the foreign policy of a state is actually an extension of its domestic policy to be applied globally. From this perspective, the paper comparatively reappraises Nigeria's foreign policy and the extent to which it contributed to the realization of her national image under the presidencies of Goodluck Jonathan (2011-2015) and Muhammadu Buhari (2015-2019), using the rational actor model in analyzing the data generated from secondary sources. It basically accentuated on some very remarkable achievements of Nigeria's foreign policy and how they positively impacted on Nigeria's national image against all odds under the period of review. The paper recommends the continuity of good governance and public policies by successive administrations as a way of consolidating Nigeria's foreign policy

achievements and gains for the continued advancement of her positive national image.

Keywords: Comparative, Foreign Policy, National Image, National Interest, administration.

Introduction

Nigeria as a political entity came into being on 1st January, 1914, when the British colonial government amalgamated the protectorate of Northern Nigeria with the colony and protectorate of Southern Nigeria (Ishiaki, 2001, p. 1). This is indicative of the fact that Nigeria has had an existing relationship with the outside world before attaining statehood in 1960, and obviously had no foreign policy of her own other than that of Britain as her colonial master. For instance, in 1959, Nigeria and India particularly had diplomatic relationship in the area of fighting against colonialism as British colonies. However, with the granting of political independence to Nigeria by the British colonial power, she legitimately expressly became saddled with the exclusive responsibility and sovereign right to henceforth formulate her own foreign policy as well as conduct external relations with other sovereign political entities.

According to Gilbert (2001, p.127), Nigeria as a nation-state was born into a bipolar international system on 1st October 1960. Ever since then, she has been actively involved in a new phase of multilateral diplomatic

relations with various state actors and non-state actors in the contemporary Westphalian state system vis-a-vis the promotion and advancement of her national interest. Nigeria as a British colonial creation having therefore officially gained political independence was accorded the needed diplomatic recognition from other sovereign independent states as it were. Consequently, she got admitted formally into the United Nations as its 99th member state, and thereby has the membership of several other notable multilateral international organizations like the Commonwealth of Nations, Organization of Africa Unity (OAU) now African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), etc. Indeed, the Nigerian state, at the continental level of international politicking visibly played a very important role in the bargaining and negotiation that preceded the formation of the OAU (Nwahiri, 2010). Nigeria was also instrumental at the sub- regional level to the formation of ECOWAS and as such houses its headquarters in her present capital city of Abuja.

However, the history of Nigeria's foreign policy in the immediate post-colonial Nigeria cannot be given without particular reference to the First Republic which lasted from 1960 to 1966. Thus, the principles of Nigeria's foreign policy were basically the brain child of Sir

Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Prime Minister (Nwahiri, 2010, p. 34). In essence, according to chapter 2, section 19 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the foreign policy objectives include:

1. promotion and protection of the national interest;
2. promotion of African integration and support for African unity;
3. promotion of international cooperation for the consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect among all nations and elimination of discrimination in all its manifestation;
4. respect for international law and treaty obligations as well as the seeking of settlement of international conciliation, arbitration, and adjudication and;
5. promotion of a just world economic order.

In other words, the implementation of Nigeria's foreign policy since independence in 1960, has somewhat been characterized by various foreign policy postures and conceptual constructs that have been enunciated by various administrations in Nigeria, ranging from, the seven-point agenda the transformation agenda, the change mantra, citizenship diplomacy, afrocentrism, multilateralism and economic diplomacy.

Although, Nigeria is popularly referred to as "the Giant of Africa", and it is rather regrettable to note that her national image has been greatly smeared. This is largely due to a number of ethical reasons ranging from corruption, insecurity, bad governance, misappropriation, mismanagement, misapplication and embezzlement of public funds. The public perception of the Nigerian state is indeed on the negative side.

In addition, Akinterinwa (2014, p.237) observed that weak and infective governance structures and lack of transparency accountability have had a detrimental impact on the socio-economic development of Nigeria. Hence, in 2014, the All Progressive Congress (APC) presidential campaign was anchored on "Change Mantre" of fighting corruption, insecurity and improving the Nigerian economy. Notwithstanding the immediate past administration led by president Goodluck Jonathan also anchored hers on "The Transformation Agenda" which was closely related to the philosophy and manifesto of the Buhari led APC government. The difference in the focal points of administrations can easily be noticed in the nomenclature not in practice.

However, these measures were geared towards redeeming Nigeria's prestige and hitherto battered national image and perception in the international community through the instrumentality of leaders' foreign policy thrusts and conceptual constructs. Indeed,

in Nigeria today, there is an increasing level of corruption, insecurity and economic sabotage. For example, the embezzlement of public funds by government official and politicians, bombing and kidnapping activities by especially Boko Haram terrorists and perhaps the Niger Delta militants in the areas of crud oil theft and oil bunkering have all culminated in the economic sabotage of Nigeria.

