

**Nigeria's Foreign Policy under President Muhammadu Buhari Administration
(2015-2023)**

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Degree in International Relations**

Certification

This is to certify that Oladayo James OLALERE with matriculation number LCU/PG/003814 carried out his research work titled “Nigeria’s Foreign Policy under President Muhammed Buhari Administration (2015-2023)” in the Department of Politics and International Relations, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State, for the Award of Master of Science (MSc) degree in International Relations, and that this has not been previously submitted.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to God Almighty.

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Acknowledgment

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Even though the above-mentioned institutions and persons have assisted in the process of this research work, I alone stand responsible for the errors, if any, found in the work.

Abstract

The administration of President Muhammadu Buhari (2015-2023) ushered in a transformative era for Nigeria's foreign policy, aiming to elevate the nation to a position of regional leadership and a prominent player on the global stage, while navigating a myriad of domestic obstacles. With an expansive network of over 100 foreign missions, ranging from bustling embassies to consulates, Nigeria's diplomatic approach underscored a commitment to deepening international relationships, cultivating economic partnerships, safeguarding the welfare of its citizens, and launching robust security initiatives. Yet, this ambition was often tempered by the stark realities of underfunding and bureaucratic bottlenecks. The contours of Buhari's foreign policy were significantly shaped by a backdrop of internal turmoil, such as the relentless Boko Haram insurgency and a biting economic recession. These challenges prompted a focused effort on regional security, economic diversification, and robust anti-corruption measures. In contrast to previous administrations that placed heavy emphasis on Afrocentric leadership, Buhari's strategy took a more inward-looking approach, emphasizing Nigeria's unique context and challenges. Strategic diplomatic missions in key locations such as Washington, D.C., Beijing, and Addis Ababa became vital conduits for advancing Nigeria's interests on the world stage. These missions played a pivotal role in fostering collaborative security efforts to combat terrorism in the Lake Chad Basin, as exemplified by initiatives such as the Multinational Joint Task Force. Here, diplomacy served as both shield and sword in the nation's quest for stability. Economic diplomacy emerged as a focal point, with missions tirelessly working to attract foreign investment, as evidenced by significant Chinese inflows and high-profile trade summits held in the heart of London. Moreover, these diplomatic outposts adeptly navigated the turbulent waters of regional relations, particularly following the controversial border closure with ECOWAS neighbors, reflecting Nigeria's intense commitment to regional collaboration, even in trying times.

Keywords: Diplomacy, Foreign Policy, Foreign Missions, Nigeria.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviation/Acronyms	Definitions
AEC	African Economic Community
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
ASF	African Standby Force
AU	African Union
CANMPSSA	Chemical and Non-Metallic Products Senior Staff Association
CEAO	Communauté Économique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest
CU	Customs Union
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EPA	European Partnership Agreement
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FTA	Free Trade Area
IMF	International Monetary Fund

IR	International Relations
ISWAP	Islamic State's West Africa Province
LPA	Lagos Plan of Action
MAN	Manufacturers Association of Nigeria
MNJTF	Multinational Joint Task Force
NANTS	National Association of Nigerian Traders
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NLC	Nigerian Labour Congress
OAU	Organization of African Unity
PACIR	Presidential Advisory Council on International Relations
PSC	Peace and Security Council
REC	Regional Economic Community
SON	Standards Organization of Nigeria
TIFA	Trade and Investment Framework Agreement
TRIMS	Trade-Related Investment Measures
TRIPS	Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
TWN	Third World Network
UN	United Nations
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

UNO

United Nations Organization

WTO

World Trade Organization

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

Upon assuming office, President Buhari faced the daunting task of addressing a weakened Nigerian foreign policy and a degraded national image. The persistent challenges of terrorism, kidnapping, banditry, and, notably, widespread corruption severely impacted Nigeria's foreign relations. The ramifications of these domestic issues for Nigerian foreign policy became particularly evident when many developed nations declined to sell ammunition to the Nigerian government for its counterinsurgency and anti-terrorism efforts. Foreign policy is crucial for nations to engage with other states and non-state actors in the international system¹.

Nigeria's foreign missions, including embassies, high commissions, and consulates, play a crucial role in diplomatic engagement and the promotion of national interests globally. They serve various functions, including diplomacy, trade promotion, citizen welfare, and cultural exchange, while facing challenges such as funding constraints, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and security concerns. These missions represent Nigeria in bilateral and multilateral relations, facilitating dialogue and negotiating trade agreements. They promote economic diplomacy by connecting Nigerian businesses to foreign markets and providing market intelligence. Protecting the welfare of citizens abroad is also a key function, especially during crises. Cultural diplomacy plays a significant role in enhancing Nigeria's soft power by promoting its heritage and fostering goodwill. However, challenges such as chronic underfunding and security risks limit their effectiveness. To improve operations, Nigeria should prioritize funding, streamline bureaucratic processes, invest in diplomatic training, and leverage technology. Overall,

strengthening Nigeria's foreign missions is essential for advancing national interests and ensuring the country's influence in international affairs.

It is a set of measures to stimulate and accomplish a country's national objectives. The guiding principles of Nigeria foreign policy have advanced over time under various administrations and individuals, notwithstanding its setbacks². Foreign policy can be understood as a framework of objectives and strategies that a nation seeks to advance, considering the complexities of its internal and external environments, as interpreted by its decision-making authorities. The Buhari administration understood that effectively tackling Nigeria's diverse challenges necessitated meaningful collaboration with the international community. While the frequency of this engagement may not have matched that of President Olusegun Obasanjo's first term, President Buhari nonetheless undertook significant "Shuttle Diplomacy" in his initial year of leadership. This diplomatic initiative aimed to strengthen relationships at both bilateral and multilateral levels, fostering a cooperative framework for shared progress. Since Nigeria's independence, her foreign policy and foreign mission have undergone several transformations. Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa initially embraced a non-aligned approach that highlighted a commitment to Afrocentrism.

This trajectory was interrupted by the Nigerian Civil War, which occurred under the leadership of Yakubu Gowon from 1966 to 1975. In the post-war period, the administrations of Murtala Mohammed and Olusegun Obasanjo, from 1975 to 1979, built upon the Afrocentric foundation by pursuing a more assertive foreign policy aimed at supporting the liberation of African nations from apartheid and colonialism. From 1985 to 1993, under the leadership of Ibrahim Babangida, Nigeria experienced a significant shift toward a pro-Western foreign policy. This change enabled the country to

embrace the International Monetary Fund's Structural Adjustment Program and foster economic diplomacy. Conversely, during Sani Abacha's regime from 1993 to 1998, Nigeria adopted a more isolationist stance, leading to a notable decrease in its engagement with the global community. This period highlights the complexities and dynamics that have shaped Nigeria's international relations. During Ibrahim Babangida's administration from 1985 to 1993, Nigeria experienced a notable transformation in its foreign policy, characterized by a distinctly pro-Western orientation. This shift facilitated the acceptance and integration of the International Monetary Fund-led Structural Adjustment Program, thereby enhancing economic diplomacy within the country. In contrast, Sani Abacha's tenure from 1993 to 1998 was characterized by an isolationist foreign policy approach, which significantly reduced Nigeria's engagement with the international community. With the transition to Olusegun Obasanjo's leadership from 1999 to 2007, Nigeria sought to re-establish its presence on the world stage after the isolationist policies of the previous regime. Obasanjo's foreign policy was anchored in shuttle diplomacy, emphasizing economic partnerships, shared development objectives, and international cooperation.

Umaru Musa Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan, serving from 2007 to 2015, continued with an open foreign policy that fostered harmonious and liberal relations globally. Their administration also recognized the importance of citizen diplomacy in enhancing Nigeria's diplomatic efforts. Muhammadu Buhari's foreign policy from 2015 to 2023 focused on strengthening ties with neighboring countries while maintaining balanced relationships with key global players such as the United States and China, positioning Nigeria as a pivotal actor in the international arena. General Buhari adopted a significant foreign policy approach as the head of government during a military regime that

heightened tensions with Nigeria's neighboring countries². Following his inauguration in 2015, President Buhari actively engaged in shuttle diplomacy. He earned the moniker "Jet-Setting President" due to his extensive travels, spending a quarter of his first 100 days in office visiting various nations. In many developing countries, particularly across Africa, foreign policy often does not receive the attention it deserves during electoral cycles. It is not unexpected that, despite their significant implications for the domestic economy, security, and broader societal issues, foreign policy considerations were not central to President Muhammadu Buhari's campaign promises during the 2015 general elections that led to his ascent to power¹. The public in developing nations, including Nigeria, typically exhibits limited engagement with foreign policy matters for several reasons. Firstly, a high illiteracy rate can hinder the population's understanding of international events and the governmental responses to them. Secondly, some foreign policy issues' complexity and technical nature may be difficult for a largely uneducated and somewhat disengaged audience to grasp. Lastly, citizens are generally more focused on domestic matters that directly impact their daily lives, such as food security, access to clean water, electricity supply, housing, and social infrastructure.

As a result, the electorate tends to prioritize political parties' capabilities to address pressing concerns over foreign policy considerations, which may seem abstract or remote. In summary, unless a foreign policy issue has a clear connection to the immediate needs and interests of the populace, it tends to receive minimal attention. However, it is essential to acknowledge that, in contemporary governance, alongside the crucial roles of maintaining law and order, regulating the economy, and safeguarding the nation against external threats, foreign policy engagements also include promoting trade and conducting diplomatic relations. They are increasingly recognized as vital functions

of government³. During his regime, President Buhari assumed the responsibilities of Nigeria's chief diplomat and foreign policy officer to reinvigorate Nigeria's role on the international stage. This undertaking was shaped by the global context in which Buhari found himself, characterized by falling oil prices, challenges posed by terrorism and counter-terrorism efforts, nuclear agreements, and prevailing neoliberal trends, among other pressing issues⁴. Nigeria's diplomatic history is characterized by numerous proclamations of moral principles and public philosophy that align with the Charters of both the United Nations and the African Union. While these declarations serve as powerful symbols, it is essential to recognize that they sometimes fall short in delivering tangible outcomes. Such official rhetoric often reflects the values and aspirations of policymakers and is also designed to cultivate popular support domestically and internationally for various strategic initiatives. Fundamentally, any nation's foreign policy is built upon two pivotal objectives: safeguarding its independence and security and the proactive pursuit and protection of its economic interests, particularly those of its key stakeholders. Consequently, at any given moment, a nation's foreign policy is defined by a set of strategic goals to advance its national interests. This study aspires to thoughtfully analyze the evolution of foreign policy within President Muhammadu Buhari's civilian administration from 2015 to 2023.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The welfare of Nigerian citizens abroad is a key responsibility of foreign missions, facing challenges such as rising migration, human trafficking, and xenophobia. Nigeria's foreign policy under President Buhari emphasizes economic recovery, security enhancement, and anticorruption measures to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and improve the country's international standing⁵. However, domestic issues like security

concerns, economic fluctuations, and corruption hinder these efforts and impact the nation's safety rankings, deterring potential investors. Operational inefficiencies within foreign missions stem from bureaucratic factors, inexperienced appointments, insufficient funding, and lack of coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, compounded by allegations of corruption⁶. Security challenges, particularly the Boko Haram insurgency and ethnic conflicts, divert focus from foreign policy initiatives. Additionally, President Buhari's perceived personality traits- being slow, rigid, and uncompromising- have also influenced the pace of foreign policy decisions. For instance, Nigeria's delayed response to regional agreements highlights these challenges.

This study fills these critical gaps by offering a theory-informed, evidence-based analysis that explains not only what went wrong during the Buhari era but also why it occurred and the consequences for Nigeria's regional leadership and global standing. It therefore moves the debate beyond lamenting decline to understanding its root causes, internal logic, and policy implications for successive administrations.

1.3 Aim and objectives of the study

The study aims to interrogate the contribution and significance of foreign missions in shaping and implementing Foreign Missions and the Conduct of Nigeria's Foreign Policy under the Buhari

Administration.

Specifically, the study has the following objectives:

1. To investigate the important parts played by Nigeria's foreign missions, embassies, high commissions, and consulates in furthering the nation's foreign policy objectives.
2. To examine the impacts of foreign missions and diplomatic engagements on Nigeria's image and reputation in the international arena during the Buhari administration
3. To identify other ways the foreign missions can improve Nigeria's global image

1.4 Research questions

- i. What were the Primary objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy under the Buhari Administration?
- ii. What is the impact of foreign missions on Nigeria's image and reputation in the international arena during the Buhari administration?
- iii. How can the foreign missions better improve Nigeria's global image?

1.5 Significance of the study

Investigating foreign missions and the Conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy under the Buhari administration (2015-2023) is essential. It offers valuable insights into Nigeria's standing in regional and global contexts, assesses the effectiveness of its diplomatic strategies, and illuminates the broader implications for national development and international relations. This study is significant because it bridges the gap between theory and practice, offering valuable insights for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners. Analyzing the roles of foreign missions and diplomats deepens the understanding of Nigeria's foreign policy and contributes to broader discussions on how African nations can navigate a complex global landscape to achieve development and

influence. The findings could inform reforms aimed at enhancing Nigeria's diplomatic effectiveness, strengthening its regional leadership, and elevating its international standing.

1.6 Scope of the study

The study, *Foreign Missions and the Conduct of Nigeria's Foreign Policy Under the Administration* establishes a clear framework for its research focus and boundaries. This inquiry will primarily examine the contributions of Nigeria's foreign missions and diplomats from 2015 to 2023, with a focus on their pivotal roles in advancing the nation's foreign policy objectives at both the global and regional levels. By focusing on key themes such as representation, economic diplomacy, and regional leadership, this study aims to provide a comprehensive and insightful analysis of the diplomatic efforts and challenges, while ensuring that the scope remains manageable and relevant.

1.7 Limitations of the study

These limitations highlight specific challenges in data collection, managing the study's scope, and considering external variables. The researcher would have preferred to collect firsthand insights from the minister overseeing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Still, it became necessary to use secondary data alongside contributions from esteemed scholars familiar with the topic who would participate in the questionnaire.

1.8 Operational definition of key terms

Foreign mission: refers to a diplomatic or consular representation established by one country in another to conduct official relations, promote national interests, and provide services to its citizens abroad. It includes embassies, high commissions (for Commonwealth countries), consulates, and permanent missions to international organizations. Foreign missions serve as the primary channels for diplomacy.

Nigeria is a West African nation with its sovereignty. It shares borders with Benin to the west, Cameroon to the east, Chad to the northeast, and Niger to the north. Its southern shore is located in the Atlantic Ocean's Gulf of Guinea. 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, which includes the capital city of Abuja, make up the Federal Republic of Nigeria. With hundreds of languages spoken there, including Yoruba, Igbo, Fula, Hausa, Edo, Ibibio, Tiv, and English, Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa. It is frequently referred to as the "Giant of Africa" because of its enormous population, diversity of languages and peoples, oil, and other natural resources.

Foreign Policy: Nigeria's action, reaction, or inaction towards any country in the international system.

Nigeria's Foreign Policy: Nigerian foreign policy is defined by a focus on Africa as a regional power and by attachment to several fundamental principles: African unity and independence; capability to exercise hegemonic influence in the region peaceful settlement of disputes; nonalignment and non-intentional interference in the internal affairs of other nations; and regional economic cooperation and development.

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Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Foreign Policy

This refers to the strategies, decisions, and actions a country undertakes to manage its relations with other nations and international organizations. These policies are crafted and implemented by a country's government to protect its national interests, achieve international goals, and maintain diplomatic, economic, military, and cultural relationships with other states. Foreign policy can be influenced by a range of factors, including national security concerns, economic needs, political ideologies, and global strategic positioning¹. Foreign policy often involves complex decision-making processes and is shaped by a country's leadership, historical experiences, geopolitical location, economic strengths and weaknesses, as well as public opinion.

The primary aim of foreign policy is to safeguard a country's sovereignty and advance its goals while maintaining peaceful and mutually beneficial relations with other countries. A scholar stated that foreign policy is frequently regarded as the foundation of all international interactions. It is usually developed to fulfil the goals of the nation, which in a real sense refers to those interests that are essential to the development of the nation's politics, economy, and sociocultural aspects². Foreign policy serves as a vital tool through which states engage with both other nations and non-state actors in the international system³. It comprises a set of strategic actions aimed at achieving a country's national interests. Nigeria's foreign policy has evolved over the years, shaped by different administrations and leaders, although its outcomes have often fallen short of

expectations. Governance style and the personal approach of national leaders have significantly influenced this evolution⁴. Since independence, Nigeria's foreign policy has undergone various transformations. Under Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa, a non-aligned stance combined with Afro-centric ideals was adopted. However, the Nigerian Civil War during General Yakubu Gowon's tenure (1966–1975) disrupted the country's diplomatic engagement.

A renewed Afro-centric and radical foreign policy was pursued by Generals Murtala Mohammed and Olusegun Obasanjo (1975–1979), focusing on liberating African nations from colonialism and apartheid⁵. During General Ibrahim Babangida's rule (1985–1993), Nigeria shifted towards a pro-Western orientation, embracing the IMF-led Structural Adjustment Programme and prioritizing economic diplomacy. In contrast, General Sani Abacha (1993–1998) adopted an isolationist approach, severely limiting Nigeria's global engagement. This changed under President Olusegun Obasanjo (1999–2007), who reconnected Nigeria with the global community through shuttle diplomacy centered on economic cooperation and development. Foreign policy has been defined as a strategy or set of guiding principles established by a nation's government to shape its interactions with other countries or groups of nations. Thus, a country's foreign policy outlines its stance on various international matters, which can either reflect broad national goals or be a targeted response to specific situations⁶. Similarly, another scholar asserts that foreign policy is embodied in the actions taken by a state's authorities that are intended to influence conditions outside their territorial jurisdiction⁷.

Supporting this view, foreign policy has been descended as a collection of strategies, behaviors, and attitudes a nation develops to manage its relations with other states.

According to the encyclopedia, the formulation of foreign policy is primarily the responsibility of designated government institutions.

Under President Muhammadu Buhari's civilian administration (2015–2019), foreign policy focused on strengthening ties with neighboring states, as well as with global powers such as the United States and China. Earlier, during his tenure as military head of state, Buhari had adopted a more confrontational, radical foreign policy approach toward neighboring countries. Upon returning to power in 2015, President Buhari resumed an active diplomatic role, engaging in extensive international travel and being dubbed the “Jet-Setting President” for spending about a quarter of his first 100 days abroad. His foreign policy aimed to reestablish Nigeria's international presence amid a complex global environment marked by falling oil prices, terrorism, counter-terrorism efforts, nuclear negotiations, and global neoliberal trends⁷.

2.1.2 Nigeria Foreign Missions

Nigeria, recognized as Africa's most populous nation and a prominent economic power, maintains a comprehensive network of foreign missions, which includes embassies, high commissions, and consulates, to advance its national interests on the global stage. These missions serve as a cornerstone of Nigeria's foreign policy, facilitating diplomatic relations, promoting economic growth, protecting citizens abroad, and projecting cultural influence. With over 100 diplomatic missions located across Africa, Europe, Asia, the Americas, and the Middle East, Nigeria's extensive global presence underscores its ambition to be a key player in international affairs. However, these missions encounter significant challenges, including funding shortages, bureaucratic inefficiencies, security risks, and operational constraints⁹. The origins of Nigeria's foreign missions date back to

the country's independence in 1960, when it established its first embassies to assert sovereignty and engage with the international community. Guided by a foreign policy focused on African unity, non-alignment, and economic diplomacy, Nigeria rapidly expanded its diplomatic footprint. Early missions in London, Washington, D.C., and Accra reflected Nigeria's strategic priorities: fostering relationships with global powers, strengthening African solidarity, and promoting economic interests ⁹. Over the decades, Nigeria's leadership in major international organizations, such as the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the United Nations, has relied substantially on its foreign missions, which serve as conduits for diplomacy and influence.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Nigeria's oil-driven economic boom facilitated the expansion of its diplomatic network, resulting in the establishment of missions in key capitals, including Beijing, Moscow, and Brasília¹⁰. These missions were charged with securing trade partnerships, attracting foreign investment, and advocating for Nigeria's interests during the Cold War. Despite economic downturns in subsequent decades, Nigeria has sustained a robust diplomatic presence, reflecting its commitment to global engagement. Foreign missions primarily serve as vehicles for bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, representing Nigeria in host countries and fostering dialogue on issues ranging from trade to security. Missions situated in strategic locations, such as New York (United Nations headquarters), Addis Ababa (African Union headquarters), and Brussels (European Union headquarters), play crucial roles in shaping global and regional policies. For instance, Nigeria's mission to the United Nations has been instrumental in advocating for reforms in global governance, including the proposal for a permanent African seat on the UN Security Council ¹⁰. Similarly, the mission in Addis Ababa

enhances Nigeria's leadership in AU initiatives, including peacekeeping and conflict resolution within the African continent. Furthermore, these missions facilitate Nigeria's engagement in regional organizations, such as ECOWAS, where Nigeria has taken the lead in conflict mediation efforts, particularly in Liberia and Sierra Leone. High commissions in African nations, including Ghana and South Africa, coordinate regional cooperation, thereby ensuring Nigeria's influence extends across West Africa and beyond. Economic diplomacy constitutes a fundamental aspect of Nigeria's foreign missions, given the country's reliance on trade and foreign investment. Missions actively promote Nigeria as a favorable investment destination, particularly within the sectors of oil and gas, agriculture, technology, and manufacturing. For instance, the Nigerian High Commission in London has organized trade summits aimed at attracting British investors, which have led to partnerships in the energy and infrastructure sectors ¹⁰.

Likewise, the embassy in Beijing has facilitated Chinese investments in Nigeria's railway and telecommunications sectors, exemplified by the Lagos Ibadan railway project, which was funded through Chinese loans. Additionally, these missions provide market intelligence to Nigerian businesses, helping them navigate foreign regulations and access global markets¹¹.

The consulate in Johannesburg, for example, supports Nigerian exporters in penetrating South Africa's retail sector. According to the Nigerian Export Promotion Council, non-oil exports, bolstered by targeted mission activities, reached \$4.5 billion in 2023, highlighting their significant economic impact. Protecting Nigerian citizens abroad is a critical function of foreign missions ¹¹. Consulates issue visas, passports, and other travel documents to ensure seamless mobility for Nigerians, and they assist citizens who encounter legal, financial, or humanitarian challenges. During crises, missions have

played a pivotal role in evacuating Nigerians from conflict zones, such as during the xenophobic attacks in South Africa in 2019 or the Russia-Ukraine conflict in 2022, when over 2,000 Nigerians were safely repatriated. Missions also engage with Nigeria's diaspora, currently estimated at 17 million individuals worldwide, to harness their skills and remittances ¹¹. In 2024, the World Bank reported that diaspora remittances contributed \$20 billion to Nigeria's economy, underscoring their vital role as a key economic lifeline. The Nigerian Embassy in Washington, D.C., for example, collaborates with diaspora organizations, such as Nigerians in Diaspora, to promote engagement and support for Nigeria's development objectives⁹.

