THE DOMESTIC ENVIRONMENT AND NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY (2010-2019)

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Abstract

Research Problem: *This study examined the nexus between the domestic environment and Nigeria's foreign policy, 2010-2019. Nigeria's regional ambitions during 2010–2019 coexisted with domestic governance, economic and security pressures that complicated the pursuit of its foreign-policy objectives.*
Methods/theory: *The study uses a qualitative, documentary approach and an ex post facto design. It analyses scholarly literature, policy material and contemporary reporting through thematic content analysis, guided by the Innerpolitik paradigm.*
Results: *The evidence reviewed indicates that insecurity, corruption allegations, weak institutional capacity, economic constraints and leadership choices shaped Nigeria's external priorities and its requests for bilateral and multilateral cooperation. The Jonathan administration's citizenship diplomacy and economic diplomacy agenda operated amid the Chibok abductions and Boko Haram violence while Buhari's first term foregrounded anti-corruption, counterterrorism and economic diplomacy.*
Conclusion: *The study concludes that domestic constraints did not eliminate Nigeria's diplomatic activity but affected its credibility, priorities and implementation capacity. Thus, foreign-policy effectiveness depends partly on the alignment between external ambitions and domestic governance performance; domestic factors interact with, rather than wholly replace, international influences.*
Key contribution to Knowledge: *The study's contribution offers a period-specific comparison of how domestic political, economic and security conditions shaped foreign-policy priorities across two administrations.*

Recommendation: *The study recommends amongst others that the government should strengthen accountable governance and citizen welfare, improve security-sector effectiveness, diversify the economy, and give professional diplomats and relevant technical experts a substantive role in policy design and implementation.*

1. Introduction

Foreign policy is made at the intersection of domestic politics and the international environment. Political institutions, economic resources, public opinion, bureaucratic capacity and security conditions shape the choices available to decision makers and influence how external partners assess the commitments of a state in the international system (Hussain, 2011). Domestic conditions are therefore not merely background circumstances as they can affect both the substance of foreign policy and the capacity to implement it. In this instance, Nigeria is a useful case because its population, resources and regional role have supported expectations of continental leadership, while persistent governance and security problems have complicated the projection of that role.

Scholarly literature on Nigeria's external relations has examined unresolved policy issues, the evolution of foreign-policy doctrine, national image and the relationship between domestic factors and external engagement (Ambe-Uva & Adegboyega, 2007; Ebegbulem, 2019; Ujara & Ibietan, 2018). Studies also consider the image consequences of corruption and the administrations of Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari (Akuche, 2021, 2022; Idowu & Ogunbiyi, 2024; Out et al., 2018).

Thus, while these contributions establish that domestic factors matter, however, existing literature is yet to consistently bring political governance, economic pressures, insecurity and leadership choices into a single comparison of the 2010–2019 period. Some works address broad historical evolution, unresolved foreign-policy issues, image management or particular policy episodes. The analytical problem is therefore not that domestic determinants have been ignored altogether, but that their combined operation across the Jonathan administration (2010–2015) and Buhari's first term (2015–2019) requires analytical synthesis.

The core issue under this present study anchors on the tension between Nigeria's regional and international ambitions and domestic conditions that affected its ability to pursue and implement foreign-policy objectives during 2010–2019. In this vein, the study asks: how did political, economic and security conditions shape Nigeria's foreign-policy priorities during the two administrations, and how did leadership choices and governance outcomes affect the country's international reputation and diplomatic leverage? To interrogate this, the study pursues two specific objectives: (1) to examine how domestic political, economic and security conditions influenced Nigeria's foreign policy under Jonathan and Buhari; and (2) to assess how leadership choices and governance outcomes affected Nigeria's external reputation, diplomatic leverage and capacity to protect its interests. Its central argument is that domestic pressures shaped the priorities and implementation conditions of foreign policy, although outcomes also depended on external partners and the wider international environment.

2.Literature Review

Conceptualising the Domestic Environment and Foreign Policy

The domestic environment refers to the political, economic, social, institutional and security conditions within a state that shape

decision makers' preferences, the resources available to them and the constraints they face when pursuing external objectives. It includes formal institutions and leadership, but also public opinion, organised interests, civil society, economic structures and non-state actors whose actions can raise the domestic costs of particular foreign-policy choices. This definition is consistent with the domestic-politics perspective in foreign-policy analysis, which treats external behaviour not as an automatic response to the international system but as an outcome mediated by domestic institutions and political processes (Fearon, 1998; Kaarbo, 2015). A first strand of dicourse establishes the connection between internal conditions and external relations. Ambe-Uva and Adegboyega (2007), through their examination of Nigerian–Israeli relations, demonstrate the relevance of domestic factors to the direction of bilateral relations. Pehe (1998) similarly emphasises the reciprocal relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy: domestic arrangements affect external conduct, while international commitments and pressures can feed back into domestic political debate. Hussain (2011) provides a more direct account of the effect of domestic politics on foreign-policy decision-making. These works converge on the proposition that internal politics is not merely background context but helps structure the choices that governments consider feasible or desirable.