In fact, one of these unfortunate incidents was the 26 August, 2011 bombing of the UN building in Abuja by a suicide bomber attributed to Boko Haram terrorist group in which 50 persons died (Gilbert, 2014). Consequently, President Muhammadu Buhari strongly admitted that insecurity remains a big challenge in Nigeria, and also solicited one every citizenry to unite and build bridges across ethnic divides given that the Nigerian state has been bedeviled by past economic and political mismanagement, thus institutionalizing corruption as it were (Ubani, 2019). This is actually not far from the reason why the former British Prime Minister, David Cameron had earlier described Nigeria as a fantastically corrupt nation.

The outright implication of this ugly development therefore, is that the Nigerian state suffers a negative image and perception within the international system. Foreigners, for example, who already have business in Nigeria and other prospective foreign investors, tend to

have lost confidence in the leadership of the country. In other words, they have even become scared of investing in the Nigerian economy and this has affected to a great extent, the country's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) as well as her national image and reputation. This in actuality is unhealthy for country's development. Hence, it is the focus of this article to comparatively reappraise the achievements of Nigeria's foreign policy towards the promotion of her national image under the presidencies of Goodluck Jonathan and Mohammadu Buhari.

Conceptual Clarifications

Foreign Policy Foreign policy, like most issues in social science literature, has been susceptible to multiple scholarly interpretations. However, according to Handreinder (1967), as cited by Nwahiri (2007, p.4), foreign policy is "a coordinated strategy with which institutionally designed decision-makers seek to manipulate the external environment." Thus, states cannot exist without the formation and implementation of foreign policy to advance their national interests. According to Gilbert and Thom- Otuya (2005), citing Northedge (1968), it is "...interplay between the outside and the inside. This implies that states are constantly interacting with one another in the international system through the application of their distinct foreign policies. Every nation's foreign policy is apparently always geared to advance the national interest (Palmer & Perkins,

2002). According to Okeke (2017, p.342), national interest guides the formulation of foreign policy, but it is not an end in itself; rather, it is a means to an end. In addition, it adds flavour to the execution and implementation of any state's foreign policy, and a state without a pre-designed national interest is doomed to succumb to the complexities of global politics.

However, Frankel (1967) also cited in both Gilbert (2013, p.23) and Nte (2016, p. 21), views foreign policy as "... considering of decisions and actions which involve to some appreciable extent, relations between one state and another." It therefore suffices to say that foreign policy can be understood as a country's response to the world outside or beyond its own frontiers or boundaries (Chibundu, 2003, p. 1). For Goldstein and Pevehouse (2009), foreign policies are the strategies governments use to guide their actions in the international arena. To them, foreign policies are largely responsible for spelling out the objectives state leaders have decided to pursue in a given diplomatic relationship or engagement.

National Image

The ability of a nation to forge and sustain favourable ties with other nations as well as with international audiences is one of the most important notions in the age of globalisation (Kinsey & Chung, 2013). These

academics accordingly noted that a state's national image might affect her capacity to forge coalitions and, as a result, increase her soft power's global influence. According to Nye (2004), having soft power means being able to lure others to you rather than using force or money to get what you want. Wang (2008) pointed out that national image, in contrast, deals with the opinion produced by the perceptions and assessments of the global public. Making an image is therefore a key component of a country's foreign policy. An image can be thought of as how other actors in the international community (including states and non-state actors) perceive a nation, and this view might be the outcome of an objective or subjective goal (Kobani, 2021, p.33). In a similar vein, Chidozie et al. (2014) claimed that a country's international reputation serves as a foundation for self-reappraisal in the event of any negative perception. Global image primarily refers to how a nation is viewed by other international actors in the course of its contacts with others, and in particular, the behaviour of its population both at home and abroad (Boma-Lysa et al, 2015; Kobani, 2012). Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that image-building must necessarily comprise a basic component of a country's foreign policy and that how a country is seen, particularly in the twenty- first century, depends on her national image (Adeniyi, 2012; Kobani, 2021).