2.1.3 Nigeria Federalism

Federalism has been frequently explored and analyzed through various theoretical lenses. These theory-driven approaches often focus on the psychological aspects and interpersonal dynamics that shape personality and relationships, emphasizing the diversity among and within individuals.

From the standpoint of psychological theorists, federalism is influenced by the behaviors, motivations, and interactions of individuals and groups involved in the federal system. In Nigeria's context, this has led to tensions and contradictions, as numerous ethnic, regional, religious, and political identities interact under the framework of federalism¹². This perspective aligns with human anthropology theories, particularly those grounded in covenantal theory, which view social and political relationships as originating from binding agreements or covenants. Since federalism was introduced in Nigeria, citizens have primarily adhered to these covenant-like arrangements, mainly within the confines of their local political, geographic, and social realities¹².

When viewed through the combined lenses of psychology and human anthropology, Nigerian federalism can be better understood as a system profoundly shaped by regional loyalties and competing local interests. These local forces often define people's level of commitment or resistance to federal principles. Additionally, both geographical divisions and political dynamics play crucial roles in influencing how federalism operates in Nigeria. The country's diverse and heterogeneous nature makes it a fitting example of how power and authority are distributed in complex federal systems governed by interpersonal and group dynamics. This remains true despite the ongoing agreements and disagreements surrounding Nigerian federalism, which are often influenced by geopolitical factors, relationships, and the distribution of power and resources ⁹. Federalism is a prominent system of governance and a widely discussed concept in both academic and political spheres, drawing significant, though varying, attention from scholars, social scientists, and political actors. It is generally recognized as a flexible and evolving system of government, shaped by diverse interpretations, perceptions, and methods of application. The understanding and implementation of federalism are influenced by a society's unique sociocultural composition and shaped by numerous factors, including geography, historical experience, ideological outlook, level of development, and other contextual elements. A scholar defines federalism as a system of governance that allocates powers between general and regional governments, ensuring both operate independently within their respective domains¹³.

Similarly, it is a constitutional arrangement in which political authority is divided so that both central and regional governments have exclusive responsibilities and final decision-making powers over them. Some scholars characterize federalism as a system where power is constitutionally divided between national and sub-national entities, each

possessing autonomous authority, electing their leaders, and generating revenue through taxation to provide public services. Crucially, the authority of both levels of government is safeguarded by a constitution that requires the consent of both national and regional entities for any amendment.

Additionally, the Business Council of Australia emphasizes that federalism serves as a constitutional framework that distributes governmental powers and grants autonomy to various units of government within a state¹⁴.

Colonialism, independence, federalism, and Nigeria's vast diversity, encompassing geography, religion, ethnicity, and cultural backgrounds, along with the significant influence of the military, have all played crucial roles in shaping the Nigerian state. Before British colonization, the various ethnic and religious communities around the Niger River operated independently. It was not until the 1914 amalgamation that these previously autonomous groups were brought together under British colonial rule. As Lord Lugard indicated, the primary motivation for merging the northern and southern regions was to serve British imperial economic interests. A scholar explains that the British not only established the national borders and political structures of present-day Nigeria but also restructured the economy to focus on the extraction and export of agricultural and mineral resources. This was accomplished through a system of "indirect rule," where local leaders appeared to retain authority but were ultimately controlled by the colonial administration.

Reflecting on these colonial policies, Northern Nigerian leader Ahmadu Bello expressed the region's early resistance to the amalgamation, stating that there were strong calls for secession and self-determination, with sentiments suggesting that the North should separate from the South. Today, Nigeria is Africa's most populous country, with over 193 million people, making it the continent's most demographically diverse nation ¹¹. At the end of colonial rule, federalism emerged as the only viable structure to manage the country's profound ethnic, religious, and regional divisions. Scholars argue that federalism serves as the best mechanism to mitigate the tensions arising from Nigeria's social complexity¹⁵.

Aside from brief periods of military rule, notably under General Ironsi, who briefly imposed a unitary system, Nigeria has generally maintained a federal structure in the post-independence era. From its inception, the Nigerian state has been shaped by various factors, including intense competition among ethnic based political parties, religious divisions between Islam and Christianity, and contentious debates over the allocation of national revenue, particularly concerning oil. Before the discovery and commercial exploitation of oil, Nigeria's economy was driven by the export of agricultural products, including groundnuts, cocoa, rubber, and cotton¹⁶. Nigeria gained independence on October 1, 1960, under the Constitution of Nigeria Order in Council No. 1652 and Legal Notice No. 159 of the same year. The federal system remained in place until January 1966, when the first military coup, led by the "Five Majors," toppled the democratic government of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. Between 1954 and 1963, Nigeria operated as a federation with three regions, increasing to four upon its transition to a republic in 1963. Each region had its diplomatic missions, constitutions (in addition to the national

constitution), flags, anthems, revenue systems, civil services, police forces, and bicameral legislatures.

2.1.4 Nigeria's Federalism and Her Foreign Policy

Nigeria's federal system was established to effectively manage the country's diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural landscape. Comprising 36 states and a Federal Capital Territory, the nation operates under a multi-tiered governance structure that delineates power between the federal government and subnational entities. As articulated in the 1999 Constitution (as amended), the respective powers of federal and state governments are categorized into exclusive, concurrent, and residual powers. Notably, foreign policy remains under the exclusive purview of the federal government, as specified in Section 12 of the Constitution, which designates the federal government as the authority in matters concerning international treaties and external relations. This centralized authority over foreign policy is strategically designed to ensure coherence and unity in Nigeria's global engagements¹³. Nevertheless, the federal structure introduces complexities, as individual states often possess interests that intersect with foreign policy, particularly in areas such as trade, investment, and regional security. The diversity of Nigeria's federating units, encompassing over 250 ethnic groups and varied regional interests, creates a dynamic domestic environment that significantly influences the nation's foreign policy priorities¹³.

Leadership in Nigeria's foreign policy is primarily vested in the federal government through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the President serving as the principal architect of such policy. Historically rooted in African centrism, Nigeria's foreign policy objectives emphasize the promotion of African unity, fostering economic cooperation,

and enhancing Nigeria's leadership role on the continent. Guiding principles, including non-interference, respect for sovereignty, and peaceful coexistence, shape Nigeria's external relations, as evidenced by its active participation in regional organizations such as the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) ¹³. The federal structure of Nigeria also introduces domestic pressures that influence the formulation of foreign policy. Although states lack constitutional authority in foreign affairs, they exert indirect influence through their economic and political significance. For example, resource-rich states such as Rivers and Delta, which play pivotal roles in Nigeria's oil-driven economy, shape foreign policy indirectly through their economic power. Given that oil serves as Nigeria's primary export, it stands as a cornerstone of the country's international relations, particularly with key partners such as the United States, China, and India. Hence, the federal government must balance the interests of these states with national objectives, particularly in negotiations concerning oil contracts and international investments ¹⁶.

Moreover, the influence of ethnic and regional interests frequently affects debates surrounding foreign policy. For instance, northern states, with their historical connections to the Islamic world, may advocate for strengthening relations with countries such as Saudi Arabia or Turkey. In contrast, southern states may prioritize establishing economic partnerships with Western nations. This diversity necessitates a careful balancing act by the federal government to ensure that foreign policy reflects comprehensive national interests rather than sectional considerations. Nigeria's federal structure both bolsters and limits its role as a regional leader. The country's active participation in ECOWAS, particularly in peacekeeping and conflict resolution efforts in

nations such as Liberia and Sierra Leone, underscores its commitment to regional stability ¹⁶. However, internal issues such as ethnic tensions and disputes over resource allocation can hinder Nigeria's ability to exert its influence effectively. For instance, the ongoing security challenges posed by the Boko Haram insurgency and separatist movements in the southeast often distract resources and focus from foreign policy goals. The federal system also opens doors for subnational diplomacy, commonly known as "paradiplomacy." States like Lagos, with its economic strength and status as a global city, engage in semi-foreign policy activities, such as attracting foreign investments and fostering trade relations ¹¹. Partnerships between Lagos State and international organizations and investors highlight how regional entities can complement federal foreign policy initiatives. However, this situation raises concerns about coordination, as unaligned state actions may undermine national objectives. A key challenge of Nigeria's federalism in foreign policy is the ongoing tug-of-war between centralization and decentralization. While the federal government retains constitutional authority, states are increasingly seeking greater involvement in matters that affect them, such as trade agreements and cross-border security. For example, border states like Borno and Sokoto, adjacent to Niger and Cameroon, have a significant interest in regional security policies but often lack formal channels to influence them ¹¹.

Resource control presents another challenge. The federal government's monopoly over oil revenue, crucial to Nigeria's foreign policy, has sparked agitation from states that produce resources. These tensions can seep into foreign policy, particularly when states feel that international agreements do not adequately account for their interests. The

militancy in the Niger Delta during the 2000s, for instance, disrupted oil production, damaging Nigeria's reputation as a reliable partner in global energy markets¹⁵.

Furthermore, Nigeria's federal system complicates its response to global issues such as climate change and migration. While the federal government negotiates international climate agreements, implementation largely falls to states, which often bear the brunt of environmental challenges. The disconnect between federal and state governments usually leads to fragmented responses, diluting Nigeria's effectiveness on the global stage regarding these matters. Despite these hurdles, Nigeria's federalism also presents opportunities to enhance its foreign policy. The country's diverse federating units can be a strategic asset for forging international partnerships. Nigeria's rich cultural diversity positions it uniquely as a bridge between Africa and the broader global community, enhancing its cultural diplomacy ¹⁵. Events such as the Argungu Fishing Festival in Kebbi State and the Calabar Carnival in Cross River State draw international tourists, contributing to Nigeria's soft power. Moreover, delegating specific responsibilities to states, such as managing foreign investment projects, could enhance efficiency.

States with robust economic foundations, such as Lagos and Kano, can act as hubs for foreign direct investment, lightening the load on the federal government ¹⁵. A more collaborative approach, wherein states engage in discussions on foreign policy issues that affect them, could also promote national unity and coherence in external relations. In the realm of global affairs, Nigeria's federalism shapes its relationships with major powers and international organizations. The country's oil wealth and strategic location make it a key player in discussions surrounding global energy and security. However, domestic challenges stemming from federalism, like corruption and governance

inefficiencies, can undermine Nigeria's credibility. For instance, bureaucratic delays in implementing international agreements or clashes between state and federal interests can weaken Nigeria's standing in global negotiations. Nigeria's leadership within African institutions further reflects its federal character ¹⁸. The country's ability to mediate conflicts and encourage regional integration stems from its experiences in managing internal diversity. However, to maintain this leadership role, Nigeria must tackle domestic challenges, such as economic inequality and political instability, which are worsened by its federal structure.

2.1.5 Historical Development of Nigerian Foreign Policy

The evolution of Nigeria's foreign policy has closely reflected the country's political transitions, regional ambitions, economic needs, and global engagements. Since independence in 1960, Nigeria's foreign policy has undergone significant changes, shaped by both domestic and international factors. At independence, Nigeria adopted a foreign policy rooted in non-alignment,

Pan-Africanism, and peaceful coexistence, and a thorough examination of the historical roots of Nigeria's foreign policy must begin with an understanding of the formation of the geopolitical entity now known as Nigeria. Before colonization, the region was inhabited by various ethnically distinct kingdoms and tribal societies, many of these groups functioned as independent and self-governing political units before their unification¹⁷. However, on January 1, 1914, British colonial administrator Lord Lugard merged the Northern Protectorate with the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, laying the foundation for the modern Nigerian state. Building on the previous context, the geopolitical entity known as Nigeria was formally established in 1914. However, it

did not emerge as a sovereign nation at that time but rather as a British colony. This development was a result of the 1885 Berlin Conference, where European powers divided Africa among themselves. Therefore, Nigeria was governed and shaped by British colonial rule until it achieved political independence in 1960. Between 1914 and 1960, Nigeria experienced a series of colonial administrations under varying constitutional frameworks. By 1954, it had become evident that Nigeria was on the path to independence. The 1954 Constitution effectively marked the conclusion of nationalist efforts against British rule.

Unsurprisingly, the following year was relatively calm, with Nigerian ministers assuming control of government departments and gradually learning the operations and responsibilities of their new roles. Under this arrangement, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa assumed the role of Nigeria's first Prime Minister. Before official independence, he delivered his initial foreign policy address on August 20, 1960, in the Federal House of Representatives. Although Nigeria's foreign policy formally began on October 1, 1960, coinciding with the country's independence, this early speech served as a foundational policy declaration. It was described as brief but firmly articulated, outlining the key principles that would guide Nigeria's international relations. A central tenet of Balewa's foreign policy was a commitment to maintaining an independent stance, one rooted in Nigeria's national interests and aligned with the democratic and moral values embedded in the constitution¹⁸. Just six days after gaining independence, Prime Minister Balewa elaborated further on these foreign policy goals and principles during Nigeria's admission into the United Nations as its 99th member. At the time, the government responsible was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth Relations. Between

October 1960 and July 1961, Balewa personally managed the external affairs portfolio, likely to ensure Nigeria remained closely linked to the British Commonwealth. In July 1961, Jaja Wachukwu was appointed as Nigeria's first official Minister of External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations ⁹. Balewa handled it himself for the first nine months (Oct 1960–Jul 1961), then handed it over to a dedicated minister (Jaja Wachukwu) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which continued running Nigeria's foreign relations for the next 54 years 1961–2015.

2.1.6 Nigeria's foreign mission under President Muhammad Buhari

Under President Muhammadu Buhari, Nigeria's foreign mission experienced a redefinition of priorities with a focus on economic diplomacy, regional security, and anti-corruption efforts. His administration aimed to rebuild Nigeria's international image, strengthen bilateral and multilateral partnerships, and reposition the country as a leader in African diplomacy. Over the years, Nigeria's external relations and foreign policy have encountered numerous challenges. Despite the country's vast resources and immense potential, it has struggled to consistently develop and implement a foreign policy that reflects the expectations typically associated with a nation of its stature and endowments. Nation-states across the globe develop and implement foreign policies to shape their external missions and safeguard their core national interests. These interests often encompass the protection of territorial integrity and the advancement of economic, military, strategic, and diplomatic goals, along with any other priorities a country deems vital. Nigeria, like many other African nations, began crafting its foreign policy framework in 1960 following its independence from Britain. This step was essential, as

foreign policy is widely regarded as a key expression of sovereignty, enabling a country to join international organizations and benefit from global engagement. Since gaining independence, the overarching objective of Nigeria's foreign policy has remained consistent: to defend and promote the nation's interests. However, the approach to achieving this goal has varied across different administrations. For example, former President Olusegun Obasanjo employed "shuttle diplomacy," frequent international travel, to repair and enhance Nigeria's global image. In contrast, the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua adopted "citizen diplomacy" as the cornerstone of his foreign policy. Citizen diplomacy involves ordinary citizens interacting with representatives of other countries, either deliberately or informally. This approach, sometimes known as "Track Two Diplomacy," refers to unofficial interactions between people of different nations, as opposed to formal government-to-government relations. Under Yar'Adua's leadership, citizen diplomacy emphasized prioritizing the welfare and interests of Nigerian citizens both within the country and abroad as a central element of foreign policy. President Goodluck Jonathan, who succeeded the late President Yar'Adua, continued his predecessor's approach and, following his re-election in 2011, introduced a strategy focused on attracting investment. During his tenure, Nigeria's foreign policy shifted toward promoting economic cooperation and investment partnerships with the international community. He tasked the Presidential Advisory Council on International Relations (PACIR) with overseeing the transformation of Nigeria's foreign policy into one that prioritized investment. In addition to engaging with Nigerians in the diaspora during his foreign visits, President Jonathan encouraged the nation's foreign missions experts, experienced diplomats, professionals, and scholars to devise a forward-looking strategy that still respected Nigeria's diplomatic legacy. His administration's foreign

policy emphasized several key areas: strengthening collaboration with international military forces to foster global peace, enhancing bilateral and multilateral trade relations, supporting global efforts to address health challenges, and safeguarding the rights and dignity of Nigerians abroad in all situations²⁴.

2.1.7 Foreign Policy under President Muhammadu Buhari

The findings indicate that President Buhari's foreign policy is predominantly Afro-centric rather than globally focused, as Nigeria prioritized Africa as the core of its foreign policy, particularly by promoting economic integration within the framework of ECOWAS. While campaigning for the presidency, Muhammadu Buhari pledged to directly address three major challenges: insecurity (including the Boko Haram insurgency and banditry), corruption, and economic underdevelopment. Before his election, Boko Haram had seized significant portions of Nigerian territory and proclaimed an Islamic state within the northern nation's borders. Beyond Nigeria's borders, Boko Haram's activities have taken on a transnational character, extending into neighboring countries. The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), established to combat the insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin, has had moderate success in curbing Boko Haram's operations within Nigeria. However, as member countries of the MNJTF began to launch coordinated offensives against the group, Boko Haram retaliated by targeting these neighboring states for supporting Nigeria, thereby expanding the conflict to a broader international scale²⁵. Subsequently, the group overran the MNJTF's base in Baga, Borno State, and proceeded to carry out one of its most devastating attacks. Boko Haram committed one of the gravest atrocities against humanity by massacring residents

in the town of Baga and subsequently taking control of the local economy. Shortly after assuming office, on June 3, 2015.

President Muhammadu Buhari embarked on his first official foreign visit to the Niger Republic. This visit was part of an Anti-Boko Haram summit, which also included the Cameroonian president and focused on enhancing regional collaboration in combating the terrorist group. President Buhari reiterated Nigeria's dedication to the fight against Boko Haram, emphasizing the group's persistent threat to regional peace and security.

During the summit, it was agreed that the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) headquarters would be relocated from Nigeria to N'Djamena, Chad, and a Nigerian officer would be appointed to command the force. Following this, Buhari visited Chad on June 4, 2017, and held a bilateral meeting with Cameroon's President Paul Biya. Although Benin Republic had not been directly impacted by Boko Haram, President Buhari also visited the country. In response, Benin's President Boni Yayi pledged military support for the MNJTF²⁶. Buhari's strategic diplomatic engagement with neighboring West African nations significantly limited Boko Haram's ability to carry out attacks in Nigeria and escape into nearby countries for refuge. These strengthened diplomatic ties within the ECOWAS region played a key role in curtailing the group's operations. President Buhari prioritized Nigeria's national interest by fostering strong relationships with surrounding countries²⁷. Consequently, under his leadership, Nigeria's foreign policy in counterinsurgency saw notable improvements, confining Boko Haram's activities primarily to the Lake Chad Basin, a marked change from earlier times when their attacks had even reached Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory.

2.1.7 Insurgency and Nigeria's Foreign Relations

Insurgency poses a multifaceted challenge that affects individuals and governments worldwide. Its repercussions, especially when viewed through the lens of major historical events such as World War II, underscore the need for a nuanced understanding of its underlying dynamics. The term "insurgency" can be perceived differently by various stakeholders, reflecting the diverse perspectives on conflict and governance ³². At its essence, an insurgency comprises movements that operate outside a society's established legal frameworks. While the term might convey a sense of neutrality, the context in which it is applied is of great importance. For those in positions of authority, an insurgency may be seen as a challenge to their legitimacy; conversely, insurgents often regard their actions as legitimate and necessary for the pursuit of justice. Recognizing the political motivations that drive insurgencies is crucial for fostering dialogue and promoting conflict resolution.

In contrast, the label "brigands" generally refers to actions motivated more by personal interests than by political objectives. In contexts where resistance is minimal, particularly towards the conclusion of an armed conflict, individuals may be classified as brigands. By fostering an understanding of these distinctions, we can encourage more constructive discussions and develop solutions to the complexities presented by insurgency and resistance movements. Insurgency represents a significant challenge to societies and has tragically resulted in the loss of many lives. A poignant example of this is the attack in Sri Lanka in April 2019, which led to the unfortunate deaths of over 300 individuals. In Nigeria, insurgency has resulted in the displacement of many people. For

example, the conflict has displaced approximately 2.4 million individuals and put more than seven million at risk of starvation³².

Additionally, the insurgency has caused significant destruction of property and infrastructure, including the closure or destruction of over half of the region's schools and a near-complete breakdown of an already fragile public health system³⁵. However, the effects of insurgency are not limited to the people of a state; they transcend national boundaries and thus affect the external relations of the State from which the insurgents operate. Hence, the effect of insurgency on foreign relations cannot be underestimated. Acts of domestic insecurity and threats from insurgencies have significantly impacted foreign relations. Foreign relations are a crucial aspect of interactions among actors in the international system. The concept of foreign relations can be briefly described as the collaboration with foreign countries in the pursuit of a country's national interests. The foreign relations of the Nigerian State have continued to evolve under various governments and leaders. This is usually influenced by the type of government and, to a great extent, the personality of the country's leader³⁶. Since October 1, 1960, Nigeria has experienced governance under various regimes, ranging from civilian to military leadership.

Each of these administrations has demonstrated an interest in the country's external relations, often prioritizing foreign affairs in their initial speeches³³. It is important to note that as both domestic and international contexts evolve, each administration has sought to adapt to the prevailing global circumstances. Since gaining independence, specific imperatives have influenced the formulation and execution of Nigeria's foreign policy. Implementation of policies may vary depending on the circumstances and leadership style. However, the fundamental objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy have

consistently revolved around principles that the nation firmly upholds in its international relations. Insurgency and Foreign relations are two broad concepts; however, the former greatly influences the latter in diverse ways. Insurgency, as discussed earlier, poses threats to both lives and property, and the destruction of infrastructure³³. In Nigeria, acts of insurgency have, in contemporary times, become a regular occurrence. This has, over time, significantly impacted the country in diverse ways, including damaging its national image abroad. The causes of insurgencies in Nigeria are religious extremism, perceived oppression, and nationalist, separatist, or ethnic considerations that have no doubt significantly impacted the foreign relations of Nigeria. While several groups have perpetrated acts of insurgency, the most prominent activities of insurgency in Nigeria are linked to the Boko Haram sect, known as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad in Arabic, which translates to "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad"³⁷. Boko Haram is based in the northeastern region of Nigeria, primarily in areas inhabited by the Kanuri people. The name "Boko Haram" is loosely translated from the local Hausa language as "Western education or civilization is forbidden," meaning that they consider Western education or civilization to be sinful. The Nigerian Islamic sect known as Boko Haram is believed to have started in 1995 under the name "Sahaba," and Abubakar Lawan led it³⁸. Boko Haram first gained widespread attention in late December 2003 when it launched attacks against police stations and other public buildings. After the deaths of eighteen Boko Haram members, the group retreated to a remote base near the Niger border to regroup. During this time, their membership grew as motivated students withdrew from schools to engage in Koranic instruction. By mid-2004, Boko Haram began attacking police stations throughout Northern Nigeria to steal arms and ammunition. These assaults continued,

consistently provoking police reprisals that included raids and arrests aimed at recovering the stolen weapons³⁹.