There are, however, differences in emphasis. For instance, Ambe-Uva and Adegboyega (2007) offer a country-specific illustration arguing that a country's institutional and political processes in the domestic front specifically shape the foreign policy choices the country more than its external environment., while Fearon (1998) and Kaarbo (2015) provide broader analytical arguments about the relationship between domestic political processes and international behaviour where the external environment pressures the outcome of foreign policy choices. Katzenstein (1976), in examining domestic structures and foreign economic policy, further suggests that state institutions and societal arrangements can condition the way governments respond to external economic pressures. These scholarly approaches are complementary, but they do not necessarily identify the same causal pathway where domestic factors may shape leaders' preferences, constrain available resources, alter the political costs of a decision, or affect the state's capacity to implement a policy. Distinguishing these mechanisms is essential to avoid using 'the domestic environment' as a catch-all explanation.

Nonetheless, the main limitation of a domestic-environment approach is therefore not that it pays too much attention to internal politics, but that it can become descriptive if every domestic difficulty is listed without showing how it influenced a specific policy choice. A further limitation arises when the state is treated as a unified actor. Ojieh's (2015) discussion of public opinion and foreign-policy decision-making under military rule, alongside the wider domestic-politics literature, suggests that political institutions, public attitudes and organised actors may have unequal access to decision-making. In similar vein, Rose (1998) cautions, through the related neoclassical-realist perspective, against ignoring the international environment and the way leaders interpret external pressures through domestic institutions and state capacity. Hence, this study connects these debates by treating domestic conditions as intervening mechanisms rather than as automatic causes. It compares how governance, economic capacity, insecurity and leadership priorities shaped external policy under Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari. The analytical expectation is not that similar domestic pressures must produce identical outcomes, but that leaders and institutions interpret shared pressures differently and

translate them into distinct diplomatic priorities.

Domestic Determinants of Nigeria's Foreign Policy

Scholarship on Nigeria's foreign policy has explored its historical evolution, national interest, economic development, diplomatic posture and unresolved policy problems. Ebegbulem (2019) provides a historical account of the evolution of Nigeria's foreign policy asserting that the country's foreign policy is mostly dictated by the idiosyncratic nature of leaders and the nature of the political environment within the period, while Idahosa and Adebayo (2017) offer a narrative analysis of its principal features of foreign policy that anchors on Afroccenricism, non-alignment, multilateralism, and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Ujara and Ibietan (2018) focus on unresolved issues in the Fourth Republic such as unrequited reciprocity despite the country's Afrocentric posture, failure in citizenship diplomacy, and domestic insecurity overshadowing external influence of Nigeria under the Jonathan and Buhari Administrations.

Osita (2010) interrogates the meaning and content of Nigeria's national interest in terms the country's inability to preserve our core values around security and image laundering. The works of these scholars collectively show that foreign-policy choices are embedded in wider debates about the country's identity, regional role, development priorities and the purposes for which national resources should be mobilised. Another angle is the relationship between diplomacy and economic development. Ubi and Akinkuotu (2014) explicitly connect Nigeria's foreign policy with economic development where he argued that since 1999 Nigeria has been struggling with external debt issues that directly affects the country's economic development, while Kayode (2016) assertion is about the country's options in repositioning its foreign policy towards national development in terms of moving beyond Afrocentrism to Afro-pragmatism by leveraging on our huge natural resources for regional trade and beyond, while weaponising diaspora capital and brain drain to our economic advantage.

However, Omenma (2015) indicate that the trends and transformations in Nigeria's external relations in connection to its economic development has not benefitted the country despite its resource endowment potentials. Ayinde (2010) argues that the country's prestige and the management of external relations has been poor due to leadership credentials and not necessarily existing policies. The convergence across these scholarly accounts is that diplomatic activism cannot be assessed solely by the number of visits, agreements or declarations but should also be considered in relation to the national objectives and domestic resources that it is intended to serve while ensuring pragmatic and purposeful leadership. This point is particularly important for Nigeria whose development needs to place substantial demands on public expenditure and whose external ambitions require sustained diplomatic and administrative capacity under a proactive and pragmatic leadership.