A Comparative Analysis of Nigeria's Foreign Policy and its National Image: The Democratic Administrations of Jonathan and Buhari in Perspective. The Goodluck Jonathan's Administration (2011-2015)

Although, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan became Nigeria's fourth executive President in May, 2010, following the death of his boss and predecessor, President Umaru Musa Yar Adua. It is also important to mention that at the expiration of that tenure in May 2011, he contested and won the presidential election, and was subsequently sworn in on 29 May, 2011. He then migrated from the famous "seven (7) Points Agenda" of the previous administration where he served in three capacities - Vice President, Acting President and finally President; to the "Transformation Agenda" of his foreign policy thrust. The transformation agenda served as the articulation of government prioritized policies, programmes, and projects that will guide Jonathan's administration from 2011 to 2015 (Thom-Otuya, 2015). It was also a conscious attempt to rationally and decisively aim at realizing a holistic transformation of the Nigerian state, as it were.

Thom-Otuya (2015) added that she expected Nigeria to be one of the top twenty economies in 2020 and that the policy initiative was meant to transform the country's economy in order to meet future needs of the Nigerian

populace. Again, the "Transformation Agenda" as a comprehensive initiative launched by the Jonathan's administration towards addressing the country's economic underdevelopment and review of the role of the legislature and the judiciary within a period of four years from 2011 to 2015, was chaired by former President Goodluck Jonathan and also assisted by Dr. (Mrs) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, who doubled as the Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy. It covered crucial topics like managing public spending and information and communication technology (ICT), as well as others like job creation, education, health, power, transportation, the Niger Delta, labour and productivity, and foreign policy and economic diplomacy.

President Jonathan instructed the presidential advisory council on international relations to coordinate the restructuring of Nigeria's foreign policy in order to be investment driven in line with the domestic policy of the transformation agenda in 2011 in light of President Jonathan's electoral victory. The nation's foreign policy experts, seasoned diplomats, professionals, and intelligentsia were asked to chart a new course for the future of our foreign policy without discarding the past after his interactive session with some Nigerians in the diaspora caused by his foreign visits. Gilbert and Ubani (2015) also noted that the transformation agenda of

President Goodluck Jonathan has been adjudged to have made some appreciable progress in strategic areas of the Nigerian economy. In essence, the Jonathan administration recognised the urgent need to create bi-national commissions with Canada and Germany in order to, among other things, strengthen business ties and advance development cooperation. There was also the establishment of a bi-national commission between Nigeria and the United States which made Nigeria destination point for US entrepreneurs and investments (Nte, 2016, p.74). It is therefore important to mention that only Nigeria and South Africa have bi-national cooperation agreements in Africa with the US. This was made achievable during the Jonathan presidency through his foreign policy direction which culminated in the economic growth and development of Nigeria during his regime. It is also on record that Britain, South Africa and China have strategic trade partnership with Nigeria The upgrading of Nigeria-China Joint Commission to a bi-commission speaks volumes of the Jonathan administration's resolve to aggressively attract Foreign Direct Investment in the country and for the wellbeing of her citizens.

Specifically, in the context of economic diplomacy, some scholars have argued that Nigeria's foreign policy greatly impacted on her image globally.

Nigeria, under President Jonathan, also enjoyed the privilege of being died on the occasions in the United Nations Security Council. This first happened in 2011-secondly in 2013-2015. Be that as it may, Nigeria, at the continental level Chairman of the African Union, in charge off democracy, election and good governance Africa. Also, at the sub-regional level, the Jonathan administration played ECOWAS interventions and mediation in the conflict situations in Guinea-Bissau, Come d'Ivoire, Mali and Libya (Nhe, 2006 Ja Ayotunde, 2016). For instance, Nigerian state under Jonathan displayed its sagacious hip role under the platform of ECOWAS to vehemently oppose the decision of President Laurent Ghaggo of Cote D'Ivoire for refusing to transit power in 2010 after the Presidential elections in the country that saw is defeat.

Another distinguishable role played by the Jonathan's regime in the maintenance and sustenance of continental peace and security, was her support for the Libyan's National Transitional Council as well as her leading role in the ECOWAS Framed Ag on the crisis situation in the Republic of Mali. Nigeria infact took all of these foreign galley decisions in finding lasting solutions to the political crisis of these countries in the spirit of her Afrocentric foreign policy principle guided by her national particularly on the continent of Africa.

Consequently, Nte (2016, p.75) argued that President Goodluck Jonathan left an indelible print as his government was the first to concede power to an opposition party after a democratic election and this projected the country's image in the international community as a democratic and peace-loving nation. This no doubt heralded the consolidation of democratic governance in Nigeria's political history. Even the phone call that was made by President Jonathan to General Buhari as he was then called, before the final presidential election result was declared in favour of the latter, boosted in toll Nigeria's reputation as a nation that promotes and cherishes democratic idea. Besides, the peaceful transition programme and subsequent inauguration of President Muhammadu Buhari May 29, 2015, equally climaxed the image of the country in the global system.