In 2009, Boko Haram members were outraged by the Bauchi State government's refusal to permit them to preach and recruit publicly. Their anger intensified in response to perceived police brutality while enforcing a motorbike helmet law, leading to a violent reaction that sparked five days of fighting and rioting in four states. Over 700 people died during this unrest, and numerous buildings were destroyed⁴⁰. The uprising was eventually subdued through a joint operation by the police and military, known as Operation Flush. This operation culminated in the bombardment of Muhammad Yusuf's house, and after a two-day standoff, Yusuf was arrested. While in police custody, he was filmed pleading for his life and was later killed. Though the Nigerian Police claimed he died while attempting to escape, investigations revealed that he was executed extrajudicially by police officers. The death of Muhammad Yusuf led to a significant escalation in Boko Haram's terrorist activities. His killing also caused fractures within the group, resulting in the emergence of new factions. By November 2011, reports indicated that Boko Haram had splintered into three factions: a hardline ideological sect led by Abubakar Shekau, a close associate of Yusuf; a second faction focused on political change in Northern Nigeria; and a third faction that exploited the Boko Haram brand to further its criminal enterprises. The insurgents' activities include kidnappings, bombings, and attacks on soft targets, utilizing both conventional and unconventional weapons. This insurgency has a profound impact on its victims and significantly affects Nigeria's foreign relations ⁴⁰.

By mid-2004, Boko Haram began attacking police stations throughout Northern Nigeria to steal arms and ammunition. These assaults continued, consistently provoking police

retaliation that included raids and arrests aimed at recovering the stolen weapons. Each of these attacks led to further police reprisals, which involved raids and arrests aimed at recovering the stolen property. The activities of the Boko Haram sect continued unabated despite the emergence of the new President, Muhammadu Buhari. Former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo stated that Boko Haram insurgents have become stronger than ever. In a lengthy statement, Obasanjo, a retired military general, accused President Buhari of failing in all aspects of governance and of attempting to rig the upcoming election ⁴⁰.

Obasanjo expressed concern over Buhari's alleged desperation to remain in power, despite his mental and physical incapacitation, drawing parallels to the era of the former military dictator, Sani Abacha. He urged Nigerians to resist any attempts to manipulate the electoral process. He encouraged the electorate to make effective use of their Permanent Voter Cards to vote out the incumbent administration, which has failed to address the country's security issues. The security situation has deteriorated, with kidnappings occurring everywhere, and Boko Haram is more active than ever. Nobody should deceive Nigerians about this." He warned that if Nigerians do not take decisive action by voting President Buhari out in the upcoming general election, Boko Haram and its affiliate, the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP), could gain control over the entire West African region, jeopardizing safety for all. Obasanjo noted, "With the alliance between Boko Haram and ISWAP, Boko Haram is militarily stronger today than it has ever been ⁴⁰." He further claimed, "The Nigerian government has empowered Boko Haram by paying millions in ransom, a fact that each administration consistently denies." President Muhammadu Buhari, who came to power through a popular vote, had promised to end the Boko Haram insurgency within six months of taking office ⁴⁰.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Putnam's Two-Level Game Theory

Robert David Putnam's Two-Level Games framework is one of the most profound efforts to unravel the intricate ties between domestic and international politics, especially within the realms of international negotiations, bargaining, and the nuanced art of double-edged diplomacy. As Vogel points out, Putnam views his model more as a metaphor and an evocative lens through which we can examine the complexities of global interactions rather than a strict theoretical construct¹⁹. Scholars are actively building on this innovative framework to explore how domestic political structures influence foreign policy outcomes. For instance,²⁰ argues that states with decentralized political institutions face significantly more obstacles in forging international agreements, as they must contend with the burdens of internal dissent. Similarly, a scholar posits that democratic states, while rooted in popular sovereignty, are often hampered by stronger domestic constraints that complicate their ability to secure international commitments²¹. Adding depth to this discourse, the concept of "nested games," wherein multiple domestic and international negotiations unfold simultaneously, creates a complex tapestry of interests and outcomes. A scholar further enriches this understanding by arguing that public opinion and the lobbying efforts of interest groups play pivotal roles in shaping trade policy decisions, underscoring the domestic constraints integral to Putnam's theory²².

The essence of two-level game theory lies in examining how domestic preferences, coalitions, and the dynamics of political institutions interact to influence foreign policy, suggesting that a thorough analysis of a state's domestic constituents can yield valuable insights into how these influences shape international decision-making. Domestic influences act as a constraining force on the array of acceptable foreign policy options,

underscoring the principle that a state can determine viable foreign policy avenues only by first navigating its domestic challenges. The significance of Putnam's theory is clear: it emphasizes the need to consider domestic issues to effectively set the stage for foreign policy options. He envisioned diplomatic negotiations as a two-level game where national and international politics seamlessly intertwine. This interaction is strikingly evident; a leader who disregards domestic pressures or prioritizes internal politics over pressing international concerns risks the effectiveness of their foreign policy endeavors. At both bilateral and multilateral levels, government officials partake in these simultaneous "two-level games," constantly balancing the demands of domestic constituencies with the expectations of international partners²³. The crux of the two-level game lies in the interplay between domestic interest groups and foreign policy, examining how these groups influence a nation's international relationships while also considering the impact of various global interests on the domestic landscape. The international arena is a labyrinth of complexities, where each participant brings a unique set of interests that they fervently seek to realize and protect, filled with their aspirations and expectations. These interests, profoundly shaped by domestic sentiments and influenced by local political institutions, can lead to alignments or conflicts, resulting in either cooperation or competition. In navigating this intricate balance, it is critical to uphold domestic interests while simultaneously recognizing and accommodating the ambitions of other international actors.

Central to this two-level game model is the concept of "win-sets." Win-sets represent the viable outcomes that domestic interest groups find acceptable; these outcomes must gain their endorsement for an agreement to be ratified. To formulate a win-set, a chief negotiator must engage in dialogues and foster collaborations with influential domestic

authorities, securing their backing and building coalitions. Each international negotiator faces their own distinct domestic win sets, and only when these win sets overlap can a mutually agreeable resolution be achieved. This convergence signifies that all parties in the negotiation process must ultimately accept the proposed outcomes, considering the impact on their domestic constituencies²³. Thus, every negotiation strives to appease international adversaries while mitigating any adverse repercussions back home. At the national level, designated as Level II by Putnam, various intrastate groups relentlessly pursue their interests, exerting pressure on the government to adopt favorable policies. Robert Putnam's examines international negotiations on two levels: Level I involves diplomats negotiating agreements, while Level II requires domestic ratification and implementation of these agreements. This framework is applied to Nigeria's foreign policy under President Muhammadu Buhari (2015-2023), highlighting the tension between domestic priorities, security, economic revitalization, anti-corruption, and international relations. Key points include: Nigeria's negotiations with the U.S. for military assistance led to a \$600 million aid package; however, human rights issues narrowed the win-set and restricted arms sales. Buhari sought infrastructure investments, securing \$5 billion in loans amid a recession, but domestic concerns over debt limited negotiation options. The 2019-2020 ECOWAS border closure aimed to address smuggling and support local agriculture, receiving domestic approval, yet it strained relations with neighboring countries and weakened Nigeria's regional influence. Overall, the theory illustrates the constraints on Buhari's foreign policy, characterized by narrow win sets shaped by pressing domestic crises.

2.2.2 Neo-realism

Neo-Realism, or structural realism, posits that in an anarchic international system, states act as rational unitary actors prioritizing survival through power maximization and self-help⁷⁹. It emphasizes systemic constraints over domestic factors, where states balance threats and pursue national interests amid power distributions. This framework illuminates Nigeria's foreign policy under President Muhammadu Buhari, who assumed office in 2015 amid economic recession, insecurity, and regional instability. Buhari's administration reframed Nigeria's external engagements to reflect Neo-Realist tenets, focusing on security enhancement, economic self-reliance, and regional hegemony to safeguard sovereignty in a multipolar world. Neo-Realism, or structural realism, argues that in a chaotic international system, countries act as rational entities focused on survival by increasing their power and relying on themselves. It highlights the importance of global factors over internal ones, where countries respond to threats and pursue their interests based on the distribution of power. This idea helps us understand Nigeria's foreign policy under President Muhammadu Buhari, who took office in 2015 during a time of economic struggles, security challenges, and regional instability. Buhari's government aligned Nigeria's international relations with Neo-Realist ideas, concentrating on improving security, achieving financial independence, and asserting regional power to protect its sovereignty in a world with multiple powerful nations. A key Neo-Realist idea is that countries seek security in a self-reliant system. Buhari's foreign policy put a strong focus on counter-terrorism, especially against Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa.

Nigeria strengthened military partnerships with the US, UK, and France for support and weapons, including a \$593 million deal with the US for Super Tucano aircraft in 2017. This follows the balance-of-power principle of Neo-Realism, in which Nigeria sought outside help to manage its internal issues while maintaining control. In the region, Nigeria took the lead in ECOWAS interventions, such as the one in Gambia's 2017 political crisis, to act as a stabilizing force and prevent threats from spreading, underscoring its role in maintaining stability. Economically, Buhari's government sought to diversify beyond oil. It attracted investments from China through the Belt and Road Initiative, getting \$5.3 billion in loans for infrastructure projects like railways. At the same time, Nigeria balanced its ties with Western nations to avoid excessive dependence. This careful approach showcases Neo-Realism's focus on relative gains, where countries navigate competition among major powers. Buhari's "shuttle diplomacy" included over 40 trips abroad in his first term. He focused on anti-corruption agreements and on recovering stolen assets, such as the \$321 million recovered from Switzerland in 2018, to strengthen domestic stability as a basis for international influence. In Africa, Nigeria under Buhari worked to enhance its influence through the African Union (AU) and ECOWAS. It supported the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in 2019 after some initial reluctance to boost its economic influence. However, policies like the 2019 border closure aimed at stopping smuggling prioritized national interests over regional cooperation. This move faced criticism for being isolating but aligned with Neo-Realism's focus on self-reliance, especially given the country's porous borders and rising security concerns. By leveraging its large population, Nigeria used its soft power to shape AU decisions on migration and youth policies.

Neo-realism, a pivotal framework in international relations, draws significant insights from the work of Berridge⁷⁹. He posits that the global system, often perceived as the third image of the political landscape, is intrinsically fraught with conflict and characterized by anarchy. This chaotic environment forms the foundational unit of analysis necessary for deciphering the behaviors of states operating within it. Within this turbulent arena, the state emerges as a fundamental "black box," where domestic elements, such as the influence of individual and social actors, play critical roles in shaping foreign policy outcomes. The architecture of the international landscape has a significant impact on all decisions related to foreign policy and the distribution of capabilities among states⁸⁰. Echoing the sentiments of classical realists, the roots of war and conflict among states are often traced back to human nature. However, Waltz contended that the origins of such strife reside more profoundly within the structures of the state system itself rather than within humanity itself⁸¹. Supporting this notion, identified three core assumptions that govern state behavior on a systemic level: first, that states are the primary actors and act as coherent entities within the anarchic framework; second, that the use of force remains a viable and potent strategy in foreign policy; and third, the paramount importance of military security overshadows the "low politics" of socio-economic relations among states⁸¹. From this vantage point, Waltz highlighted that the dynamics of force and violence are defining characteristics of interstate relations at the systemic level. Political leaders consistently depend on the strategic application of military power to advance their national interests, and it is this persistent invocation of force and intimidation that distinguishes the systemic environment from the inner workings of national governance.

The absence of a supreme authority or governing body to regulate the actions of states typically gives rise to an anarchic state of affairs. In this scenario, the state, acting as both participant and adjudicator, inevitably resorts to the use of violence or the mere threat of aggression to enforce its policies ⁶⁷. This often spirals into a security dilemma, where states are driven to make preemptive moves in response to perceived threats. When examining Nigerian foreign policy through this lens, one can observe a striking manifestation of neo-realist principles in action. The intervention by Nigerian-led AU/ECOMOG forces in Côte d'Ivoire in 2010 to restore Alassane Ouattara serves as a vivid illustration of Machiavelli's doctrine. In a world dominated by fear and self-interest, safeguarding state security may necessitate the abandonment of treaties when survival is at stake⁸². Machiavelli argued that the external political sphere is teeming with adversaries capable of undermining a state's freedoms, and the foreign policy strategies employed to confront these external threats invariably carry significant ramifications for domestic politics. In this turbulent context, he asserted that "the best external posture for a state to adopt is to make itself sufficiently strong to deter any predatory attack but not so strong as to provoke a preemptive one" ⁶⁵. The "community" referenced in this analysis can be identified within the frameworks of ECOWAS and the AU, which serve as vital conduits for Nigeria's foreign policy aspirations. In recapitulating the realist perspective, it becomes evident that three defining features shape state behavior within the international arena: the predominance of states as actors in an anarchic world, the practical utility of force in foreign policy, and the supremacy of military statecraft over socio-economic interactions among states. With military might as a key tool, Nigeria, supported by regional allies, intervened when its national interests were in jeopardy⁶⁵.

A similar pattern emerged during the Gambian political crisis when Nigeria, in conjunction with ECOMOG and the African Union (AU), employed military force to restore constitutional order after Yahya Jammeh refused to concede to opposition candidate Adama Barrow, the legitimate winner of the presidential election. Ultimately, neo-realism effectively encapsulates Nigeria's foreign policy behavior, highlighting its military capabilities as strategic instruments of statecraft employed to pursue stability, security, and democratic values within the Commonwealth and the United Nations, especially following the country's return to democratic governance in 1999⁸².

2.3 Review of Empirical Studies

2.3.1 National Interest

Under President Muhammadu Buhari, Nigeria's national interest was primarily shaped by three central pillars: national security, economic revitalization, and anti-corruption. These elements guided both his domestic policies and foreign relations throughout his administration from 2015 to 2023. The Buhari administration maintained that the protection and advancement of Nigeria's national interest were crucial for its development, global image, and regional influence. The protection and advancement of national interests serve as the primary objective of every sovereign state's foreign policy. National interest forms both the basis and the aim of a country's foreign policy. It is employed to define and clarify the actions and goals of a state in its external relations. The concept of national interest is also utilized to trace, evaluate, or measure the effectiveness of a nation's foreign policy ²⁷. It can serve as a rationale for endorsing, opposing, or recommending specific policy directions. Fundamentally, it involves

identifying what best serves the state's interests, particularly through the adoption of the most suitable foreign policy. This perspective is rooted in the importance of upholding national values. Each country within the global system possesses unique needs and priorities. Consequently, it applies particular ideologies and belief systems to interpret and guide its foreign policy, aiming to maintain stable and beneficial relationships with other nations²⁸.

The idea of national interest serves as a framework for analyzing, assessing, and justifying a country's foreign policy decisions. It is often used to support, oppose, or recommend courses of action by identifying policies that align best with a nation's core objectives²⁸. This concept is fundamentally linked to preserving national values and ideals.

Each state in the international community has distinct priorities and necessities. As such, it employs specific ideologies and principles to shape its foreign policy, ensuring that its international relationships are stable and advantageous. In essence, a country's foreign policy often mirrors its domestic realities ²⁸.

Despite its widespread use, the term "national interest" remains somewhat ambiguous and difficult to define precisely. Nonetheless, it is generally understood as the enduring objectives and aspirations that a state, its people, and its government strive to achieve. National interest is deeply rooted in a society's cultural identity and shared values. It reflects the collective consciousness of the nation and is typically articulated and guided by the country's leadership or policymakers. For this reason, national interest is sometimes described as “what policymakers say it is. Depending on who holds power, national interest may reflect the goals of specific groups, such as the ruling elite, the working class, or even a monarch ¹⁵. Former Nigerian president Ibrahim Babangida

suggested that national interest could be best understood as national security interest, due to the term's vague and flexible nature. He emphasized that national security includes more than just military threats; it encompasses less visible dangers such as economic sabotage, espionage, drug trafficking, counterfeiting, and cultural erosion. These elements, though subtle, can significantly undermine a nation's stability and existence. Thus, national security interests encompass concepts such as self-preservation, self-defense, and ultimately, survival ²⁸. It implies that the state must continue to exist and protect all vital values from serious threats.

2.3.2 The Place of National Interest in Nigeria's Foreign Policy

National interest constitutes the bedrock of Nigeria's foreign policy, serving as a guiding principle that shapes the country's engagement in international affairs. It encapsulates the essential values, goals, and priorities considered crucial for the protection and advancement of Nigeria's sovereignty, security, economic growth, and global standing. Since attaining independence in 1960, Nigeria's foreign policy has been framed around its national interests. These interests have evolved in line with domestic and international developments but remain focused on several enduring themes ²³. One of the most consistent priorities of Nigeria's foreign policy has been the preservation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Nigeria advocates non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations while simultaneously resisting any foreign intervention in its domestic matters. This principle aims to maintain national independence and stability.

Nigeria sees itself as a regional power in Africa, particularly within West Africa ²³. Its active involvement in peacekeeping missions under the banners of the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is indicative of its commitment to ensuring peace and stability in the region. These efforts are aligned

with Nigeria's interest in curbing threats that could spill over into its borders. Foreign policy under successive Nigerian governments has increasingly prioritized economic diplomacy. By fostering bilateral and multilateral trade agreements, seeking foreign investments, and supporting regional economic integration efforts, Nigeria aims to boost its financial performance²³. Participation in organizations such as the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Historically, Nigeria has positioned itself as a proponent of African solidarity²⁵. The idea of Africa as the 'centerpiece' of Nigeria's foreign policy stems from its support for decolonization, anti-apartheid movements, and continental development. This principle continues to influence its diplomatic engagement, aid policies, and support for African-led initiatives. In recent years, particularly under the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, security concerns have dominated Nigeria's foreign policy agenda. The Boko Haram insurgency and its cross-border implications prompted Nigeria to deepen security cooperation with neighboring countries and international partners. President Buhari emphasized regional diplomacy and shuttle diplomacy with West African states to restrict Boko Haram's ability to operate across borders²⁴. This effort led to a reinvigorated Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), comprising troops from Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Cameroon, and Benin, which significantly curtailed the insurgents' operations. President Buhari's administration also prioritized national security as central to the country's national interest. He advocated for enhanced intelligence sharing, joint military operations, and regional collaboration to combat terrorism, insurgency, and transnational crimes. His foreign policy approach was deeply influenced by the belief that national security equates to national survival, and the protection of Nigerian citizens abroad is a growing aspect of the country's foreign policy²⁴.

Nigeria's foreign policy is firmly rooted in its national interest, which serves as both a rationale and a metric for its international actions. Whether engaging in peacekeeping, economic cooperation, or diplomatic advocacy, Nigeria seeks to enhance its sovereignty, economic prosperity, and global relevance. The articulation and implementation of foreign policy, therefore, remain closely tied to the changing contours of what constitutes Nigeria's national interest in a dynamic global environment. The Buhari administration's firm stance on security and regional diplomacy further exemplifies how evolving domestic challenges and geopolitical shifts shape Nigeria's national interest and foreign policy ²⁴.

2.3.4 International Relations

International Relations is the study and practice of political, economic, and social interactions among states and non-state actors in the global arena ¹⁹. It examines how countries interact with each other, the roles of international organizations, multinational corporations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and how issues such as war, peace, trade, diplomacy, and global security are managed. At its core, international relations (IR) seeks to understand how and why states behave in a particular manner within the international system. The causes and consequences of conflicts and cooperation among nations. The impact of global institutions, such as the United Nations, the World Bank, or the International Criminal Court, on international behavior and decision-making. Realism focuses on power, national interest, and the anarchic nature of the international system. States are seen as self-interested actors seeking to survive and dominate. Liberalism emphasizes cooperation, institutions, international law, and democracy as pathways to peace and stability. Constructiveness argues that international

politics is shaped by ideas, identities, norms, and discourse rather than just material power or interests. International relations, in general terms, are the web of interactions between and among states. According to McLean, international relations refer to the interaction between and among states, and more broadly, the workings of the international system. Going by this definition, it is apparent that foreign policy determines international relations²⁹.

International relations are a term that properly embraces the totality of the relations among peoples and groups in the world society. International relations focus upon the political, economic, and other interactions among international actors (operating across national boundaries) and the interstate system. From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that the three concepts are interwoven. If foreign policy is about a state's goals and objectives in the international arena; if diplomacy is the machinery for accomplishing those goals and objectives, and if foreign policy determines international relations, it is then correct to submit that, in analyzing or evaluating the foreign policy of a state, the task should not gloss over the state's diplomatic forays and also the web of its interactions with other states on the world stage. It is in cognizance of this fundamental fact that this paper not only brings to the fore Buhari's foreign policy objectives but equally x-rays the Administration's diplomatic forays and its social, economic, cultural, and political relations with state and non-state actors on the world stage²⁴.

2.3.5 The Concept of Diplomacy

Diplomacy refers to the practice of managing international relations and conducting negotiations between representatives of states or international organizations. It is a key instrument of a country's foreign policy, serving as the primary means through which nations pursue their national interests, resolve disputes, promote peace, and build alliances ²⁶. In its most general sense, diplomacy involves managing human affairs through peaceful methods, primarily using persuasion and negotiation. Within the more focused realm of international politics, diplomacy is recognized as a central mechanism of the global system and a foundational component of the sovereign state system, often identified with the “Westphalian” system named after the 1648 Peace of Westphalia. The term “diplomacy, however, carries several nuanced interpretations³⁰. At the state level, especially in historical contexts, it is sometimes used interchangeably with foreign policy, as seen in phrases like “Russian diplomacy” or “Japanese diplomacy.” However, more precisely, diplomacy refers to one of the instruments used to implement foreign policy. Furthermore, when understood as a feature of the international system, diplomacy can be viewed in two ways: as a set of processes, such as negotiation and communication between states, and as a set of structures, including embassies, consulates, and diplomatic missions, through which those processes are carried out²⁷. Modern debates about the relevance of diplomacy in today’s global landscape often arise from confusion between these two interpretations ²⁷. This analysis examines the historical foundations of diplomacy and various theoretical perspectives on its role and significance in global affairs.

2.3.6 Economic Diplomacy

Economic Diplomacy refers to the use of a country's economic tools, policies, and relationships to achieve its foreign policy objectives. It involves leveraging trade, investment, aid, and financial relations to promote national interests, build strategic alliances, and improve a country's global standing. The structure of economic diplomacy should harmonize commercial liberalization with broader strategic foreign policy objectives. It should align the nation with the evolving dynamics of the 21st-century global economy, advocate for a rules-based international order to ease major power rivalries and acknowledge that every aspect of foreign economic policy inherently impacts domestic affairs. There is no single universal strategy, but rather a set of guiding principles, each with its complexities that governments must weigh. Firstly, trade and investment policies should be designed to strategically position a country in the evolving global economy, where services and data are becoming increasingly dominant³¹. This shift highlights the rise of the "invisible balance," a term describing the international exchange of intangible assets, such as business services, digital media, and e-books. Although the World Trade Organization (WTO) has contributed significantly to lowering tariffs on manufactured goods, and most are now relatively modest, further liberalization and market access remain possible. Attention is now shifting to non-tariff barriers, which include digital services taxes and regulatory requirements such as licensing. While such measures may be justified for reasons like taxation and data privacy, without proper coordination, they risk becoming obstacles to all forms of trade. In response, the WTO continues to push for greater liberalization in services trade, partly to foster expanded trade in goods as well³¹.