However, given the principle of reciprocity in international relations, the Nigerian under Jonathan was able to invoke and apply this principle in 2012, when African state deported some Nigerians for not having what they called "yellow fever vaccination cards" in line with conceptual construct of citizen diplomacy, that is, the protection of her citizens in the diaspora. Indeed, Nigeria retaliated in alert measure by even threatening to shut down South African companies operating in Nigeria especially MTN and DSTV, the Nigerian government

also demanded for an id apology from the government of South Africa which she did not hesitate to oblige Nigeria probably because of the South African strategic economic cum business interest in the country and infact Nigeria was able to expressly use her foreign policy for the ma of her national interest (Ubani, 2019).

The Muhammadu Buhari's Administration (2015-2019)

Following President Jonathan's defeat in the 2015 presidential election, Gemenil Muhammadu Buhari became the fifth democratically elected executive president of Nigeria, and was subsequently sworn into office on May 29, 2015. However, it is the rationalization and practice of all administrations in Nigeria, to anchor their foreign policies on the national development of the country, by identifying circumstantially the needs of the state and also mapping out strategies to actualize the foreign policy objectives. Thus, President Buhari and his All Progressive Congress (APC) led federal government came up with the popular "Change Mantra" as its foreign policy posture. For instance, in his inaugural speech, he obviously and categorically stated that his government shall focus on the economy, fight against corruption, and ensure the provision of security, that is, the tripod of his foreign policy direction.

Hence, his efforts have been channeled towards the realization of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives in the light of his administration's achievements and restoring Nigeria's external image. It will be recalled that before the emergence of President Buhari in 2015, the global image of Nigeria was not nothing to reckon with and write home about. Infact, it was bad to the extent that Nigerians living abroad were so maltreated and at the same time treated with disdain. Even those travelling abroad were subjected to all kinds of inhuman treatment and molestation and also found it very difficult to secure visas to travel some countries especially in North America and Europe. They were alas roughly searched at the airports of their destinations This explains how pathetic the situation was with Nigerians living and travelling abroad before 2015, especially because of massive corruption and Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.

However, with the emergence of the Buhari's administration, Nigeria began to witness and experience a new phase of diplomatic relation towards promoting the country's national image in the global arena. Based on Nigeria's national interest and the West African Sub-Region with particular emphasis to fight egalentservei corruption, maintenance of peace and security and development of the entry (Nte, 2016, p.75-76). By way of tackling Nigeria's internal security challenges President

Buhari embarked on several diplomatic tours to neighbouring member states of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) such as Cameroun, Chad and Niger in the North-Eastern region of Nigeria, to seek synergistic approach in fight against Boko Haram menace in particular and terrorism at large. Although, Benin Republic is not a member state of the LCBC but provided moral and technical support to Nigeria to decisively and aggressively combat the Boko Haram insurgency that massively hitherto ravaged country's national security.

The implication of this multilateral diplomatic security arrangement eventually led to the setting up of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNTTF) to curb the Boko Haram Insurgency in the Lake Chad region (Odulejo, 2017). He also visited the former President Francois Hollande of the French Republic to solicit his country's assistance in the fight against Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism. In furtherance of laundering Nigeria's national image, the Buhari regime through her several diplomatic shuttles sought for the return of the country's money looted by its corrupt leaders and deposited in foreign banks.

The frantic efforts made by the government in recovering some of these looted funds like the Ahacha loots) have also boosted the image of the Nigerian state. Nite (2016, p.765) therefore reported that more than

\$230 million USD has been recovered from Foreign banks. President Buhari also paid a state visit to the German's Chancellor Angel Merkel, and participated in the summit held at Germany and seized the medium to solicit for security assistance as well as rebuilding of the massively devastated of Nigeria's North-Eastern region by the Boko Haram insurgency as well as the G20 summit. The visits yielded some positive results because of the acceptance of German government and other G7 member states to assist in that direction. Driven also by President Muhammadu Buhari's commitment in the fight against corruption in Nigeria, he was named the African anti-corruption champion by the AU in 2018 Again, Nte (2016) is of the view that President Buhar's diplomatic shuttles to the US and China also yielded much dividends. To him, the moral support of USA to the administration is a booster but more importantly, China through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) had undertaken to make investments worth \$6 billion USD in Nigeria.