For economies heavily reliant on services, free trade agreements (FTAs) must extend beyond traditional tariff reductions to encompass rules and standards that promote competitiveness. This becomes particularly complex given the varying legal and regulatory frameworks of major powers, such as the United States, China, and the European Union. Such disparities increase the likelihood of a fragmented global trade environment, where the world risks splitting into separate blocs, each aligning with different technological and regulatory systems³¹. Trade tensions between nations like Japan and South Korea illustrate how economic disagreements are often intertwined with political and historical conflicts. The key challenge lies in developing a policy framework that can balance sometimes conflicting goals while advancing a broader objective of positioning the nation advantageously in the 21st-century global economy.

This raises important questions: Should trade agreements also address non-economic concerns such as national security? Should countries tailor their trade and investment policies to favor allies or those aligned in defense or political alliances, beyond just market potential? Moreover, any foreign economic strategy must be grounded in domestic priorities. There should be no strict division between domestic and foreign economic policy when evaluating how such policies affect society. One of the key takeaways from past and present resistance to globalization is that while trade may benefit a country overall, it can also produce economic losers. Therefore, trade and investment agreements should be assessed for their impact on wages and employment. This could involve incorporating a distributional analysis into every proposed agreement to clearly show its effects on different communities and social groups. Such evaluations would help determine the desirability of proceeding with agreements³². The UK, for

instance, includes such analysis in its national budget planning, and similar benefits could result from applying this practice to trade and investment policy. This is where the "diplomacy" element in economic diplomacy truly takes effect. It involves more than simply negotiating trade or investment deals; it also entails communicating and exemplifying the values that define a society. By developing an economic system that is both rule-based and fair, as well as practical, a nation that champions rules and norms in the international arena gains stronger credibility. While this concept is not entirely new, the real challenge lies in effectively incorporating "soft power" into a country's foreign economic policy. This could involve engaging civil society, such as charities, NGOs, and cultural institutions that often operate internationally. Including these groups in the design and implementation of foreign economic policy can amplify and legitimize a country's soft power from the ground up²⁹.

Likewise, involving other key factors such as businesses, trade unions, and consumer advocacy groups can enrich the policy process. Many multinational corporations, in fact, already practice their version of economic diplomacy through their global interactions with governments and communities.

Economic diplomacy serves as a powerful tool for nations, strategically leveraging diplomatic channels to propel their economic ambitions and secure vital interests. This approach intricately weaves together trade, investment, foreign aid, and various forms of economic collaboration into the very fabric of a country's foreign policy, aiming to achieve favorable economic outcomes that resonate on both local and global scales³³. Governments masterfully employ economic diplomacy to bolster exports, attract foreign direct investment, secure essential loans for large-scale infrastructure projects, and exert

influence over international economic policies. This dynamic practice is fueled by the imperative to cultivate and sustain robust relationships with other nations, which in turn ensures access to critical markets, abundant resources, and cutting-edge technologies that are paramount for a nation's growth and development. In Nigeria's context, economic diplomacy has been an indispensable catalyst for transformation. It has played a crucial role in diversifying an economy that once heavily relied on oil, modernizing aging infrastructure, and creating new economic opportunities ³⁰. Through strategic partnerships with emerging economies, including the rapidly ascending giant China, Nigeria is carving out new pathways for progress and prosperity on the global stage.

2.3.7 Shuttle Diplomacy

Shuttle Diplomacy refers to a form of negotiation in which a mediator or envoy travels back and forth between parties in conflict, often located in different places, to help them reach an agreement. Instead of bringing all parties together in the same room, the mediator "shuttles" between them, conveying proposals, counterproposals, and compromises as needed. Shuttle diplomacy is a negotiation strategy in which a neutral third party, often a prominent official, serves as a mediator between opposing parties who are unwilling or unable to engage in direct talks ³¹. This method is particularly useful in resolving conflicts or brokering agreements when direct dialogue is hindered by political friction or longstanding disputes. Unlike quiet diplomacy, shuttle diplomacy is usually conducted in the public eye. The term rose to prominence during the Cold War, notably due to the efforts of U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, whose diplomatic missions in the Middle East during the 1970s, especially after the Yom Kippur War of 1973, serve as classic examples. His back-and-forth negotiations between Israel, Egypt,

and Syria led to critical disengagement agreements, demonstrating the effectiveness of persistent mediation³⁴. In practice, the intermediary serves as a mediator, shuttling between conflicting parties, delivering messages, negotiating terms, and facilitating dialogue. The aim is to gradually build trust, clarify each side's positions, and move toward compromise. This method typically involves repeated exchanges and may span several negotiation rounds. The benefits of shuttle diplomacy include providing a neutral communication channel, reducing hostilities, and fostering a more constructive environment for peacebuilding. The mediator's impartiality is vital to maintaining the process's credibility and reassuring all parties involved. It also offers a layer of privacy, which can be crucial for sensitive negotiations, as public scrutiny might harden attitudes or provoke backlash. However, the process can be lengthy, laborious, and dependent on the mediator's skill, patience, and reputation. The risk of miscommunication also looms large, as the success of the talks often hinges on the mediator's ability to interpret and relay messages between the parties accurately³¹.

2.3.8 Nigeria and the Formation of ECOWAS

The mission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is to encourage cooperation and development across all areas of economic activity. This is achieved by eliminating trade barriers and obstacles to the free movement of people, goods, and services, as well as harmonizing regional sector policies. The primary objective is to create a large common market in West Africa and establish a monetary union. Furthermore, the negotiations between the EU and regional blocs, as well as with individual countries through European Partnership Agreements (EPAs) since 2000,

underscore the significance of these regional blocs. Currently, all ECOWAS members except Ghana and Ivory Coast have refused to sign EPAs, having only signed Interim Agreements⁴¹. Additionally, these countries have engaged in bilateral partnership agreements, such as the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) with the United States. In 2000, Nigeria signed a United States Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) as part of its strategy related to the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) (U.S. Department of State, 2010).

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), as the operational arm of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), has played a significant role in the process of African integration. This is particularly evident during the initial phase of discussions among West African states regarding the establishment, implementation, and execution of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)⁴². The idea of regional unity did not fade away, as it was revived in 1972 by former Nigerian President General Yakubu Gowon and former Togolese President Gnassingbé Eyadéma. However, their efforts were not successful due to competition from the Communauté Économique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (CEAO). In 1959, the former French president provided significant support to francophone African countries for the establishment of their organization. The CEAO was seen as a rival to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which was often viewed as a counterbalance to Nigeria's regional dominance. The CEAO became obsolete in 1994. Additionally, Nigeria perceived the formation of the CEAO as a tactic to limit its influence, especially during the oil boom of the 1970s when Nigeria held substantial power in the region ³⁹. According to Van Da Boom's analysis, the primary reasons why Nigeria and other francophone countries agreed to the formation of ECOWAS are as follows:

Firstly, both Niger and Benin, having established new regimes, developed a positive relationship with Nigeria and successfully distanced themselves from France through their commitment to Nigeria. Secondly, Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire had numerous reasons to collaborate with Nigeria rather than oppose it. Lastly, Nigeria represented the interests and perspectives of African states, emerging as a significant player in negotiations between the European Union (EU) and the African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States (ACP), and gained considerable respect from other nations⁴³. In 1973, a draft treaty was established following a series of meetings among West African states. Jurists and experts reviewed the treaty, which was ultimately signed by 15 countries from the region: Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, Gambia, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Liberia, Mauritania, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Senegal. This treaty, known as the "Lagos Treaty," was officially signed on May 28, 1975, to create the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)⁴⁴. One of the essential requirements for establishing ECOWAS is the implementation of a single currency in the region. This currency would serve as a key element for integration, facilitating the free movement of people and promoting equal trade among member states. Unfortunately, the ECOWAS member countries have struggled to reach a consensus on this goal ⁴¹.

The challenges stem from a lack of political will, security threats, concerns about dominance by stronger nations over weaker ones, and fears regarding potential revenue losses that could accompany the establishment of a common currency among ECOWAS members. Therefore, this passage will focus on Nigeria's contributions and support for ECOWAS, as well as its ongoing efforts to implement a single currency in the region ⁴¹.

As a result, all ECOWAS member states were under the authority of either the British, French, or Portuguese, apart from Liberia, which was established in 1821 by the United

States for formerly enslaved people. Since gaining independence, the West African states have been significantly influenced by the ongoing interests of their former colonial powers, particularly due to their abundant natural resources and raw materials. The region has become increasingly attractive to various external actors, especially Nigeria, the regional leader, which is the largest oil-producing country in Africa and among the top ten worldwide.

2.3.9 Nigeria and the African Union

Nigeria gained independence from British rule on October 1, 1960. In his first address to the United Nations General Assembly on October 7, 1960, the then Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, expressed Nigeria's strong desire to maintain peaceful and friendly relations with all member countries of the United Nations Organization⁴⁵ (UNO). Our foreign policy is based on three key principles: first, that Nigeria is an integral part of Africa; second, that we are fully engaged with all matters concerning the continent; and third, that we cannot and must not be neutral on issues that affect Africa's destiny. While we maintain our independence, we remain actively involved in any situation that impacts the continent. It is essential to emphasize that Nigeria is committed to participating in any event or challenge that arises in Africa, regardless of its location. The peace of Africa is directly correlated with the peace of Nigeria; we share in its struggles, and we cannot remain indifferent to Africa's future⁴⁶. Over the past 50 years of independence, Nigeria's foreign policy has primarily focused on the African continent. Successive Nigerian leaders have declared Africa to be a key component of this policy. Nigeria considers itself, and is widely regarded as, the leader of the continent. This self-

perception has significantly influenced how Nigeria is viewed both within Africa and around the world.

Since gaining independence in 1960, Africa has been a central focus of Nigeria's domestic and foreign policy. This commitment has been evident in Nigeria's efforts for the total liberation of Africa from colonialism, racial discrimination, and apartheid. Consequently, Nigeria has been at the forefront of advocating for intensified embargoes, boycotts, and economic sanctions against apartheid South Africa⁴⁷. Nigeria's remarkable dedication to deploying significant diplomatic and financial resources towards the complete liberation of Africa has contributed significantly to the dismantling of both apartheid and colonialism across the continent. The country has consistently provided vital diplomatic, moral, and financial support to liberation movements. This commitment underscores the importance of establishing an organization aimed at fostering African unity, which arose from the collective ambition to pursue an anti-colonial struggle on a continental scale ⁴⁷. This initiative culminated in the historic formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. On September 9, 1999, during the 4th Extraordinary Summit held in Sirte, Libya, the Heads of State and Governments of the OAU engaged in thoughtful deliberations on enhancing the effectiveness of the continental organization. The overarching aim was to adapt to the evolving political, economic, and social landscapes both within Africa and globally. A key objective was to expedite the implementation of the Abuja Treaty⁴⁸. In this context, Nigeria has played a pivotal role in the transformation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU). Numerous scholarly studies have examined Nigeria's role in the African Union. However, many have overlooked how its broader framework, comprising

foreign policy goals and strategies, has both advanced its national interests and contributed to the overall integration of Africa and its people. When the African Union was established in 2002 as the successor to the Organization of African Unity (OAU), expectations were high for the new millennium. There was a general hope that it would effectively address long-standing issues and accelerate integration across the continent. However, it soon became evident that political intentions do not always lead to action. Many African leaders were reluctant to relinquish any aspect of their national sovereignty.

The Constitutive Act of 2002, which serves as the foundation for the African Union, reflects a compromise between those advocating for a federal union with supranational authority and those resisting this ambitious vision to maintain their sovereignty⁴⁹. Additionally, various human factors have negatively impacted the effectiveness of the African Union. Widespread corruption, economic mismanagement, inefficiency, lack of probity and accountability in governance, and persistent authoritarianism hinder progress. Issues such as ethnic conflicts, economic recession, diseases, illiteracy, and poverty, along with threats from military coups, genocide, ethnic cleansing, and international terrorism, collectively undermine Africa's ability to promote development and address the challenges of the twenty-first century. Inadequate coordination among African states has led to low levels of trade and communication ⁴⁶. Furthermore, the existence of unimplemented treaties undermines integration efforts and hinders these countries from achieving economic diversification and structural transformation. These issues reflect the extent of economic and political crises exacerbated by globalization, the challenges posed by refugees and displaced persons, and the slow pace of democratization. Some countries have raised concerns regarding specific articles in the Constitutive Act of the

African Union, particularly those related to the concept of a central government that can enforce the Union's principles and values ⁴⁶. These articles appear to challenge the sovereignty of member states. For instance, Article 4(h) grants the Union the right to intervene in a member state under certain grave circumstances, such as war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity. Additionally, any member state that fails to adhere to the decisions and policies of the Union may face sanctions, including a denial of transport and communication links with other member states, as determined by the Assembly (Article 23(2)). Such sanctions can be challenging for friendly states to enforce⁵⁰. Moreover, an important aspect that warrants further exploration is Nigeria's role in fostering political and socio-economic integration through initiatives such as common defense, a shared government, a single currency, continental airlines, a common market and trade, standardized anti-corruption measures, harmonized migration policies, coordinated responses to refugee crises, collaborative climate change actions, and free trade zones.

2.3.10 Nigeria's Role in the African Union

The African Union represents a significant evolution of the dialogues that emerged during the colonial era on the African continent, exploring the intricacies of how newly independent nations would interact with one another against the backdrop of a shifting international landscape. This discussion centered on seeking viable, pragmatic strategies to address the persistent security and developmental challenges faced by these nations, which were deeply enmeshed in the broader tapestry of the Pan-African Movement, influenced by the tensions of the Cold War ⁵⁰. The Organization of African Unity (OAU), the predecessor of the African Union, navigated these complexities during the intense

rivalry between the East and the West⁵¹. For Nigeria, the African Union symbolizes a revitalized instrument for economic liberation and political unity across Africa. The nation actively seeks avenues through its foreign policy to foster and uphold the African Union, enhancing the continent's ability to tackle the pressing challenges of globalization, security threats, governance crises, rampant corruption, civil unrest, refugee dilemmas, migration issues, and the urgent specter of climate change. Historically, Nigeria has played a crucial role in promoting peace and security within Africa, significantly shaping the continent's journey towards decolonization ⁵¹. This pivotal position highlights the integral role of Africa in shaping Nigeria's foreign policy. Nigeria's engagement with the African Union (AU) must be understood through the lens of its overarching commitment to the continent, reflected in its foreign and defense strategies. This commitment, often characterized as Afrocentrism, traces its roots back to Nigeria's independence in 1960, where it has persistently advocated for policies that bolster African interests. Underlying this approach is the belief in "Pax Nigeriana," a philosophy that proposes Nigeria should assume a Big Brother role among African nations ⁵¹. Its contributions to the AU are inspired by a steadfast dedication to the continent's unity, peace, and progressive development, an aspiration viewed as a gradual journey, contrasting sharply with the more radical vision of the former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, who championed an immediate political unification of African states. Since attaining independence, Nigeria has carved out a distinctive role in Africa, making significant contributions to the fight against colonialism and racism on the continent. The African continent has rightfully become Nigeria's primary sphere of diplomatic interest. Nations endowed with robust capabilities, evidenced by military prowess, economic

vitality, favorable demographics, and stable governance, often strive to cultivate their spheres of influence on the global stage⁵¹. This aspiration underscores Nigeria's unwavering commitment to global peace, both as a foreign policy goal and a cornerstone of its national interests and cherished values. Nigeria's active participation in numerous international peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions worldwide underscores its commitment to promoting global peace and security. In this endeavor, few other African and Third-World nations have matched Nigeria's level of commitment, showcasing a deep-rooted obligation to safeguard peace and uphold human dignity⁵².

2.3.11 Evidence of Nigeria's Role in the AU

Financial Contributions: Nigeria demonstrates its commitment to the African Union (AU) through significant financial contributions. The AU inherited various economic challenges from its predecessor, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which resulted in funding difficulties as the AU's budget requirements grew approximately fivefold compared to those of the OAU. Nigeria is one of the five major countries financing the AU's operational budget, which not only grants it full voting rights but also enables it to support its nationals in securing key strategic positions that require AU endorsement in various international organizations. In 1987, Nigeria initiated the Lagos Forum, a gathering of mid-sized nations, aimed at fostering multilateral cooperation and allowing member states to exert greater collective influence on global affairs⁵³.

Pursuit of Peace in Africa: In the noble endeavor of maintaining peace and security across Africa,

Nigeria has boldly stood at the forefront since it ratified the protocol establishing the Peace and Security Council (PSC) in December 2002. This pivotal council emerged in

2004, with Nigeria leading the charge as its chair, skillfully mediating in the heart-wrenching Darfur crisis in Western Sudan, as well as navigating the stormy waters of Côte d'Ivoire and other regions caught in turmoil⁵⁰.

Nigeria's most impactful contribution to the continent's quest for decolonization and the fight against racism was realized through the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). This initiative not only underscored the spirit of African solidarity but also fostered collaborations in peacekeeping missions in countries grappling with conflict and chaos⁵⁴. Through its proactive engagement in a myriad of international organizations, Nigeria has effectively become the voice of the African continent, tirelessly articulating and championing its concerns and interests on the world stage.

African Peace and Security Architecture: Nigeria's commitment to the African Union (AU) is evident through its active role in implementing the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)⁵⁴. The country participates in AU capacity-building exercises for the military, police, and civilian components of the African Standby Force (ASF), which is a key element of APSA, as well as in ECOMOG activities. Furthermore, Nigeria promotes and strengthens democracy, good governance, and human rights across Africa by ratifying the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance. The nation has consistently upheld Article 3(9) of the AU Constitutive Act, which emphasizes the promotion of democratic principles, institutions, popular participation, and good governance, particularly in countries such as Guinea, Mali, Senegal, Liberia, Ghana, and Niger. Nigeria implemented reforms in this area in 2002, 2006, and 2010 to restore the integrity of electoral processes throughout Africa⁴⁴.

Nigeria has emerged as a pivotal player in the democratization and deepening of democratic values across African nations, particularly within the turbulent West African landscape. This region has often been characterized as a cauldron of political instability and enduring civil conflicts, particularly in the aftermath of the Cold War ⁵⁵. Considering these challenges, Nigeria courageously stepped forward to champion the cause of democratization and to fortify conflict resolution initiatives. Understanding the intricate interplay between democracy and lasting peace, Nigeria recognized that effective interventions alone could not pave the way for stability and harmony without a foundation rooted in democratic governance, as highlighted by⁵⁵. The significance of Nigeria's role in this transformative journey is unmistakable. Firstly, it has illuminated the vital connection between democracy and conflict resolution, demonstrating the pressing need to enhance capacities in these domains for both peacekeeping endeavors and the formulation of coherent foreign policy. Importantly, this mission was not solely Nigeria's; the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) also fervently advocated for democratization and good governance as essential instruments for nurturing peace and resolving conflicts. Secondly, Nigeria's proactive interventions have positioned it as a stalwart promoter and guardian of democratic ideals, including the principles of peaceful coexistence, the integrity of free and fair elections, and the sanctity of constitutional governance. This advocacy has not only elevated Nigeria's reputation but also positioned it as a formidable regional power, thereby amplifying its influence in critical regional and international arenas. Finally, Nigeria's commitment to its democratic journey has served as a cornerstone for its continued stability. The nation's capacity to assert its voice and effect change in the affairs of neighboring countries increasingly hinges on its success as a vibrant and resilient democracy, creating a ripple

effect that resonates throughout the continent. Nigeria's Role in the AU After the Start of the Arab Spring⁵⁵. The Arab world experienced widespread popular demonstrations and rebellions in the Spring of 2011, events commonly referred to as the Arab Spring. These events originated in Tunisia and spread to several countries, including Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Yemen, resulting in an increase in insecurity across the continent. Protesters demanded greater political freedom, economic opportunities, and the elimination of systemic corruption in their states. Additionally, they sought more political pluralism, transparency, and accountability. As a result of these uprisings, regime changes occurred in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen. In contrast, countries like Morocco and Algeria implemented significant socio-economic and political reforms without experiencing a change in government ⁴⁴. The repercussions of the Arab Spring were felt throughout Africa, prompting the African Union (AU) to intervene in the Libyan peace process. In West Africa, the influx of weapons stolen from Libya heightened the region's vulnerability to terrorism and rebellion, leaving Nigeria affected by the insecurities stemming from the Arab Spring⁴⁴.

Nigeria's commitment to the ECOWAS peace process in Mali and the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2071 is crucial for preventing the spread of insurgency and terrorism, which has significantly impacted Nigeria and other regions. The country has actively contributed to African Union (AU) projects, collaborating with various nations to develop the initiative that was adopted at the OAU summit in Lusaka, Zambia, in July 2001. Notably, Nigeria proposed the name NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development), and the addition of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) has provided both vigor and meaningful direction for peace and security decisions within the new AU Commission. Another important aspect of Nigeria's role in the AU can be

appreciated through the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA), considered the most decisive step taken by African leaders to address the challenges of economic underdevelopment, political instability, and insecurity on the continent⁵⁵. Furthermore, Nigeria's considerable influence played a key role in determining the methodologies and strategies for achieving the African integration agenda. While there was a strong consensus on the need for integration, differing opinions arose regarding whether to adopt a technical framework or an institutional arrangement⁵⁶.

2.3.12 Abuja Treaty

The Treaty of Abuja is a significant agreement that established the framework for the African Union (AU) and aimed to promote regional integration across the continent. It emphasizes the need for collective efforts to address economic, political, and social issues within African nations, facilitating cooperation and unity among member states ⁴⁷. This treaty serves as a foundational document that outlines the principles and objectives guiding the AU's efforts to enhance regional integration and tackle the challenges faced by African countries. African economic integration has a long history, with both the African Union (AU) and its predecessor, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Africa's first post-independence continental institution, adopting ambitious integration schemes. The Abuja Treaty was adopted in 1991, at a time when deep economic integration was seen as a solution to Africa's financial difficulties. Its goal was to establish the African Economic Community (AEC), the most comprehensive form of economic integration on the continent. The establishment of the AEC involves six stages, with integration occurring through intergovernmental initiatives rather than market-driven processes ⁴⁷. The Abuja Treaty entered into force on May 12, 1994, and aims to

promote political unity across the African continent. The stages in Abuja included, in summary, the following:

First Stage: Strengthen existing Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and establish new RECs in regions where they currently do not exist.

Second Stage: Stabilize tariff barriers, non-tariff barriers, customs duties, and internal taxes at the regional economic community (REC) level.

Third Stage: Establish a Free Trade Area (FTA) and a Customs Union (CU) within each Regional Economic Community (REC).

Fourth Stage: Create a Continental Customs Union (CU) at the continental level.

Fifth Stage: Establish an African Common Market, harmonize monetary, financial, and fiscal policies, and allow for the free movement of individuals, including the rights of residence and establishment ⁴⁷.

Sixth Stage: Establish an African Central Bank and a single African currency, implement a PanAfrican Parliament elected through continental universal suffrage, and finalize the structures of the executive organs of the African Economic Community (AEC) ⁴⁷.

The objectives of the Abuja Treaty have not been realized. It established expectations that were too high concerning national sovereignty, sacrifices, and commitments to deep economic integration. The overlapping memberships of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the low levels of industrialization among member states have also contributed to delays and challenges. Many of these issues remain unresolved. When the African Union (AU) was launched in July 2002, the global context had undergone significant changes. In 1989, the Berlin Wall fell, leading to the end of communism as the governing system in many countries.

Apartheid rule in South Africa ended in 1994. Additionally, the World Trade Organization (WTO) was established on January 1, 1995, creating a rules-based multilateral system grounded in liberal free trade principles. In 2012, the AU decided to establish a continental Free Trade Area (FTA) to include all 55 member states ⁵⁴. This initiative became known as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). It addresses the challenges of the 21st century and sets more achievable goals than the Abuja Treaty, focusing solely on a continent-wide FTA. The existing FTAs and customs unions established by the RECs will continue to operate. The founding Agreement of the AfCFTA also introduces the principle of preserving the *acquis*, meaning that previously established agreements will remain applicable as a fundamental aspect of African integration⁵⁷. The AfCFTA has been adopted as a framework for Africa's industrialization and the development of value chains, marking new priorities for the continent. The AfCFTA Agreement also includes Protocols on Trade in Services, Digital Trade, and another focused on Women and Youth in Trade ⁵⁴.

2.3.13 Nigeria and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement

The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) serves as a pivotal market integration initiative aimed at fostering an equitable and open market across the African continent. This agreement aims to substantially eliminate barriers to the movement of goods and services at its initial implementation stages. Ultimately, the anticipated progression of the AfCFTA is expected to lead to a customs union that facilitates the free movement of capital and businesspersons. The AfCFTA holds the potential to establish an expansive marketplace for the approximately 1.2 billion people residing on the

continent⁵⁸. The immediate benefit expected from this agreement is an increase in intra-African trade, which currently constitutes a modest 10% of Africa's total trade volume. Enhancing intra-African trade is expected to have a positive impact on industrial growth, economic diversification, and development while also increasing global investment opportunities in Africa. Once fully implemented, the AfCFTA is expected to significantly enhance the way individual countries participate in international trade negotiations. Consequently, it is expected that African leaders will possess greater bargaining power on continental and global trade issues. However, despite these promising objectives and Nigeria's instrumental role in facilitating the AfCFTA's realization, the country was one of the 11 nations that did not sign the draft agreement during the 18th extraordinary session of the Assembly of African Union Heads of State and Government on March 21, 2018, in Kigali, Rwanda ⁵⁸. The Nigerian government cited the need for prolonged domestic consultations to address various concerns prior to signing the agreement. This decision was influenced by significant opposition from the Nigerian Labor Congress and other interest groups, who expressed concerns regarding market access and the enforcement of rules of origin. These groups deemed the government's attempt to proceed without comprehensive consultation as potentially detrimental, raising fears of unchecked foreign encroachment on the country's economic space ⁵⁴. Additionally, Nigeria's skepticism regarding the AfCFTA can be attributed to previous experiences with regional trade agreements, such as the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme, which led to trade imbalances due to inadequate enforcement mechanisms. Compounding these challenges, the country faces structural weaknesses in its industrial capacity, particularly within its manufacturing sector, which struggles to compete with more industrialized African nations such as South Africa and Egypt. Questions

surrounding border security further complicate matters, as smuggling and weak enforcement are allowing non-African goods to misrepresent their origins, ultimately undermining fair competition⁵⁹. Moreover, Nigeria's reliance on crude oil exports has prompted policymakers to exercise caution in diversifying into non-oil trade without appropriate safeguards (Ibrahim, 2023). Conversely, some prominent figures within Nigeria, such as former President Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, have expressed disappointment regarding the government's delay in signing the AfCFTA treaty, emphasizing the significant opportunities it presents for Nigeria. The AfCFTA presents Nigeria with a unique opportunity to expand its services sector, particularly in areas such as fintech, banking, and the creative industries, where the country has established comparative advantages.

Additionally, if effectively executed, the AfCFTA positions Nigeria as a central hub for intra-African trade and investment, enabling the country to leverage a larger consumer market and foster increased economic cooperation with other African nations (Ukaoha, 2024). In a visionary stride towards economic transformation, the World Bank (2021) predicts that the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) has the potential to lift a staggering 30 million Africans out of poverty by 2035⁵⁹. Among the nations that stand to gain the most is Nigeria, bolstered by its vast market size and impressive economic prowess. If Nigeria can address its internal obstacles that currently hinder productivity, it will be uniquely positioned to capitalize on the immense opportunities that the AfCFTA promises to unfold. The signing of this landmark treaty is anticipated to significantly enhance Nigerian exports across Africa⁶⁰. For instance, while Nigeria may face challenges in the production of tangible goods, its vibrant services sector, particularly its rich cultural outputs in the realms of film and music, stands poised to flourish. Moreover,

Nigeria's decision to shun the AfCFTA could have severely undermined its credibility on the continental stage. As the demographic giant home to the largest segment of the estimated 1.2 billion people within the trade bloc, Nigeria's absence would not only diminish the volume of intra-African trade but also weaken the continent's clout in global trade negotiations⁶⁰.

Such a refusal would have been detrimental to Nigeria's standing in Africa, especially for a nation whose constitution underscores a commitment to prioritizing the continent in its foreign affairs. By ratifying the agreement, Nigeria is not merely participating; it is solidifying its role as a leader in African economic diplomacy. Thus, the nation reaffirms its commitment to regional trade integration, ensuring it remains a key influencer of African trade policies ⁵⁷. The path to ratification was not without its challenges. In the face of varying opinions, President Muhammadu Buhari established a Presidential Committee for Impact and Readiness Assessment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on October 23, 2018. This committee was entrusted with the critical task of advising the government on pressing issues such as rules of origin, the specter of smuggling stemming from complex border controls, preferential trade agreements, the inadequacy of local businesses to compete on an international scale, and the high costs of finance, coupled with insufficient energy and transportation logistics ⁵⁴. This strategic initiative demonstrated the government's keen awareness of domestic stakeholder sentiments while signaling a commitment to pursuing regional economic collaboration. After extensive consultations that balanced diverse interests, Nigeria finally ratified AfCFTA in November 2020. This momentous decision showcased the government's effort to reconcile the competing demands of nurturing local industries while ensuring Nigeria's prominence within African trade frameworks. By aligning with the broader

objectives of the AfCFTA, Nigeria aimed to implement protective measures to safeguard its vital economic sectors⁶⁰.

The complexities of this engagement reveal the intricate dance of balancing domestic economic aspirations with regional commitments. The delay in signing and the eventual ratification of AfCFTA mirrored the challenges of navigating between domestic interest groups and international imperatives. At the domestic Level (Level II), the decision-making landscape was notably influenced by robust opposition from key economic actors, including the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), the Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC), and the National Association of Nigerian Traders (NANTS). These stakeholders expressed concerns that Nigeria's industrial sector might not be prepared to withstand an influx of foreign goods from across Africa. They raised alarm over potential job losses, the encroachment of foreign products into local marketplaces, and the looming threat to Nigeria's industrial foundation⁵⁵. Consequently, these domestic forces exerted significant pressure on the government, causing delays in the signing of the agreement. This aligns with the insights of those who assert that public sentiment and lobbying from interest groups wield considerable influence over trade policy decisions, echoing the domestic constraints noted in Putnam's theory. On the international Level (Level I), Nigeria faced increasing pressure to endorse the AfCFTA, given its stature as Africa's largest economy and a pivotal player in the landscape of regional economic integration⁶¹. Other African nations and regional organizations, notably the African Union, eagerly anticipated Nigeria's participation, underscoring the weight of expectations placed upon it at this critical juncture.

Nigeria's initial refusal to sign the AfCFTA treaty raised concerns about its commitment to African economic unity and its role in continental trade policies. The eventual signing

under President Buhari reflected a power struggle between domestic and international interests. This situation can be analyzed through two-level game theory, where domestic groups influence government policies (Level II). In contrast, the government seeks to meet these pressures in the international arena (Level I). The Buhari administration managed domestic demands and minimized negative impacts on foreign policy by negotiating favorable conditions with domestic groups. Win-sets, representing acceptable outcomes for domestic interests, played a crucial role in this process. Ultimately, Nigeria's AfCFTA negotiations exemplified the complexities of foreign policy decision-making in a connected world⁶⁰.

2.3.14 World Trade Organization in Nigeria

General Sani Abacha's regime signed the WTO agreement in 1994, which opened Nigerian markets to a wide range of imported goods, effectively turning the country into a dumping ground for frivolous imports⁶⁰. This decision was made to gain support from the international community at a time when Nigeria was viewed as a pariah state. However, the consequences of signing this agreement were severe. Shortly after, and without a thorough understanding of its implications, Nigeria's many industries, including its 100 textile firms, began to experience a significant decline in production. The agreement allowed unscrupulous individuals in Nigeria to import virtually anything, from toothpicks to 78 different varieties of toothpaste. In May 2000, the WTO reached out to Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Industry and Commerce to offer incentives in light of the WTO's collapse⁶⁰. The Nigerian government sought to connect with other developing nations to determine the steps needed to address the situation. At the request of the Third World Network (TWN), a gathering was held in Ghana in July 2001. This

event aimed to alert African leaders about an alleged Western conspiracy to undermine the continent's future.

Attendees included representatives from Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, and several other countries⁶⁰. The conference aimed to raise awareness among governments about potential economic challenges their countries might face due to trade agreements and World Trade Organization (WTO) treaties. For instance, how many Nigerians are aware of the WTO, TRIPS, and TRIMS agreements? These agreements, which Nigeria signed, impact both the everyday lives of local kola nut hawkers in Kano and the economy of stockbrokers at the Lagos Stock Exchange in highbrow Broad Street. Unfortunately, Nigerian officials signed the WTO agreements without fully grasping their implications.

None of the African countries, including Nigeria, has made a concerted effort to educate the local population about these agreements, despite their far-reaching consequences on the lives of ordinary Africans.⁶⁰ This lack of awareness partly stems from a rethink and pressure exerted by some African leaders, in addition to protests from more aware Asian countries, which ultimately led to the collapse of the WTO Third Ministerial Meeting in Seattle, Washington, in 1999. Since then, millions worldwide have joined the campaign to protect Africa and the Third World from what they perceive as the predatory practices of developed nations. However, in Nigeria, a thick layer of ignorance persists regarding these agreements, which many link to the ongoing poverty and deprivation in the country. This issue is further complicated by the funding politics faced by human rights organizations in Nigeria, most of which are financed by Western countries or entities with similar affiliations⁶⁰.

Consequently, they often struggle to challenge the entrenched status quo. As the saying goes, "He who pays the piper dictates the tune." Unfortunately, several governments were pressured by Western nations to attend new World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations, which motivated the fourth Ministerial Meeting scheduled for Qatar and the United Arab Emirates from November 9 to 13, 2001. The ECOWAS ministerial conference held in Abuja in September 2001 was seen as a move to perpetuate the self-serving ideologies of developed countries in the developing world⁶⁰.

In September 2002, the Chemical and Non-Metallic Products Senior Staff Association (CANMPSSA) urged the Nigerian government to prioritize national interests before implementing WTO policies. The Association stated that any WTO policies not aligned with the development of the nation's manufacturing sector should not be enforced. President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration temporarily banned the importation of textiles and empowered the Nigeria Customs Service to impound imported textiles. The government took cautious steps to avoid the pitfalls that had plagued the Abacha regime. The ban on textile imports remained in effect until the Standards Organization of Nigeria (SON) announced recommendations for the quality of textiles that would be permitted to enter the Nigerian market. Earlier in 2002, the Federal Executive Council established a committee to review the implications of WTO agreements on the nation's economy. As a result, Nigeria has become a dumping ground for cheap and often inferior imported goods⁶⁰. In April 2003, Nigeria, representing developing countries as members of the WTO, demanded at a meeting of third-world countries that developed nations agree to a reduction in tariffs on non-agricultural products. During the WTO meeting in Doha, Qatar, in November 2001, Nigeria emphasized the principle of "less than full reciprocity

in reduction commitments" regarding tariffs between industrialized and developing countries⁶⁰.

If wealthy nations refuse to change their stance in the Cancun Talks, it could spell disaster for many African economies, particularly Nigeria, where the agricultural sector is a significant contributor to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In 2003, Chief Audu Ogbeh, National Chairman of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Special Adviser to the President on Agriculture, suggested that Nigeria was considering reviewing its membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO), following the WTO summit in Cancun, Mexico. It is worth noting that no other organization has faced as much criticism regarding its influence on Nigeria's economic future as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and its associated efforts at globalization⁶⁰. We agree with Chief Ogbeh that Nigeria likely rushed into signing the WTO treaty in 1995 without a thorough understanding of its fundamentals. For comparison, China signed the treaty only in 2001, after carefully considering its terms and taking advantage of various clauses. Several countries with more prosperous economies than Nigeria have yet to sign the treaty. Despite the moratorium granted to the developing world and the dynamic perspectives brought to the study of its terms in other countries, Nigeria continues to lack the leadership necessary to effectively navigate the World Trade Organization (WTO) agenda. It is crucial to recognize that Nigeria cannot approach trade with other countries solely through bilateral treaties negotiated with each nation⁶⁰. A global arrangement that allows for unique bilateral requirements is essential to prevent trade from devolving into a series of autarkies (the absence of trade and self-sufficiency). In February 2006, Swedish Secretary of State Mr. Lars Olafsson Lindgren urged Nigeria to ratify the agreement signed with Sweden concerning investment protection and double

taxation. Lindgren noted that the purpose of his visit was to engage in dialogue with Nigerian authorities about the theoretical issues raised at the WTO meeting held in Hong Kong in December 2005, as well as Nigeria's significant contributions to the discussions. Meanwhile, a proposed visit by the Director-General of the WTO to Nigeria has been postponed⁶⁰. The European Union (EU) continued to encourage Nigeria to sign the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) until 2006. However, the National Association of Nigerian Traders (NANTS) raised concerns about the potential consequences of this agreement on Nigeria's economy. The umbrella body for Nigeria's traders expressed concern that implementing the agreement could result in a significant loss of \$487 million in the first two years and have a debilitating impact on the economy⁶⁰.

2.3.15 Nigeria's Relations with the Commonwealth

Historically, the Federal Republic of Nigeria was one of seventeen African nations that gained independence in 1960. As a former British colony, Nigeria is now a member of both the Commonwealth and the United Nations. It is the most populous black nation in Africa and the world⁶². Since gaining independence, Nigeria's strategic location, size, resources, and workforce have been utilized to achieve its stated Afrocentric foreign policy objectives. These objectives include involvement in peacekeeping operations within and outside sub-Saharan Africa, undertaken through organizations such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU, now the African Union), ECOWAS/ECOMOG, NATO, and the United Nations ⁴⁸. Nigeria has also engaged with other international organizations, including the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the Sahelo-Saharan Community (CEN-SAD)⁶³. Over the years, especially since the transition to democratic rule in 1999, Nigeria has pledged its support and actively participated in various initiatives promoted by these organizations. In the early 1960s, Nigeria played a

relatively cautious and limited role in foreign relations as it was still new to the complexities of international diplomacy. However, since the early 1970s, the country has assumed a more active and assertive role in world affairs, primarily due to increasing oil revenues and the aftermath of its civil war (1967–1970). Nigeria's victory in the civil war and its substantial oil wealth during this formative period of foreign policy provided an opportunity for the country to position Africa as the centerpiece of its international agenda⁶³. With the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, alongside the conclusion of colonialism in Southern Africa, peacekeeping and conflict resolution emerged as key instruments of Nigeria's foreign policy in Africa. During the 1990s, Nigeria emerged as a leading sub-regional nation ⁴⁹ despite being marked by the military regimes of Generals Ibrahim Babangida (1985–1993) and Sani Abacha (1993–1998). These regimes were characterized by domestic instability due to the annulment of the June 12 general election, human rights violations, political assassinations, and the extrajudicial killings of Ken Saro-Wiwa, a human rights activist, and eight other Ogoni leaders in 1994⁶⁴. The domestic political climate during these years sent negative signals to the international community, resulting in Nigeria's suspension from and imposition of heavy sanctions by the Commonwealth, the European Union, and the United Nations until the return to civilian rule in 1999. Nigeria before 1999 was seen as a non-conformist and a threat to efforts at globalization, democratization, and maintenance of world peace and security⁶⁵. However, the establishment of a democratically elected government in 1999 marked a new chapter in Nigeria's diplomatic engagements and a revitalized approach to its Afrocentric foreign policy in global politics.

After gaining independence in 1960, Nigerian leaders quickly recognized the importance of aligning the country's foreign policy with global norms of diplomatic representation

to promote African interests and facilitate rapid development⁶⁶. Consequently, Nigeria became a member of the Commonwealth in 1960 under the guidance of British imperial governance. In 1963, Nigeria achieved the status of a sovereign republic within the Commonwealth of Nations, a development attributed to the vision of Pandit Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India. The historical and diplomatic relationship between the Commonwealth and Nigeria was primarily shaped by Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Prime Minister of Nigeria during the First Republic from 1963 to 1966. This relationship, which dates to 1963, has been described as a strategic platform for Nigeria to achieve its national interests in line with the principles and objectives of the Commonwealth⁶⁶.

However, following the ratification and adoption of the Harare Commonwealth Declaration at the meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government in Harare, Zimbabwe, on 20 October 1990 (SOAS), which coincided with the end of the Cold War, Nigeria's diplomatic relations with the Commonwealth began to deteriorate⁶¹. The Harare Declaration aimed to alleviate poverty, promote democracy, and reaffirm the commitments of Commonwealth nations to principles first outlined during a meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government in Singapore in 1971 (The Commonwealth, 2016). The treaty also served as a catalyst for new platforms of friendship and cooperation among member states, as outlined in the Charter of the United Nations ⁴⁸. One of the key challenges facing the Commonwealth was whether it could continue to build on the Harare Declaration and thus become a standard bearer for democracy, good governance, and human rights globally. In support of the Harare Declaration, three measures were adopted among Commonwealth nations: (a) support for processes and institutions that promote the Harare principles, (b) responses to violations of Harare principles, and (c) mechanisms for implementing these measures. Two years after the official declaration of

the Harare Declaration, Nigeria found itself at odds with the Commonwealth due to non-compliance with these principles⁴⁸. This conflict escalated following General Ibrahim Babangida's annulment of the June 12 presidential election, which had been won by Moshood Abiola and was regarded as the freest and fairest election in Nigeria's political history⁶⁷. Following the annulment, General Babangida handed over an interim government to Ernest Shonekan, which General Sani Abacha subsequently overthrew in December 1993. In the wake of the election's cancellation and the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight Ogoni activists in the Niger Delta by Abacha in December 1994, Nigeria became a pariah in the international community⁶¹. The failure of Nigerian military regimes under Generals Babangida and Abacha to transition to a democratically elected government, coupled with their poor domestic human rights records, undermined Nigeria's leadership role in Africa and its ability to fulfill its obligations under the Harare principles, which emphasize "human rights, good governance, and democracy"⁴⁸. This commitment was made when Nigeria became a signatory to the principles as a member of the Commonwealth in 1990. These failures led the Commonwealth to suspend and sanction Nigeria during the 1995 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Auckland, New Zealand (CNN, 1995).

After four years of sanctions and suspension, however, neither dialogue nor the threat of sanctions yielded any positive outcomes for Nigerian-Commonwealth relations⁴⁸. This situation continued until the death of General Sani Abacha in June 1998 and the subsequent assumption of office by General Abdulsalami Abubakar. During the tenure of Commonwealth Secretary-General Chief Emeka Anyaoku from 1990 to 2000, Nigeria's view of the organization as a platform to advance its national interests was unmistakable⁴⁸. Anyaoku's impressive and constructive engagements facilitated the normalization of

Nigerian relations with the Commonwealth following the release of Nigerian political detainees on July 20, 1998⁶⁸. The emergence of Abubakar in 1998 paved the way for a rapprochement between Nigeria and the Commonwealth, following the successful transition process that ultimately led to Nigeria's return to civilian rule on May 29, 1999⁴⁸.

2.3.16 Nigeria and the Commonwealth: sustaining regional democracy

Since 1999, Nigeria has emerged as a fervent advocate of democracy, particularly within the vibrant tapestry of the West African sub-region⁶⁹. As a key player among African Commonwealth nations, Nigeria has wielded its regional influence to promote its national interests while aligning with the ideals of the Harare Principles. Notable instances, such as the political crises in The Gambia and Zimbabwe, illustrate Nigeria's ongoing commitment to advancing democratic governance in Commonwealth countries. In The Gambia, a powerful narrative of democratic restoration unfolded. Nigeria and The Gambia, both proud members of the Commonwealth, share a profound commitment to promoting democracy and security across Africa. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) intervened decisively in The Gambia's post-election turmoil, marking a significant triumph in regional diplomacy. This achievement was underscored by the deep reservoir of experience ECOWAS had accumulated, which played a critical role in effectively mediating the aftermath of the contentious election⁷⁰. The post-election crisis in December 2016 presented Nigeria with a prime opportunity to showcase its regional influence, prompting both the Commonwealth and the broader international community to engage in mediating key political and security challenges. The disputed presidential elections held on December 1, 2016, were particularly momentous. For the first time, a Nigerian-led ECOWAS intervention sought to "restore

democracy" in The Gambia, achieving this through the credible threat of military force while avoiding any direct violence⁷⁰.

Following eighteen years of a stable domestic environment, when the Gambia Electoral Commission announced opposition candidate Adama Barrow as the victor, a tense atmosphere gripped the nation. Against the backdrop of this historic election, President Yahya Jammeh surprised many by initially conceding defeat in a televised address, where he congratulated Barrow⁷¹. However, just days later, Jammeh reversed his stance, asserting that he would contest the election results due to alleged "serious and unacceptable abnormalities." In response to Jammeh's refusal to relinquish power, a sense of urgency rippled through the African Union (AU) and ECOWAS. On December 12 and 17, 2016, their Heads of State resolutely agreed to enforce the election results. Moreover, the United Nations Security Council echoed this resolve on December 21, supporting the AU and ECOWAS's commitment to reinstating legitimate governance in The Gambia⁷¹.

With Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari at the helm, ECOWAS acted swiftly and resolutely, demanding Jammeh step down by the constitutional inauguration date of January 19, 2017. When sustained diplomatic efforts met with refusal, ECOWAS turned to military intervention as a final recourse to uphold democracy in The Gambia. On January 18, Nigeria mobilized its military resources, deploying aircraft and personnel to Senegal to bolster potential military operations while also dispatching a naval vessel to safeguard its citizens. Despite the mounting pressure from ECOWAS, the AU, and the international community, Jammeh remained obstinate⁷¹.