The signing of a bilateral agreement with the United Arab Emirates government by President Buhari for the seizure of stolen assets with a view to recovering looted funds from Nigeria kept in UAE banks. In recognition of Nigeria's foreign policy under President Buhari and also in line with its Afrocentric principle, the government has shown much commitment in promoting democratic

governments in Africa as well as supporting general elections in Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea Conakry and the Gambia through materials and technical support. Between 2016 and 2017, the Buhari administration was instrumental to stepping down of President Yahya Jammeh who lost the presidential election in the Gambia and conceded, but later reneged to hand over power to the winner of that election, President Adama Barrow. That in itself was a big plus to Nigeria's foreign policy under President Buhari.

It should be noted also that, though, the Jonathan administration in January 2014 signed into law die Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act, after its passage by die National Assembly. Thus, a greater percentage of Nigerians world over commended President Jonathan for being courageous in that direction despite pressures from the Obama led US government. As if that was not enough, so, when President Buhari visited the White House to seek for financial assistance for Nigeria, the issue of the status of Gays and their rights were tendered and President Buhari subtly declined the offer (Nte,2016, p.78). Since it was considered to be unethical and equally not in the national interest of Nigeria. As a result, both regimes were heavily commended for rationally being focused and consistent in pursuing their foreign policies without doubt. Meanwhile, it is also fundamentally important to specifically highlight other

remarkable achievements of the Buhari administration which the implementation of his foreign policy thrust has engendered:

- The release of over 16, 000 persons in Boko Haram captivity as well as 106 chibok girls abducted in 2014 and 105 Dapchi school girls equally being abducted.
- The recovery of 14 local governments and territories hitherto under the firm grip and control of Boko Haram in Nigeria's Northeast region and the return of about one million displaced persons to their communities.
- Introducing an improved mechanism for the distribution of aids to IDPs in the Northeast based on the setting up of the Special Intervention Programme of the federal government (ie. Door-to-door strategy).
- The successful implementation of the Treasury Single Account (TSA) and the increase of government revenue to more than N3 trillion, thereby bolstering transparency and accountability.
- The implementation of the Bank Verification Number (BVN), thereby preventing corruption through the closing of loopholes for the syphoning of

public funds and the tracking of illicit funds through multiple accounts.

- The release of bailout funds of about N689 billion to 27 states of the federation for the payment of outstanding workers' salaries.
- The implementation of the 2011 UNEP report for the on' exercise after several years of environmental degradation air with the setting aside of US \$170 million funding in an established for that purpose.
- The release of N2 billion take off grant for the Nigerian Maritime University in Okerenkoko of Delta State, with a view to addressing part of the demands by the Niger Delta region.
- The introduction of the new Whistleblowing policy by the federal ministry of finance in December 2016, to ensure recovery of looted funds and tax evasion and other corrupt practices. For instance, the government in May 2018 paid N439.2 million to about 14 whistleblowers for useful information on tax evasion.
- The establishment of Nigerians in Diaspora Commission through the signing of the bill in 2011 so as to complement the duties and efforts of the Nigeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign

Missions in the area of citizen diplomacy (Ubani, 2019).

Conclusion

This study reappraised the dynamics of Nigeria's foreign policy using in comparative terms the presidencies of Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari as a veritable inter-state diplomatic instrument for the realization of the country's national image. Due to the obvious fact that a state's foreign policy also serves as the engine room for the advancement of her national priorities in the contemporary international system. The politics of Nigeria's external relations is therefore such that cannot be overemphasized. Several criticisms notwithstanding have been leveled against Jonathan and Buhari foreign policy directions as exemplified in the Transformation Agenda and the Change Mantra respectively, for not achieving much in the promotion of the country's national interest. Nevertheless, their foreign policies have contributed immensely towards the realization of Nigeria's national image vis-a-vis their foreign policy achievements.

Recommendation

We recommend therefore that:

1. There should be continuity of good governance and public policies by successive regimes no matter the political affiliations and convictions of the leaders, such as the implementation of BVN, TSA, and the Maritime University, since foreign policy is an extension of a state's domestic policy.
2. Successive Nigerian governments should as a matter of the country's national interest, consolidate on foreign policy achievements already recorded thereby not just restoring but improving Nigeria's external image.
3. Seasoned experts, technocrats, and credible people should always be used in the conduct of government business especially in formulating and implementing foreign policies. Specifically, the appointment of the Minister of Foreign Affairs should always be one taken from the Foreign Service because of experiential knowhow.
4. There should be realizable and beneficial foreign policy thrusts by successive governments in line with Nigeria's foreign policy objectives and principles.
5. There should be an overhauling of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) and the appointment its Director-General should be devoid of

undue political patronage and also legally led by a seasoned and renowned Professor of Political Science cum International Relations. 6. There is the urgent need for the readjustment of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives, principles, and strategies by the critical stakeholders so as to keep abreast with current global trends for the advancement of the nation's strategic national interest and national image.

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