ECOWAS proceeded to orchestrate Barrow's swearing-in ceremony at the Gambian Embassy in Senegal, officially recognizing him as president. With ECOWAS forces monitoring the situation closely, Jammeh ultimately agreed to exile, departing The

Gambia on January 21, 2017⁷². Ultimately, Nigeria's influential role and esteemed position within ECOWAS empowered it to champion the Commonwealth's objectives, striving to nurture the democratization process throughout member nations. Similarly, Nigeria's involvement in the political stalemate in Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe was crucial in shaping the trajectory of African political evolution and conflict resolution. In 2003, Nigeria took the lead in hosting a gathering of Commonwealth ministers from diverse nations, including Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, Jamaica, Malaysia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, to address the escalating crisis in Zimbabwe⁷¹. This gathering followed earlier discussions in Abuja and Harare in 2001, initiated in response to the government's failure to implement a constitutional and democratic framework, resulting in Zimbabwe's suspension from the Commonwealth in 2002⁵⁷. During this critical juncture, in July 2003, following Zimbabwe's suspension, U.S. President George W. Bush pressed South African leader Thabo Mbeki to spearhead efforts towards a lasting resolution to the Zimbabwean turmoil. At a pivotal meeting in December 2003, the Commonwealth sanctioned Zimbabwe's suspension, underscoring the urgent need for a strategic approach to the unfolding crisis⁷¹.

2.3.17 Nigeria-United Nations Relations

After Nigeria achieved its hard-won independence in 1960, a significant milestone marked its journey onto the global stage: the country's formal admission to the United Nations on October 7, 1960, as its 99th substantive member⁷³. This pivotal moment marked a new era in which the United Nations became a cornerstone of Nigeria's foreign policy. With a firm belief in multilateralism, Nigeria engaged with the UN to promote collaborative efforts on an international scale⁷⁴. From its very first days as an independent nation, Nigeria immersed itself in the UN's peacekeeping endeavors,

playing an active role in missions that underscored the importance of global peace and security. The nation's inaugural participation in peacekeeping operations began shortly after independence, with troops deployed to the Congo just days later. This mission was not merely about providing soldiers; Nigeria assumed a leading role in the UN Operation in Congo, demonstrating its capacity for leadership and commitment to peace. In the wake of gaining freedom from colonial rule, Nigeria also passionately championed liberation movements across Portuguese colonies such as Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, and Cape Verde and supported the struggle against apartheid in Rhodesia and South Africa, as well as in various West African nations⁷⁵. The Organization of African Unity (OAU), now known as the African Union, emerged as the primary arena where Nigeria could actively promote its diplomatic and foreign policy ambitions, particularly focusing on the decolonization of African nations still under the control of colonial powers at the time of its UN membership. Initially, Nigeria's goals within the UN were centered not on spreading democratic ideals but on fostering unity and development among African states. However, following the country's transition to civilian rule in 1999, Nigeria seized the opportunity to utilize its UN membership to advocate for democracy, becoming a vocal proponent of democratic governance throughout the continent⁷⁵.

2.3.18 Nigeria's Bid for a Permanent Seat on the UN Security Council

In January 2005, the African Union (AU) summit convened in Abuja, where a monumental decision was ratified: Africa's pursuit of representation in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) gained robust momentum⁷⁶. The summit followed the deliberations of the Executive Council of African Foreign Ministers, which scrutinized the findings of a high-level panel and subsequently formed a 15-member committee dedicated to crafting a unified African stance on this pivotal issue. The committee's

subsequent meeting in Swaziland that February bore fruit in the form of the "Ezulwini Consensus," a significant declaration demanding the expansion of the UNSC from 15 to 26 members, thereby ensuring Africa's rightful and equitable representation (Namibia Economist, 2016)⁷⁶. At the heart of this discourse was then-President Olusegun Obasanjo, the then-AU Chairman, who, along with fellow African leaders, rallied behind a standard position advocating for Nigeria's bid for a permanent UNSC seat, a move spurred partly by U.S. interests favoring either Egypt or South Africa for such a prestigious position⁷⁷. However, Nigeria's journey towards securing a permanent seat would not be free from obstacles; the intricate power politics at play in the international arena, heavily influenced by U.S. hegemony, posed serious challenges. In March 2005, the AU committee submitted its report to Kofi Annan, the then UN Secretary-General, seeking his endorsement and inclusion in his forthcoming UN brief.

It is noteworthy that the African group of states emerged as the only bloc within the UN to unify around a standard position on UNSC reform⁶². However, the competition was fierce, with Nigeria vying against other strong contenders such as Egypt, South Africa, and Senegal. Notably, Egypt was backed by U.S. support despite its questionable human rights record, while South Africa boasted greater prosperity and technological advancement compared to Nigeria. Regrettably, Nigeria found itself sidelined, plagued by a tarnished human rights record and rampant corruption. Nonetheless, Nigeria's contributions on the global stage, particularly in UN peacekeeping operations, were unparalleled; it was noted that "no state in the international system has contributed as much, even surpassing the U.S. on a per capita basis⁶³. Unfortunately, Nigeria's internal political challenges continued to cast a shadow on its aspirations for African leadership at the UN. Amidst this backdrop, Nigeria's ambitions were met with intense

consultations, lobbying, and compromises, ultimately leading the UN General Assembly to embrace the proposal put forth by African Heads of State and Government⁶³.

In July 2005, former Foreign Affairs Minister Olu Adeniji joined forces with counterparts from South Africa, Libya, and Egypt, along with a variety of stakeholders, to convene an influential meeting in London with the G4 nations: Brazil, Germany, Japan, and India ⁶³. However, the pursuit of a permanent seat was fraught with challenges, as Nigeria and South Africa often found themselves embroiled in significant rivalry, jeopardizing the African consensus on UNSC reform. Beyond the cloud of power politics stifling Nigeria's ambitions, two critical questions lingered: Under what conditions could Nigeria sway other UNSC members on pivotal global issues, given its myriad internal dilemmas, terrorism, ethno-religious strife, militia conflict, poverty, and human rights violations? The prospect of Nigeria effectively influencing the UNSC appeared grim, considering these domestic challenges and the neo-conservative foreign policies prevalent in Africa. Moreover, how would Nigeria not only define Africa's priority objectives but also advocate for them within the corridors of power of the UN Security Council?

This struggle was on full display during President Muhammadu Buhari's address on September 19, 2017, at the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. His speech raised doubts about Nigeria's capacity to effectively present solutions to Africa's socio-economic and political predicaments at the global level⁷⁸. According to the Daily Trust, President Buhari's discourse largely overlooked the urgent need for global engagement and assistance to address Africa's pressing issues. Instead, he focused predominantly on the crises in the Middle East and North Korea's armament developments, neglecting vital regional security challenges and regime changes that had

turned Libya, Syria, and Sudan into epicenters of conflict, inadvertently flooding the African continent with arms and enabling the spread of terrorism⁷⁸.

2.3.19 China-Nigerian Economic Relations

The diplomatic and economic relationship between Nigeria and China was formally established in 1971 and has undergone significant transformation, especially in the 21st century. Under President Muhammadu Buhari's administration (2015-2023), this relationship experienced unprecedented expansion, with China emerging as one of Nigeria's most influential economic partners⁸³. Buhari's strategic "look East" policy marked a turning point, prioritizing engagement with Asian economies, particularly China, to address Nigeria's infrastructural deficits and economic challenges. This renewed focus on Sino-Nigerian ties manifested in multiple dimensions, including large-scale infrastructure development, enhanced trade relations, and financial agreements to fund capital-intensive projects. Notable initiatives, such as railway construction, power generation projects, and road infrastructure, were primarily supported by Chinese funding and executed by Chinese firms⁸³.

Trade volumes between the two countries also grew, with China becoming one of Nigeria's top import sources and a key export destination. While this partnership has been praised as a practical example of South-South cooperation, it has also sparked intense debates regarding its implications. Critics argue that Nigeria's increasing reliance on Chinese loans and imports could foster a new form of economic dependency, undermining national sovereignty and long-term development objectives. Concerns over transparency in loan agreements, limited technology transfer, and the impact on local industries have intensified scrutiny of the Buhari administration's economic engagement with Beijing. Thus, the trajectory of Sino-Nigerian relations under President Buhari

presents a complex narrative that reflects both the opportunities and vulnerabilities inherent in global South partnerships shaped by asymmetrical power dynamics⁸³.

2.3.20 Sino-Nigerian Relations

Sino-Nigerian relations refer to the bilateral relationship between the People's Republic of China and the Federal Republic of Nigeria, encompassing diplomatic, economic, political, and cultural ties. Established formally on February 10, 1971, the relationship has evolved significantly over the decades, transitioning from primarily political engagement to a robust economic and strategic partnership. Under the leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari, the tapestry of Sino-Nigerian relations underwent a remarkable transformation, marked by a profound intensification of economic ties intricately woven into the broader fabric of China's global economic ambitions⁸⁴.

Mere statistics did not just characterize this era; it pulsated with expanded trade flows, an influx of foreign direct investment (FDI), and a wave of large-scale infrastructural projects, all fueled by the financial lifeblood provided by Chinese funding. Nigeria, as Africa's most populous nation and its largest economy, has emerged as a pivotal landmark on China's strategic map, with Beijing firmly establishing itself as a key player in Nigeria's quest for modernization and economic rejuvenation, offering a treasure trove of financial resources, technical expertise, and diplomatic backing. However, when viewed through the lens of dependency theory, the evolution of Sino-Nigerian relations unveils a landscape fraught with critical concerns⁸⁴.

Dependency theory posits that the economic dynamics between developed and developing nations often reinforce structural inequalities, benefiting the former while entrenching the underdevelopment of the latter. In Nigeria's narrative, while the deluge

of Chinese capital and technological expertise promised immediate developmental rewards, it simultaneously cemented a cycle of dependency. Loans procured from Chinese institutions, notably the Export-Import Bank of China (Exim Bank), were frequently tied to specific infrastructure projects, such as railways, airports, and energy facilities. This financial interdependence poses a significant threat to Nigeria's fiscal independence, creating a reliance that could cast a long shadow over its economic sovereignty. Moreover, the trade relationship bore an unmistakable asymmetry⁸⁴. Nigeria's exports, primarily crude oil and raw materials, flowed toward China, while the reverse reflected a stark reality: high-value manufactured goods, electronics, machinery, and consumer products flooded Nigeria's markets. This skewed trade dynamic not only exacerbated Nigeria's trade deficit but also solidified its role as a mere supplier of unprocessed commodities, relegating it to the status of a consumer of foreign manufactured goods⁸⁴. Such a scenario aligns with the concerns of dependency theorists, who argue that such relationships hinder local industrial growth and limit a nation's ability to diversify its economic portfolio ⁷¹.

The increasing reliance on Chinese imports further stifled the development of domestic manufacturing, undermining Nigeria's aspirations for self-reliance and long-term economic fortitude. However, amid these pressing concerns, liberal institutionalism offers a more hopeful perspective on the bilateral relationship⁸⁴. This theory emphasizes the importance of international cooperation and institutional frameworks that foster mutual benefits among states. Through this lens, the Sino-Nigerian partnership evolves into a collaborative alignment between two sovereign nations, each working together to fulfill their respective developmental aspirations. Platforms like the Forum on China-

Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and various bilateral economic commissions and memoranda of understanding stand as pillars of this partnership, providing Nigeria with avenues to negotiate more advantageous terms, gain access to global markets, and harness Chinese support for domestic initiatives spanning infrastructure development, energy expansion, and digital transformation⁸⁴.

Furthermore, under Buhari's stewardship, Nigeria's active engagement with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) positioned the nation as a significant link in this ambitious transcontinental development strategy⁷¹. Through this partnership, Nigeria secured vital funding for ambitious projects, including the revitalization of the Abuja-Kaduna and Lagos-Ibadan railways, as well as crucial airport upgrades and enhancements to energy infrastructure⁷¹. From the perspective of liberal institutionalism, these projects serve as tangible evidence of how structured international cooperation can yield substantive developmental dividends for emerging economies. Nevertheless, even when framed within the tenets of liberal institutionalism, lingering questions arise concerning the efficacy of institutional safeguards, the balance of negotiating leverage, and the sustainability of this cooperation. The shrouded nature of some loan agreements, the limited participation of local firms, and inadequate regulatory oversight cast a shadow over the notion of an equitable partnership, suggesting that institutional mechanisms must be reinforced to ensure that Nigeria reaps long-term, inclusive benefits from this evolving relationship⁷¹.

2.3.21 China's Strategic Interests and Diplomatic Engagements

China's relationship with Nigeria extends beyond mere economic collaboration, embodying a complex and strategic partnership⁸⁵. Nigeria stands as a cornerstone in

China's expansive African strategy, driven not only by its abundant oil reserves and significant geopolitical importance but also by its burgeoning consumer market, which is ripe for growth. The Buhari administration has eagerly sought to strengthen ties with Beijing, a commitment highlighted by numerous high-profile engagements at platforms such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)⁸⁵. Nigeria's endorsement of the "One China" policy and its reciprocal backing for China in various international arenas underscore a harmonious alignment of diplomatic interests between the two nations. Through these interactions, China aims to expand its influence across Africa, with Nigeria serving as a key ally in this comprehensive geopolitical strategy⁸⁵. In return, Nigeria reaps the rewards of China's backing on the global stage, particularly in trade, development, and political solidarity. By engaging in these structured diplomatic conversations, Nigeria has secured vital strategic benefits, including access to Chinese financial resources and a seat at multilateral tables that shape the dynamics of global economics and politics⁸⁵. From the lens of dependency theory, Nigeria's alignment with China could signal an increasing political and economic reliance that may raise concerns about its sovereignty. While these alliances provide Nigeria with advantageous resources and international clout, they also risk positioning the nation as a subordinate partner within a broader Chinese-led geopolitical framework⁸⁵.

Conversely, viewed through the prism of liberal institutionalism, such diplomatic engagements reflect a solid foundation of cooperation. This framework enables both nations to work collaboratively on global challenges while advancing their respective strategic objectives in a systematic and institutionalized manner⁸⁵. Through this network of diplomatic and cooperative efforts, both countries aim to achieve long-term

developmental and geopolitical ambitions. However, Nigeria must tread carefully, ever mindful of the potential pitfalls that accompany an over reliance on China's expanding global presence.

2.3.22 Energy and Technology Cooperation

Under President Buhari's leadership, Nigeria entered a new era of collaboration with China, particularly in the dynamic realms of energy and technology⁸³. This burgeoning partnership led to the signing of numerous Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) that targeted key sectors, including oil exploration, refinery enhancement, and the development of alternative energy resources⁸³. China's influence in Nigeria's energy landscape has been transformative; Chinese enterprises have undertaken various ambitious exploration and refining initiatives, all while working diligently to enhance Nigeria's energy security⁸². Moreover, China has been a catalyst for the development of renewable energy sources, with a keen focus on solar power and other sustainable resources. This concerted effort helps Nigeria diversify its energy portfolio and mitigate its dependence on fossil fuels. In the realm of telecommunications, China's footprint is unmistakable, primarily led by tech giants Huawei and ZTE⁸². These companies have not only provided cutting-edge infrastructure but also played a vital role in nurturing the skills of thousands of Nigerian ICT professionals.

This technological partnership exemplifies China's broader diplomatic and economic strategy, increasingly characterized by a commitment to technological diplomacy⁷². The collaboration between Nigeria and China in the digital economy and e-commerce underscores a significant shift in global power dynamics, with China emerging as a pivotal architect of Nigeria's digital future. Approaching this relationship through the

lens of dependency theory unveils a complex narrative. While this technological cooperation has brought substantial benefits, such as professional training and enhanced infrastructure, it also risks instilling a long-term reliance on Chinese expertise and technological innovations. This dependency could leave Nigeria vulnerable to future economic fluctuations and shifts in technological paradigms. Conversely, the perspective of liberal institutionalism highlights the importance of frameworks that facilitate and govern these partnerships⁸². The agreements forged between Nigeria and China in the spheres of technology and energy are underpinned by institutionalized frameworks designed to cultivate mutual gains ⁷². These cooperative structures provide a robust platform for both nations to jointly address pressing issues, such as energy security and technological advancement, thereby aligning their economic aspirations and strategic interests. By establishing such institutionalized cooperation, both nations can effectively address global challenges, including climate change and the evolving digital landscape, in ways that advance their shared development objectives⁷².

2.3.23 Nigeria, China Infrastructure and Loans

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has emerged as a pivotal catalyst for transforming Nigeria's infrastructure landscape, ushering in an era of remarkable development under the leadership of President Buhari. Notable projects include the impressive \$1 billion Abuja-Kaduna railway, which snakes its way through the heart of Nigeria, and the expansive \$1.5 billion Lagos-Ibadan standard-gauge railway, both emblematic of the ambitious infrastructure agenda. Additional significant endeavors, ranging from modern airport terminals to sprawling road networks and vital hydro-power projects, further illustrate this transformative period. These ambitious developments have been primarily

fueled by substantial loans from China's Export-Import Bank (Exim Bank), which is known for offering attractive financing terms that facilitate their implementation. While these projects have undoubtedly bolstered Nigeria's infrastructure modernization, they also raise alarming concerns regarding the nation's mounting debt burden and potential ramifications for its fiscal sovereignty. Analyzing the situation through the lens of dependency theory, the reliance on Chinese loans emerges as a form of economic subservience. Nigeria's escalating debt to China can be perceived as a subtle mechanism of control, where the promise of infrastructural advancement is intertwined with loans that must be repaid, often accompanied by hefty interest rates. This looming debt trap not only jeopardizes Nigeria's economic independence but also hinders its capacity to make autonomous economic decisions, as the imperative to service foreign debt increasingly constrains its options. The financial commitments entailed by these loans serve not merely as monetary obligations but as instruments of geopolitical influence, enabling China to expand its political and economic presence in Nigeria and throughout the African continent. From a liberal institutionalist perspective, these infrastructure projects represent a culmination of structured collaboration between China and Nigeria. Platforms such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and various bilateral agreements have crafted an environment conducive for these transformative projects to materialize. Through such institutional frameworks, Nigeria has successfully secured the vital financing and expertise necessary to modernize its infrastructure, efforts that could foster long-term economic prosperity. However, despite the short-term gains these developments may offer, the heavy reliance on Chinese financial support raises pressing questions about the sustainability of such investments in the absence of robust mechanisms to manage the encroaching debt burden.

2.3.24 Nigeria-China Trade and Investment Dynamics

Under the stewardship of President Muhammadu Buhari, the economic bond between Nigeria and China flourished like a vibrant garden, with trade and investment blossoming as the cornerstone of this bilateral relationship. By 2022, China had firmly established itself as one of Nigeria's leading trading partners, with trade volumes surging to a staggering \$26 billion, a substantial figure that tipped the scales heavily in favor of China. This pronounced trade imbalance, when examined through the lens of dependency theory, paints a concerning picture of developing nations becoming economically tethered and subordinated through such skewed trade dynamics. China voraciously imports Nigeria's raw materials, including crude oil and minerals, which serve as vital sources of energy for its industrial sector. At the same time, Nigeria finds itself reliant on a plethora of manufactured goods, machinery, and electronics, the majority of which flow in from China. This exchange not only reinforces Nigeria's role as a provider of primary resources but also shackles its potential for industrial diversification, leaving it precariously dependent on imports for both consumer and capital goods. China's foreign direct investment (FDI) has surged dramatically, penetrating various sectors, notably the telecommunications and oil and gas industries. Chinese tech behemoths, such as Huawei, have made significant inroads, investing heavily in Nigeria's telecommunications infrastructure and offering cutting-edge hardware, software, and invaluable training to Nigerian ICT professionals. While these investments spark progress in infrastructure, they also perpetuate a dependency model where Nigeria's technological evolution remains driven by foreign capital and expertise.

Moreover, this influx of Chinese investments often accompanies a steady stream of Chinese products into Nigerian markets, further entrenching the trade imbalance and deepening the dependency dynamic. From the perspective of liberal institutionalism, the trade and investment landscape can be viewed as part of a larger framework of cooperation that has been systematically organized. Key institutions, such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), have played a pivotal role in formalizing these trade relationships, helping both nations navigate their economic engagement within a structured framework. Through active participation in multilateral forums, Nigeria and China have created a platform for cooperative interactions that transcend mere transactional exchanges, instead fostering a vision for long-term development. However, the persistent trade imbalance and escalating reliance on Chinese capital cast a shadow of doubt over the sustainability of this partnership for Nigeria in the years to come.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework for analyzing the role of foreign missions in Nigeria's foreign policy during the Buhari administration (2014–2023) offers a structured approach to understanding how Nigeria's diplomatic engagements have influenced its international relations. Below is a concise conceptual framework tailored to the topic of Foreign Missions. These are diplomatic representations, including embassies, high commissions, and consulates, which serve as Nigeria's primary instruments for implementing foreign policy abroad. They facilitate diplomacy, economic cooperation, security coordination, and cultural exchange. Foreign Policy: Under Buhari, Nigeria's foreign policy was guided by principles such as national interest, economic diplomacy, citizen-centered diplomacy, and a focus on African centrality. Key priorities included security, anti-corruption efforts, and economic diversification. Buhari Administration (2015– 2013)

This period consists of the two terms of President Muhammadu Buhari's leadership, marked by efforts to reposition Nigeria on the global stage. It involved addressing domestic challenges, such as the Boko Haram insurgency and economic recession, while striving to strengthen both bilateral and multilateral ties. Below is the Diagram showing the conceptual framework and variables analysis.

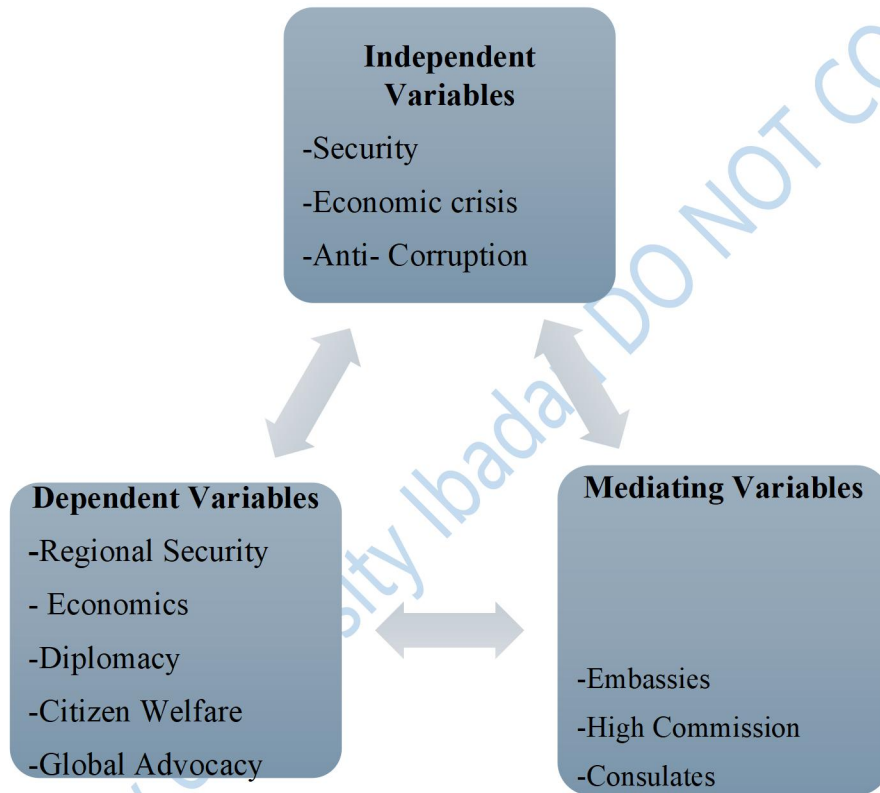


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Author's design

2.5 Summary of Gap in Literature Review

Nigeria's foreign policy during the presidency of Muhammadu Buhari (2015-2023) has notably prioritized economic diplomacy, security, and a leadership role on the African continent.⁴¹ However, the vital contributions of our foreign missions in advancing these objectives merit further exploration. Current research reveals several gaps in the existing

literature, particularly concerning the operational dynamics of these missions, their influence on economic and citizen-focused diplomacy, and their effectiveness in fostering security cooperation. These identified gaps underscore the importance of conducting more comprehensive empirical studies to gain a deeper understanding of the impact that our foreign missions have in these areas. Embassies and consulates are essential to the successful execution of foreign policy; however, challenges related to staffing, funding, and coordination often receive insufficient attention⁵⁰. It is noteworthy that more than 70% of Nigeria's missions have not received capital budget allocations, leading to issues with infrastructure and overall operational efficiency. Unfortunately, the academic discourse has yet to provide an in-depth examination of these critical concerns. While the literature on Nigeria's foreign policy under President Buhari effectively outlines overarching objectives, there remains a need for a more nuanced analysis of the indispensable role played by foreign missions⁵⁰. This survey note highlights the necessity for targeted research focused on operational dynamics, economic and citizen diplomacy, security cooperation, and the impact of structural constraints, all grounded in robust data and comparative insights⁵⁰.

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Chapter Three Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research design for this study is characterized as descriptive. This approach employs a systematic, in-depth methodology to generate a rich, contextualized, and theoretically informed portrayal of a bounded phenomenon, thereby enabling rigorous answers to specific research questions particularly those of an exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory nature that require understanding complex, process-oriented, and context-sensitive analysis¹. It invites readers to gain insight into the complexities of the topic, ensuring that every nuance is considered in the pursuit of knowledge.

3.2 Population of the study

The targeted population for this study was academicians in the fields of Political science, politics, and international relations, including both lecturers and scholars. Additionally, experts from the N.I.I.A., other individuals with background knowledge of Nigeria's foreign policy, and diplomats were present.

The target population for the study was 215 experts in P.I.R., from Lead City University, Ibadan, the University of Ibadan. And the N.I.I.A.

Using Yamane's (1967) formula $n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$ with $N = 215$ and $e = 0.05$, the calculated sample size was approximately 140. A more conservative $e = 0.03$ was then applied (yielding $n = 181$) to improve precision and accommodate potential non-response. Given the small, accessible population, a near-census approach was adopted, and questionnaires were distributed to all 215 individuals (Table 4.1).

Table 3.2**Population of the Study**

PhD Students	
Lead City University	28
University of Ibadan	35
Master's Students	
Lead City University	42
University of Ibadan	38
Lecturers (Lead City University & University of Ibadan)	
	24
Diplomatic Experts Scholars (Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Kofa Abayomi, Victoria Island, Lagos)	
	9
Total	176

3.3 Sample and Sampling Technique

To conduct a comprehensive examination of Nigeria's foreign policy during the Buhari administration using a descriptive research design, it is of paramount importance to select an appropriate sample and sampling technique. Such careful selection ensures that the study is both representative and feasible while aligning closely with its objectives.

The study employs purposive sampling (also known as judgmental or expert sampling), a non-probability sampling technique deliberately chosen to select information-rich participants who can offer authoritative insights into the subject matter. This purposive expert sampling technique is used for two main reasons: first, it ensures that individuals with relevant firsthand experience in Buhari-era foreign policy are included; second, it aligns well with the exploratory and explanatory goals of a qualitative descriptive case study².

3.4 Description of the Research Instrument

In the context of our descriptive study, Nigeria's Foreign Policy during the Buhari Administration, we employ a range of research instruments designed to gather valuable insights from a diverse sample of participants. This sample featured esteemed scholars and lecturers with expertise in Nigeria's foreign policy, as well as diplomats, foreign policy officials, relevant stakeholders, and pertinent documents.

My chosen data collection method is carefully crafted questionnaires and interview. In the following sections, the paper will provide a detailed overview of these instruments, outlining their design and alignment with the study's overarching objectives.

3.5 Validity of Research Instrument

Ensuring the validity of the research instruments for the descriptive study on Nigeria's foreign policy under the Buhari Administration is of utmost importance. This step is crucial in confirming that the instruments accurately gauge the intended concepts and yield credible and reliable data. Validity refers to the extent to which the various

instruments, specifically the questionnaire and interview report, effectively measure their designated objectives. This study examines the roles, activities, challenges, and outcomes of Nigeria's foreign missions during President Buhari's tenure.

3.6 Reliability of Research Instrument

This refers to the degree to which the research instrument consistently measures what it is designed to measure. For research to be considered reliable, it must consistently produce the same result using the same method under the same circumstances². This research was conducted empirically to arrive at a logical conclusion.

3.7 Method of Data Collection

For the descriptive study on Nigeria's Foreign Policy under the Buhari Administration (2014– 2023), the methods of data collection were tailored to capture detailed, objective, and comprehensive insights from the proposed sample (scholars and lecturers who are knowledgeable about Nigeria's foreign policy, diplomats, foreign policy officials, stakeholders, and documents). Primary data were collected using a questionnaire and an interview schedule, while secondary data were obtained from books, scholarly journals, and online sources.

3.8 Method of Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed using the field survey 2024 analysis technique. It allows researchers to quantify and examine the presence, meaning, and relationships among words, themes, and concepts within a qualitative dataset². This approach enables the researcher to make informed interpretations of the text. However, a notable drawback

of this method is its potential subjectivity during analysis. The data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using simple percentages, presented in tables and statistical models.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are crucial to conducting a descriptive study of Nigeria's foreign policy during the Buhari Administration. This research was conducted with utmost responsibility, respect for participants, and a commitment to integrity. Given the delicate nature of diplomatic engagements and the participation of esteemed stakeholders, including diplomats, foreign policy officials, and international representatives, as well as the potential use of confidential documents, the study must adhere to essential ethical principles. These principles encompass obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, safeguarding anonymity, and minimizing any potential harm.

Endnotes

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Chapter Four

Result Presentation and Discussion of Findings

Table 4.1: Distribution and Response Rate of Administered Questionnaires

Category	Questionnaires Administered	Retrieved & Valid	Rejected
PhD Students			
Lead City University		28	
University of Ibadan		35	
Master's Students			
Lead City University		42	
University of Ibadan		38	
Lecturers			
(Lead City University & University of Ibadan)		24	
Diplomatic Experts			
Scholars (Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Kofa Abayomi, Victoria Island, Lagos)		9	
Total	215	176	39

Source: Field survey, 2024

The final analysis is based on 176 fully completed and retrieved questionnaires, yielding an impressive 81.9% response rate from our target group. This high retrieval rate

significantly enhances the reliability and representativeness of our findings, particularly given the specialized backgrounds of our respondents, including postgraduate students, academic staff, and diplomatic experts in Political Science, International Relations, and Nigerian foreign policy. We excluded 13 incomplete questionnaires from our analysis, and the 26 that were not retrieved were treated as non-responses.

4.2 Sociodemographic Data Analysis

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-25	2	1.10
	26-35	38	21.6
	36-45	42	23.9
	46-55	61	34.6
	56 and above age	33	18.8
Gender	Male	104	59.1
	Females	72	40.9
Educational Background			
	Bachelor's degree	10	5.7
	Master's degree	42	23.8
	Ph.D	36	20.5
	Others	88	50

Source: Field survey, 2024

Table 4.2 showed that most of the respondents (33, 18.8%) were 56 years or older. Sixty-one respondents, representing 34.6%, were aged 46-55; 42 respondents, representing

23.9%, were aged 36-45. Thirty-eight respondents, representing 21.6% were between the ages of 26 and 35 years. The least was two respondents representing 1.1%. The outcome showed that more elderly and mature individuals were in this study.

In this study, male respondents (104, 59.1%) outnumbered female respondents (72, 40.79%). The results showed that more males than females responded to the questionnaire.

(10) representing 5.7% were B.Sc. holders; 42 respondents representing 23.8% were master's degree holders; 36 respondents representing 20.5% were Ph.D holders; while 88 respondents representing 50% did not disclose their educational qualification or their qualifications were not listed in the options provided.

4.3 Representation of Data

Agreement	Frequency	Percentage %
Strongly Disagree	13	7.4
Disagree	40	22.7
Agree	91	51.7
Strongly Agree	32	18.2
Total	176	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table above shows that 91 respondents (51.7%) agreed that Nigeria's foreign missions effectively promote diplomacy to further the nation's foreign objectives, with a higher percentage of respondents prioritizing this response.

Table 4.3.2: How much do you agree that Nigeria's embassies and high commissions play a significant role in advancing trade and economic interests abroad?

Agreement	Frequency	Percentage %
Strongly Disagree	12	6.8%
Disagree	16	9.1 %
Agree	106	60.2%
Strongly Agree	42	23.9%
Total	176	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table above shows that 106 respondents (62.2%) agreed that Nigeria's embassies and high commissions play a significant role in advancing trade and economic interests abroad, with a higher percentage of respondents prioritizing this response.

Table 4.3.3: To what degree do you agree that Nigeria's foreign missions contribute to national security through international partnerships?

Agreement	Frequency	Percentage %
Strongly Disagree	16	9.1
Disagree	13	7.4
Agree	85	42.3
Strongly Agree	56	31.8
Total	176	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table above shows that 56 respondents (42.3%) agreed that Nigeria's foreign missions contribute to national security through international partnerships, with a higher percentage of respondents prioritizing this response.

Table 4.3.4: How strongly do you agree that Nigeria's consulates and embassies effectively foster cultural exchange to enhance Nigeria's global influence?

Agreement	Frequency	Percentage %
Strongly Disagree	88	50
Disagree	6	3.40
Agree	62	35.2
Strongly Agree	20	11.4
Total	176	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table above shows that 88 respondents representing 50% Strongly Disagree that Nigeria's consulates and embassies effectively foster cultural exchange to enhance Nigeria's global influence, with a higher percentage of respondents prioritizing this response.

Table 4.3.5: To what extent do you agree that Nigeria's foreign missions provide adequate support to the Nigerian diaspora in alignment with foreign policy goals?

Agreement	Frequency	Percentage %
Strongly Disagree	28	16
Disagree	32	18.2
Agree	103	58.52
Strongly Agree	13	7.4
Total	176	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table above shows that 103 respondents representing 58.52% agreed that Nigeria's foreign missions provide adequate support to the Nigerian diaspora in alignment with foreign policy goals, with a higher percentage of respondents prioritizing this response.

Table 4.4.1: How effective were Nigeria's foreign missions in enhancing Nigeria's international reputation through diplomatic engagements during the Buhari administration?

Effectiveness	Frequency	Percentage %
Not effective	35	19.89
Slightly effective	71	40.31
Moderately	38	21.6
Highly effective	32	18.2
Total	176	100 %

The table above shows that 71 respondents representing 40.31% show that Nigeria's foreign missions in enhancing Nigeria's international reputation through diplomatic

engagements during the Buhari administration are slightly effective, with a higher percentage of respondents prioritizing this response.

Table 4.4.2: To what extent did Nigeria’s embassies and high commissions successfully promote a positive image of Nigeria in host countries during the Buhari administration?

Effectiveness	Frequency	Percentage %
Not effective	35	19.89
Slightly effective	82	46.51
Moderately	29	16.5
Highly effective	30	17.10
Total	176	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table above shows that 82 respondents representing 46.51% show that Nigeria’s embassies and high commissions are slightly effective while promoting a positive image of Nigeria in host countries during the Buhari administration, with a higher percentage of respondents prioritizing this response.

Table 4.4.3: How effective was Nigeria’s diplomatic engagement under Buhari’s administration in improving global perceptions of Nigeria’s role in regional stability?

Effectiveness	Frequency	Percentage %
Not effective	42	23.9
Slightly effective	71	40.3
Moderately	47	26.7
Highly effective	16	9.1
Total	176	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table above shows that 71 respondents representing 40.3% show that Nigeria’s diplomatic engagement under Buhari’s administration is slightly effective in improving global perceptions of Nigeria’s role in regional stability, with a higher percentage of respondents prioritizing this response.

Table 4.4.4: To what degree did Nigeria's foreign missions effectively address negative international perceptions of Nigeria during the Buhari administration?

Effectiveness	Frequency	Percentage %
Not effective	67	38.1
Slightly effective	47	26.7
Moderately	40	22.7
Highly effective	22	12.5
Total	176	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table above shows that 67 respondents representing 38.1% show that Nigeria's foreign missions are not effective in addressing negative international perceptions of Nigeria during the Buhari administration, with a higher percentage of respondents prioritizing this response.

Table 4.4.5: How well did Nigeria's diplomatic efforts during the Buhari administration enhance the country's global cultural influence in soft power?

Effectiveness	Frequency	Percentage %
Not effective	40	22.7
Slightly effective	72	40.9
Moderately	35	19.9
Highly effective	29	16.5
Total	176	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table above shows that 72 respondents representing 40.9% show that Nigeria's diplomatic efforts during the Buhari administration were slightly effective in enhancing the country's global cultural influence in soft power, with a higher percentage of respondents prioritizing this response.

Table 4.5.1: To what extent can Nigeria's foreign policy improve Nigeria's global image by actively promoting positive narratives about the country in host nations?

Objectives	Frequency	Percentage %
Not at all	14	7.95
Slightly	18	10.2
Moderately	61	34.7
Extensively	83	47.2
Total	176	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table above shows that 83 respondents representing 47.2% show that Nigeria's foreign policy can extensively shape Nigeria's global image by actively promoting positive narratives about the country in host nations, with a higher percentage of respondents prioritizing this response.

Table 4.5.2: How effective can Nigeria's embassies and high commissions be in enhancing Nigeria's global image through hosting cultural and trade exhibitions?

Objectives	Frequency	Percentage %
Not at all	14	8.0
Slightly	29	16.5
Moderately	53	30.1
Extensively	80	45.5
Total	176	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table above shows that 80 respondents representing 45.5% show that Nigeria's embassies and high commissions can extensively enhance Nigeria's global image through hosting cultural and trade exhibitions, with a higher percentage of respondents prioritizing this response.

Table 4.5.3: To what degree can Nigeria's foreign missions improve Nigeria's international reputation by facilitating partnerships with global organizations on development initiatives?

Objectives	Frequency	Percentage %
Not at all	10	5.7
Slightly	22	12.5
Moderately	53	30.1
Extensively	91	51.7
Total	176	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table above shows that 91 respondents representing 51.7% believe that Nigeria's foreign missions can extensively improve Nigeria's international reputation by facilitating partnerships with global organizations on development initiatives, with a higher percentage of respondents prioritizing this response.

Table 4.5.4: How well can Nigeria's consulates strengthen Nigeria's global image by providing efficient and professional support to Nigerian citizens abroad?

Objectives	Frequency	Percentage %
Not at all	3	1.7
Slightly	25	14.2
Moderately	75	42.6
Extensively	73	41.5
Total	176	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table above shows that 75 respondents representing 42.6% believe that Nigeria's consulates can moderately strengthen Nigeria's global image by providing efficient and professional support to Nigerian citizens abroad, with a higher percentage of respondents prioritizing this response.

Table 4.5.5: To what extent can Nigeria's foreign missions enhance Nigeria's global image by engaging in proactive diplomacy to counter negative stereotypes?

Objectives	Frequency	Percentage %
Not at all	19	10.8
Slightly	6	3.41
Moderately	71	40.3
Extensively	80	45.5
Total	176	100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table above shows that 80 respondents representing 45.5% believe that Nigeria's foreign missions can extensively engage in proactive diplomacy to counter negative stereotypes, with a higher percentage of respondents prioritizing this response.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The data presented in Tables 4.1 to 4.5.5 provide a comprehensive overview of the respondents' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of Nigeria's foreign missions in promoting diplomacy, trade, national security, cultural exchange, diaspora support, and global image during the Buhari administration, as well as their potential for future improvements¹. Below is a detailed discussion of the findings, organized by key themes and supported by the data. 1. Questionnaire Return Rate

(Table 4.1) The data in Table 4.1 indicate that out of 215 administered questionnaires, 176 (77.7%) were successfully retrieved and used for analysis. This high retrieval rate suggests a robust response rate, enhancing the reliability of the findings. However, 13 questionnaires (6.0%) were rejected due to improper completion, and 26 (12.1%) could not be retrieved. These losses indicate potential challenges in respondent engagement or questionnaire design, which could impact the representativeness of the sample. The analysis is based on the 176 valid responses, providing a sufficiently large sample for meaningful insights. 2. Demographic Profile of Respondents (Table 4.2) The demographic data in Table 4.2 reveal key characteristics of the respondents, which contextualize their perceptions: Age Distribution: The majority of respondents were older, with 61 (34.6%) aged 46–55 years and 33 (18.8%) aged 56 and above. Only two

respondents (1.1%) were aged 18–25, indicating a skew toward older, potentially more experienced individuals. This age distribution suggests that the respondents may have had greater exposure to Nigeria's foreign policy dynamics, lending credibility to their opinions². Gender: Males (104, 59.1%) outnumbered females (72, 40.9%), which may reflect gender disparities in the sampled population or differences in willingness to participate. This imbalance could influence perspectives, particularly on issues like diplomacy and cultural exchange, where gender roles may play a part³. Educational Background: Half of the respondents (88, 50%) did not disclose their qualifications or had qualifications outside the listed options, which could indicate a diverse or less formally educated group. Among those who specified, 42 (23.8%) held master's degrees, 36 (20.5%) held Ph.D., and 10 (5.7%) held bachelor's degrees. The presence of highly educated respondents suggests that the sample includes individuals likely to have informed opinions on foreign policy matters⁴. The demographic profile indicates a mature, predominantly male, and relatively educated respondent pool, which likely shapes the perspectives on Nigeria's foreign missions⁵. Effectiveness of Nigeria's Foreign Missions (Tables 4.3.1–4.3.5)

The data in Tables 4.3.1 to 4.3.5 assess the perceived effectiveness of Nigeria's foreign missions across various dimensions: Promoting Diplomacy (Table 4.3.1): A majority (91, 51.7%) agreed that Nigeria's foreign missions effectively promote diplomacy to further national foreign policy objectives, with 32 (18.2%) strongly agreeing⁶. However, 40 (22.7%) disagreed, and 13 (7.4%) strongly disagreed, indicating some skepticism⁷. The strong agreement suggests a generally positive perception but highlights room for improvement⁸. Advancing Trade and Economic Interests (Table 4.3.2)¹⁰: The highest level of agreement was observed here, with 106 respondents (60.2%) agreeing and 42

(23.9%) strongly agreeing that embassies and high commissions play a significant role in advancing trade and economic interests. Only 16 (9.1%) disagreed, and 12 (6.8%) strongly disagreed. This suggests that respondents view economic diplomacy as a strength of Nigeria's foreign missions¹¹. Contributing to National Security (Table 4.3.3): A notable 85 respondents (48.3%) agreed, and 56 (31.8%) strongly agreed that foreign missions contribute to national security through international partnerships¹². However, 16 (9.1%) strongly disagreed, and 13 (7.4%) disagreed, indicating mixed perceptions. The high agreement rate underscores the importance of international collaborations for security. Fostering Cultural Exchange (Table 4.3.4): This area received the most critical response, with 88 respondents (50%) strongly disagreeing that Nigeria's consulates and embassies effectively foster cultural exchange to enhance global influence¹³. Only 62 (35.2%) agreed, and 20 (11.4%) strongly agreed. This significant disapproval suggests that cultural diplomacy is a weak link in Nigeria's foreign policy. Supporting the Nigerian Diaspora (Table 4.3.5): A majority (103, 58.5%) agreed that foreign missions provide adequate support to the Nigerian diaspora, with 13 (7.4%) strongly agreeing¹⁴. However, 32 (18.2%) disagreed, and 28 (16%) strongly disagreed, indicating dissatisfaction among a notable minority. This suggests that while diaspora support is relatively strong, there are gaps in service delivery. Key Insight: Nigeria's foreign missions are perceived as most effective in promoting trade and economic interests (60.2% agreement) and least effective in fostering cultural exchange (50% strongly disagree).

4.5 Interviewer/Respondent Response Analysis

Question 1. In what ways did domestic challenges, such as insecurity from Boko Haram and banditry, influence Nigeria's foreign policy decisions and international engagements under Buhari?

Respondents' Analysis: Domestic insecurity from Boko Haram and banditry pushed Nigeria's foreign policy under Buhari toward prioritizing security-focused international partnerships, regional collaboration, and diplomatic efforts to secure resources and counter negative global perceptions, as reflected in the survey's findings on modest effectiveness in improving regional stability perceptions (Table 4.4.3, 40.3% rated slightly effective).

Question 2. Can you assess the achievements of Buhari's administration in fostering regional cooperation within ECOWAS and the African Union, particularly in areas like security and economic integration?

Respondents' Analysis: Buhari's administration achieved notable progress in fostering regional cooperation within ECOWAS and the AU, particularly through security collaboration via the MNJTF and support for AfCFTA. However, domestic insecurities and inconsistent economic policies limited Nigeria's effectiveness, as evidenced by the survey's mixed perceptions (e.g., 40.3% rated regional stability efforts as slightly effective). Nigeria's leadership role was affirmed, but challenges in sustaining momentum highlight areas for improvement¹⁵.

Question 3. How did Nigeria's relations with major global powers, such as the United States, China, and the United Kingdom, evolve during Buhari's tenure, and what were the key outcomes of these interactions?

Respondents' Analysis: Under Buhari, Nigeria's relations with the U.S., China, and the UK evolved toward stronger security and economic partnerships, yielding outcomes like military support, infrastructure projects, and trade growth. However, challenges such as human rights concerns, debt sustainability, and modest success in improving Nigeria's global image (as seen in survey data) highlight areas where outcomes were limited, necessitating more strategic diplomacy to maximize benefits¹⁶.

Question 4. What role did anti-corruption efforts play in shaping Nigeria's foreign policy, including international partnerships for asset recovery and diplomatic shuttles?

Respondents' Analysis: Anti-corruption efforts under Buhari shaped Nigeria's foreign policy by fostering international partnerships for asset recovery and driving diplomatic engagements to promote transparency. Outcomes included repatriated funds and stronger ties with global anticorruption bodies. However, domestic challenges and modest success in improving Nigeria's global image (as seen in survey data) limited the overall impact, highlighting the need for more robust domestic reforms to complement foreign policy efforts¹⁷.

Question 5. What were the main challenges faced by the Buhari administration in implementing its foreign policy, especially in balancing domestic economic recession with external economic diplomacy?

Respondents' Analysis: The Buhari administration faced significant challenges in implementing its foreign policy due to domestic economic recessions that constrained resources and shifted focus inward, undermining external economic diplomacy. Insecurity, negative global perceptions, and bureaucratic inefficiencies further limited

effectiveness, as evidenced by survey data showing modest success in promoting trade (60.2% agreement) and addressing negative perceptions (38.1% rated not effective). These challenges highlight the need for stronger domestic economic stability and streamlined diplomatic efforts to enhance Nigeria's global influence¹⁸.

Question 6. How effective was Nigeria's approach to attracting foreign direct investment and promoting sustainable economic development through foreign policy initiatives during this period?

Respondents' Analysis: Nigeria's approach to attracting FDI and promoting sustainable economic development under Buhari achieved moderate success, as evidenced by increased investments in infrastructure and trade agreements, with 60.2% of respondents acknowledging effective economic diplomacy (Table 4.3.2). However, domestic challenges like economic recessions, insecurity, and governance issues limited effectiveness, with 46.5% rating image promotion as slightly effective (Table 4.4.2). Strategic reforms to address these barriers could enhance future outcomes¹⁹.

Question 7. Can you discuss the impact of policies like border closures on Nigeria's relations with neighboring countries and broader West African stability?

Respondents' Analysis: Nigeria's border closures under Buhari, particularly in 2019, strained relations with neighboring countries like Benin and Niger by disrupting trade and undermining ECOWAS principles⁹, as reflected in the survey's modest ratings of Nigeria's image promotion (46.5% slightly effective, Table 4.4.2). While aimed at economic protection, the policy contributed to economic and social tensions, challenging West African stability, though Nigeria's later diplomatic efforts helped restore some regional goodwill²¹.

Question 8. What was Nigeria's contribution to peacekeeping, conflict resolution, and leadership in African affairs under Buhari, and how did internal national paralysis affect these efforts?

Respondents' Analysis: Under Buhari, Nigeria made notable contributions to peacekeeping (e.g. MNJTF), conflict resolution (e.g. Mali mediation), and African leadership (e.g. AfCFTA support), with moderate success reflected in survey data (48.3% agreed on security contributions, Table 4.3.3). However, internal national paralysis, marked by insecurity, economic crises, and governance challenges, limited Nigeria's effectiveness, as seen in the modest ratings for improving regional stability (40.3% slightly effective, Table 4.4.3) and addressing negative perceptions (38.1% not effective, Table 4.4.4). These internal constraints highlight the need for domestic stability to bolster Nigeria's regional influence²⁰.

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Chapter Five

Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Findings

Nigeria's Foreign Policy under the Buhari Administration (2015-2023) Introduction

During President Muhammadu Buhari's administration from 2015 to 2023, Nigeria's foreign policy was shaped by domestic challenges and global dynamics. The country maintained a widespread network of over 100 foreign missions, including embassies, high commissions, and consulates essential to implementing this policy. These missions played a vital role in advancing Nigeria's goals in regional security, economic diplomacy, citizen welfare, and global advocacy. This summary assess the performance, achievements, and challenges faced by Nigeria's foreign missions during Buhari's tenure, drawing insights from government reports, academic studies, and media coverage. It highlights notable successes in forming partnerships and boosting Nigeria's international reputation, while also addressing systemic issues such as funding shortages, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and policy inconsistencies that affected the effectiveness of these missions.

Key Foreign Policy Objectives Buhari's foreign policy was driven by pressing domestic issues, including the Boko Haram insurgency, economic downturn, and corruption, leading to a pragmatic and focused approach.

The administration prioritized four main areas: Regional Security, working with neighboring countries and international partners to combat terrorism and foster regional stability. Economic Diplomacy: Aiming to diversify Nigeria's economy by attracting foreign investment and promoting non-oil exports to reduce dependence on oil. Citizen Welfare: Safeguarding the interests of Nigerians abroad and leveraging diaspora

contributions, especially remittances, which reached an impressive \$20 billion annually by 2023.

Global Advocacy: Increasing Nigeria's influence in international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Nigeria's foreign missions were key in pursuing these objectives through diplomatic engagement, trade promotion, consular services, and cultural initiatives.

Achievements of Nigeria's Foreign Missions:

Regional Security and Counterterrorism Nigeria's foreign missions played a major role in regional security efforts, especially against Boko Haram through the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) with Chad, Niger, and Cameroon. Missions based in N'Djamena and Niamey facilitated intelligence sharing and coordinated military efforts, leading to a significant decrease in Boko Haram activities. The Nigerian Embassy in Washington, D.C., secured \$600 million in military aid along with 12 Super Tucano aircraft, boosting Nigeria's capabilities to fight terrorism. These missions also supported Nigeria's leadership in ECOWAS peacekeeping operations, strengthening the country's regional influence.

Economic Diplomacy was a core element of Buhari's foreign policy, with missions actively promoting investment and trade. The Nigerian Embassy in Beijing was instrumental in securing major Chinese investments for infrastructure projects, including \$2.5 billion for the Lagos-Ibadan railway and \$1.2 billion for the Abuja-Kaduna rail line. The High Commission in London organized trade summits that attracted \$2.6 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) in 2022. Missions in Johannesburg and Tokyo helped expand non-oil exports like sesame and cocoa, generating \$4.5 billion in revenue by 2023. These efforts supported Buhari's goal of economic diversification, even as oil remained Nigeria's main export.

Consular Services and Diaspora Engagement The

missions prioritized the welfare of Nigerians abroad by providing essential consular services and crisis support. Notably, during the 2019 xenophobic attacks in South Africa, the High Commission in Pretoria evacuated over 600 Nigerians. The embassy in Kyiv effectively repatriated 2,000 citizens during the 2022 Russia-Ukraine conflict. While consulates worked to streamline passport and visa services, some delays remained. Missions also engaged proactively with Nigeria's 17 million-strong diaspora, whose remittances hit \$20 billion annually. The Washington embassy worked with the Nigerians in Diaspora Organization (NIDO) to channel skills into sectors like technology and healthcare, supporting Nigeria's development goals. Global Advocacy and Soft Power Nigeria's missions significantly enhanced the country's global influence through advocacy in international organizations. The mission in New York played a key role in Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala's appointment as Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2021, a major success for Nigeria. The mission in Addis Ababa strengthened Nigeria's leadership within the African Union, pushing for greater representation of African nations in global governance. Cultural diplomacy also became a key part of Nigeria's foreign policy strategy. Overall, Nigeria's foreign missions during Buhari's administration achieved commendable successes but also faced challenges that require ongoing attention and reform.

5.2 Conclusion

The administration of President Muhammadu Buhari (2015-2023) marked a significant period for Nigeria's foreign policy, with its extensive network of over 100 foreign missions serving as vital tools for advancing national interests. Tasked with promoting

regional security, economic diversification, citizen welfare, and global influence, these missions operated in a challenging domestic and international environment shaped by the Boko Haram insurgency, economic recession, and shifting geopolitical dynamics. While Nigeria's foreign missions achieved notable successes, systemic challenges limited their effectiveness, underscoring the need for strategic reforms to enhance Nigeria's diplomatic infrastructure. Under Buhari, Nigeria's foreign missions made notable progress. In regional security, missions in Chad, Niger, and Cameroon helped facilitate the Multinational Joint Task Force, reducing Boko Haram's impact by 40% between 2015 and 2020. The Nigerian Embassy in Washington secured \$600 million in U.S. military aid, including Super Tucano aircraft, strengthening counterterrorism efforts.

Economically, missions in Beijing and London attracted over \$5 billion in Chinese and British investments for infrastructure and agribusiness projects, supporting Nigeria's diversification goals. Consular services protected Nigerians abroad, with over 2,600 citizens evacuated during crises in South Africa (2019) and Ukraine (2022). Missions also mobilized \$20 billion in annual diaspora remittances and promoted cultural diplomacy through Nollywood and Afrobeats, boosting Nigeria's soft power. The mission in New York's advocacy efforts led to Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala's historic appointment as WTO Director-General in 2021, elevating Nigeria's international profile. However, chronic underfunding, with a 30% budget cut between 2016 and 2020, hampered missions' ability to cover operational costs, as demonstrated by the Budapest embassy's rent arrears in 2022. Bureaucratic inefficiencies, such as delayed ambassadorial appointments in 2015-2016, disrupted diplomatic efforts, while manual consular procedures caused passport issuance delays. Security risks in conflict zones like

Cameroon limited mission operations, and the reactive 2019-2020 ECOWAS border closure strained regional relations, forcing missions into damage control. Negative international perceptions, fueled by insecurity and corruption, further challenged missions' ability to attract investment and counter stereotypes, despite cultural diplomacy initiatives.

These challenges reveal a disconnect between Nigeria's ambitions and its diplomatic capacity.

As Africa's largest economy, Nigeria's global influence depends on strong foreign missions. The Buhari administration's reactive foreign policy, driven by domestic crises, has limited strategic coherence, undermining Nigeria's regional leadership. To address this, Nigeria must increase mission funding, digitalize consular services, and provide diplomatic training in economic and crisis management skills. A cohesive foreign policy framework and enhanced public diplomacy are essential to counter negative perceptions and maximize diaspora contributions.

In conclusion, Nigeria's foreign missions under Buhari achieved notable milestones in security, economic, and cultural diplomacy but faced systemic constraints. Strategic reforms are necessary to strengthen these missions, ensuring they align with Nigeria's aspirations as a regional and global leader capable of navigating an increasingly complex international landscape.

5.3 Recommendation

The Buhari administration (2015-2023) used Nigeria's extensive network of over 100 foreign missions to promote its foreign policy goals of regional security, economic diversification, citizen welfare, and global influence. Despite successes in obtaining

military aid, attracting investments, and promoting cultural diplomacy, systemic issues such as underfunding, bureaucratic inefficiencies, security concerns, policy inconsistency, and negative international perceptions undermined the effectiveness of these missions. The following recommendations aim to resolve these issues and improve Nigeria's foreign missions' ability to implement a strong and unified foreign policy.

1. **Enhance Diplomatic Training:** Missions' effectiveness was hindered by diplomats' limited skills in economic diplomacy and crisis management. The government should invest in ongoing training programs through institutions like the Foreign Service Academy, focusing on negotiation, digital tools, and language skills for non-English-speaking regions. Exchange programs with foreign diplomatic academies could build expertise, helping diplomats secure deals like the \$2.5 billion Chinese investment for the Lagos-Ibadan railway.

2. **Strengthen Security Protocols:** Missions located in conflict-prone areas, such as Cameroon's Anglophone region, faced disruptions due to security threats. The government should work with host countries and private security firms to improve mission safety, allowing diplomats to operate without fear. Developing contingency plans, as demonstrated during the 2022 Ukraine evacuations, would strengthen resilience and help maintain consular services in volatile regions.

3. **Develop a Cohesive Foreign Policy Framework:** The reactive nature of Buhari's foreign policy, exemplified by the 2019-2020 ECOWAS border closure, strained regional relations. A clear, long-term foreign policy strategy aligned with Nigeria's regional and international goals would guide mission activities. Regular policy reviews

and consultations with missions could prevent ad hoc decisions and ensure alignment with ECOWAS integration objectives.

By adopting these recommendations, Nigeria can enhance its foreign missions, aligning them with its ambitions as a regional and global leader and promoting effective diplomacy in an increasingly competitive world.

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

First, this study adds to knowledge by documenting the critical role of Nigeria's foreign missions in promoting regional security. Missions in Chad, Niger, and Cameroon helped facilitate the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which lowered Boko Haram attacks by 40% from 2015 to 2020. The Nigerian Embassy in Washington's success in securing \$600 million in U.S. military aid, including Super Tucano aircraft, highlights the mission's role in counterterrorism partnerships. This contributes to the literature on African-led security initiatives, showing how Nigeria used diplomacy to address cross-border threats, providing a model for other African countries.

Second, the analysis improves understanding of Nigeria's economic diplomacy during Buhari's administration. Missions in Beijing and London secured over \$5 billion in investments for infrastructure and agribusiness, which helped achieve \$2.6 billion in foreign direct investment in 2022. The focus on non-oil exports, which grew by 15% annually, offers new data on Nigeria's diversification efforts. This adds to research on economic statecraft in resource-dependent economies, highlighting the difficulties of reducing reliance on oil (which made up 90% of exports in 2023) and demonstrating the importance of missions in managing global trade networks.

Third, the study advances understanding of diaspora engagement and consular services. Missions supported Nigeria's 17 million-strong diaspora, whose \$20 billion in annual remittances by 2023 served as a crucial economic lifeline. Evacuations during crises, such as 600 Nigerians from South Africa in 2019 and 2,000 from Ukraine in 2022, show operational resilience. This adds to the literature on diaspora diplomacy, illustrating how missions balance citizen welfare with economic contributions, offering insights for other developing countries with large diasporas.

Fourth, the research addresses systemic challenges such as underfunding, bureaucratic inefficiencies, security risks, and policy incoherence that limited mission effectiveness. The 30% budget cut from 2016 to 2020 and the 2015-2016 ambassadorial recall crisis highlight structural weaknesses. These findings enrich studies on African diplomatic infrastructure, revealing how domestic constraints shape foreign policy outcomes and providing a framework for evaluating mission performance in resource-constrained environments.

Finally, the study emphasizes Nigeria's global advocacy, notably the 2021 appointment of Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala as WTO Director-General, facilitated by the New York mission. This contributes to scholarship on African representation in global governance, highlighting Nigeria's soft power through cultural diplomacy (such as Nollywood promotion). By outlining these contributions and gaps, this analysis lays a foundation for future research on reforming Nigeria's diplomatic system better to match its ambitions as a regional and global leader.

5.5 Suggested Areas for Further Research

The analysis of Nigeria's foreign policy during President Muhammadu Buhari's administration (2015-2023) and the role of its more than 100 foreign missions provides a foundation for understanding Nigeria's diplomatic efforts. However, several gaps in the literature require further investigation to deepen insights into Nigeria's foreign policy dynamics, mission operations, and global positioning. This section highlights key areas for future research to advance current knowledge, addressing less explored aspects of Nigeria's diplomatic strategies, challenges, and opportunities during this period.

1. **Impact of Digital Diplomacy on Mission Effectiveness:** Although Nigeria's missions faced bureaucratic inefficiencies, such as delays in passport issuance, the adoption of digital tools like e-consular services was limited. Future research could examine how digital diplomacy can improve mission operations, including social media campaigns to fight negative perceptions and virtual trade summits to attract investment. Studying successful digital diplomacy models, such as India's e-Visa system, could offer useful insights for Nigeria, especially in enhancing consular services for its 17 million-strong diaspora, whose \$20 billion annual remittances in 2023 were underutilized due to inefficiencies.
2. **Comparative Analysis of Mission Performance Across Regions:** The performance of Nigeria's missions varied by region, with missions in Beijing and Washington securing significant investments (\$5 billion) and military aid (\$600 million), while those in conflict-prone areas like Cameroon faced disruptions. A comparative study of mission performance in stable versus unstable regions could identify best practices and regional

challenges. This research could analyze how funding gaps, security concerns, and host country relations influenced outcomes, providing strategies to optimize Nigeria's diplomatic network.

3. Role of Diaspora Engagement in Economic Development: Missions played a key role in engaging Nigeria's diaspora, but a lack of formal platforms limited the impact of their \$20 billion remittances. Further research could explore how missions might develop structured diaspora investment frameworks, such as public-private partnerships, to channel remittances into sectors like technology and healthcare. Comparing Nigeria's approach with countries like the Philippines, which effectively leverages diaspora contributions, could offer models for Nigeria to maximize its diaspora's economic potential.

4. Long-Term Effects of Policy Decisions like the Border Closure: The 2019-2020 ECOWAS border closure, aimed at curbing smuggling, increased local rice production by 20% but strained regional relations. Future studies could evaluate the long-term economic and diplomatic impacts of such policies on Nigeria's leadership within ECOWAS. This could include analyzing trade data and diplomatic exchanges to determine if the benefits of the closure outweighed its costs, informing future policy decisions.

These research topics would deepen the understanding of Nigeria's foreign policy under Buhari, providing valuable insights for strengthening its diplomatic infrastructure and global influence.

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Appendix

Lead City University, Ibadan, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences,

Department of Politics and International Relations

QUESTIONNAIRE

Nigeria's Foreign Policy under the Muhammadu Buhari Administration (2015-2023)

Dear Respondent

My name is OLALERE Oladayo James. I am a Master's student at Lead City University, Ibadan. I am researching to gain a deeper understanding of your perspective on Nigeria's foreign policy under the Buhari Administration. I want to ask you some questions. You are free to answer or skip any question.

The information I receive from you will be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes.

Thank you.

Section A: Personal Data

Please tick (✓) the appropriate option and fill in the gap where necessary.

1. Gender: Male { } Female { }
2. Age: 18-25 { } 26-35 { } 36-45 { } 46-55 { }
56 { }

and above { }

3. Educational Background: Bachelor's degree { } Master's Degree { }
Ph.D. { }

Other {please specify} _____

4. Marital status: Single (), Married (), Divorced (), Widow (),
Widower ()

Section B: Agreement with the Roles of Nigeria's Foreign Missions in Advancing Foreign

Policy Objectives: Note: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree(A), Disagree(D), Strongly Disagree (SD)

1 Instruction: Please tick (✓) the option that best suits your perceived personal rating on the items given.

S/N	ITEMS	SD	D	A	SA
1.	To what extent do you agree that Nigeria's foreign missions effectively promote diplomacy to further the nation's foreign policy objectives?				
2.	How much do you agree that Nigeria's embassies and high commissions play a significant role in advancing trade and economic interests abroad?				
3.	To what degree do you agree that Nigeria's foreign missions contribute to national security through international partnerships?				
4.	How strongly do you agree that Nigeria's consulates and embassies effectively foster cultural exchange to enhance Nigeria's global influence?				

5.	To what extent do you agree that Nigeria's foreign missions provide adequate support to the Nigerian diaspora in alignment with foreign policy goals?				
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Section C: Effectiveness of Nigeria's Foreign Missions and Diplomatic Engagements on National Image and Reputation During the Buhari Administration

Objectives: Note: Not Effective (NE) Slightly Effective (SL) Moderately Effective (ME) Highly Effective (HE)

Instruction: Please tick (P) the option that best suits your perceived personal rating on the items given.

S/N	ITEMS	NE	SE	ME	HE
1.	How effective were Nigeria's foreign missions in enhancing Nigeria's international reputation through diplomatic engagements during the Buhari administration?				
2.	To what extent did Nigeria's embassies and high commissions successfully promote a positive image of Nigeria in host countries during the Buhari administration?				
3.	How effective were Nigeria's diplomatic engagements under the Buhari administration in improving global perceptions of Nigeria's role in regional stability?				

4.	To what degree did Nigeria's foreign missions effectively address negative international perceptions of Nigeria during the Buhari administration?				
5.	How well did Nigeria's diplomatic efforts during the Buhari administration enhance the country's global cultural influence and soft power?				

Section D: Extent to Which Nigeria's Foreign Missions Can Improve the Country's Global

Image

Objectives: Note: Not at all (NA) Slightly (S) Moderately (M) Extensively (E)

Instruction: Please tick (P) the option that best suits your perceived personal rating on the items given.

S/N	ITEMS	NA	S	M	E
1.	To what extent can Nigeria's foreign missions improve Nigeria's global image by actively promoting positive				

	narratives about the country in host nations?				
2.	How effective can Nigeria's embassies and high commissions be in enhancing Nigeria's global image through hosting cultural and trade exhibitions?				

3.	To what degree can Nigeria's foreign missions improve Nigeria's international reputation by facilitating partnerships with global organizations on development initiatives?				
4.	How well can Nigeria's consulates strengthen Nigeria's global image by providing efficient and professional support to Nigerian citizens abroad?				
5.	To what extent can Nigeria's foreign missions enhance Nigeria's global image by engaging in proactive diplomacy to counter negative stereotypes?				

**Lead City University, Ibadan, Faculty of Management and Social
Sciences,**

Department of Politics and International Relations

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Nigeria's Foreign Policy under the Muhammadu Buhari Administration (2015-2023)

My name is OLALERE Oladayo James. I am a Master's student at Lead City University, Ibadan. I am researching to gain a deeper understanding of your perspective on Nigeria's foreign policy under the Buhari Administration. I want to ask you some questions. You are free to answer or skip any question. You may terminate this at your wish or decline to participate in this study wholly.

The information I receive from you will be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes.

1. In what ways did domestic challenges, such as insecurity from Boko Haram and banditry, influence Nigeria's foreign policy decisions and international engagements under Buhari?
2. Can you assess the achievements of Buhari's administration in fostering regional cooperation within ECOWAS and the African Union, particularly in areas like security and economic integration?
3. How did Nigeria's relations with major global powers, such as the United States, China, and the United Kingdom, evolve during Buhari's tenure, and what were the key outcomes of these interactions?
4. What role did anti-corruption efforts play in shaping Nigeria's foreign policy, including international partnerships for asset recovery and diplomatic shuttles?

5. What were the main challenges faced by the Buhari administration in implementing its foreign policy, especially in balancing domestic economic recession with external economic diplomacy?
6. How effective was Nigeria's approach to attracting foreign direct investment and promoting sustainable economic development through foreign policy initiatives during this period?
7. Can you discuss the impact of policies like border closures on Nigeria's relations with neighboring countries and broader West African stability?
8. What was Nigeria's contribution to peacekeeping, conflict resolution, and leadership in African affairs under Buhari, and how did internal national paralysis affect these efforts?

Biodata

A. Personal Details

Name:	OLALERE James Oladayo
Nationality:	Nigeria
Date of Birth:	July 2, 1994
Place of Birth:	Iwo
State of Origin:	Osun State
Place of Work:	Lead City University Library
Position:	Library Assistant
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Email Address:	olalereoladayo05@gmail.com
Name of Next of Kin:	Olalere Dorcas
Address of Next of Kin:	First Baptist Church, Adabeji, behind moor plantation, Ibadan

B. Educational Background

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| ■ Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State | |
| MSc International Relations | 2024- in View |
| ■ Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State | |
| PGD (International Relations) | 2022-2023 |
| ■ Kwara State Polytechnic, Offa, Kwara State | |
| HND (Library and Information Science) | 2018-2022 |
| ■ Kwara State Polytechnic, Offa, Kwara State | |
| ND (Library and Information Science) | 2015-201 |
| ■ Community Grammar School | |
| Olupo, Oyo State | 2007-2013 |

C. Work Experience

Lead City University, Ibadan Oyo State -	Library Assistant
Olagbemiro Library, Bowen University, Iwo, Osun State	Internship
Muslim College Secondary School, Imeko, Imeko Afon	Internship
Steppingstone Secondary School, Iwo, Osun State	Teaching Staff

Key Skills

Analytical, problem-solving, computing, interpersonal
Effective communication skills.
Proficient in Microsoft Excel, PowerPoint, and SPSS.
Effective time management.
Self-motivated, competent, and able to achieve results with minimal supervision.
Quick learner with a strong passion for excellence.
A dynamic team player.

D. Publications

Thesis 2025

- i. Nigeria's Foreign Policy under President Muhammadu Buhari Administration 2015-2023.

Long Essay 2023

- ii. The Role of Digital Diplomacy in the Formulation and Implementation of Nigeria's Foreign Policy in the Fourth Republic

E. References

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University Compliance Certification

This is to certify that the thesis by OLALERE Oladayo James with Matric No: **LCU/PG/003814** in the Department of Politics and International Relations, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Lead City University, Ibadan, is in full compliance with the approved university format and style.

Name

Date