From the foregoing, while these scholars differ in their preferred emphasis, studies of national interest foreground the goals that Nigeria seeks to advance (Osita, 2010), while economic-diplomacy studies examine the developmental purpose and material implications of external engagement (Ubi & Akinkuotu, 2014; Kayode, 2016). Whereas historical and policy-oriented studies are more concerned with continuity, change and the unresolved problems of the country's foreign-policy practice (Ebegbulem, 2019; Ujara & Ibietan, 2018). These approaches provide useful perspectives, but when considered separately they can leave unclear how domestic pressures interact. For example,

economic constraints may limit the resources available for diplomatic initiatives, while insecurity can redirect attention and expenditure towards counter-terrorism and regional cooperation; leadership priorities then determine how these competing demands are ranked.

In another instance, security discourse illustrates the interaction especially clearly. Dokubo (2010) links external relations to Nigeria's national-security interests where the country have sought to partner with international actors in the fight against terrorism, while Yusufu (2022) examines the effects of contemporary security challenges on Nigeria's foreign relations especially the country's inability to get the needed support it requires during President Goodluck Jonathan's administration to fight terrorism and insurgency due to certain caveats in international politics like the inability to adequately address human rights concerns. Nwachukwu, Oddih, and Ibekwe (2019), focusing on the Multinational Joint Task Force and insurgent attacks in the Lake Chad region, highlight the regional dimension of a crisis with domestic origins and cross-border consequences where under Buhari's Administration, there was the concern about porous borders especially in the northern section of the country that borders Niger, Chad and Cameroun. Thus, the comparison indicates that insecurity is simultaneously a domestic governance problem and a driver of external cooperation. However, a security-centred explanation alone may understate economic constraints, political legitimacy and the choices through which leaders decide whether to seek bilateral assistance, regional coordination or wider international support.

This study, therefore, connects these strands by comparing political governance, economic capacity, security and leadership as interacting determinants across a bounded period. Rather than assuming that one factor explains all foreign-policy behaviour, it asks how the combination of pressures shaped the instruments and priorities of the Jonathan and Buhari administrations. This approach also allows the analysis to distinguish policy intention from implementation: a government may declare an objective or secure external cooperation without necessarily possessing the domestic institutional capacity to convert it into a durable outcome.

Governance Challenges and Nigeria's International Image

The nexus between domestic governance and international image is a core aspect of this study that scholars have debated on. For example, David (2021) links Nigeria's image problem to its foreign-policy responses and those responses have helped polished or managed the country's image. His argument is that Nigeria is only reactive to its international image concerns through foreign rather than being proactive while Idowu and Ogunbiyi (2024) posit that there is a direct link between political corruption and Nigeria's foreign image that its foreign policy try hard to defend but with little success as the world's perception of Nigeria affects its foreign policy outlook. Osegboun (2023) likewise considers the scope and effectiveness of Nigeria's image-polishing efforts as daunting and one that has impacted but little on the country's foreign policy outlook. The perceptions about Nigeria's external image are particularly concerning where issues around the domestic home front continue to form wider discourse on Nigeria's political system abroad. Thus, discourse on Nigeria's reputation is shaped not only by diplomatic communication but also by the perceived credibility of its domestic institutions, the conduct of political leaders and the consistency between official claims and governance outcomes.

The discourse on Nigeria's governance and external image is important because it

distinguishes the projection of an image from the substance on which that image rests. Image-management initiatives may communicate a preferred national identity, but they cannot by themselves resolve concerns about corruption, insecurity, human rights or institutional accountability. In this instance, Idowu and Ogunbiyi (2024) make corruption central to the analysis of Nigeria's foreign image as they argue that corrupt leadership will lack the will to project Nigeria in positive light, while David (2021) situates image management within a longer pattern of foreign-policy responses since 1999. The studies therefore converge on the significance of domestic governance, although their emphases differ as one foreground corruption as a reputational problem, while the other takes a broader view of image challenges and the state's responses.

Jonathan administration for example, illustrates how domestic policy decisions can become external diplomatic issues. Hence, Akuche (2021) examines the gay-rights policy question in United States–Nigeria relations and shows why domestic legislation such as the Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act could generate disagreement with international partners. At the same time, the administration continued to pursue regional engagement, economic diplomacy and security cooperation. The analytical implication is that reputational pressure does not necessarily terminate diplomatic relations or prevent cooperation; rather, it may complicate particular partnerships, affect the language of diplomatic engagement or create competing demands on government. This qualification guards against treating 'international image' as a single score that automatically determines foreign-policy success or failure.

On the other hand, the Buhari administration placed anti-corruption more visibly at the centre of its domestic and external messaging, including cooperation with foreign partners on asset recovery. However, the relationship between such initiatives and reputational improvement should not be assumed. This is because the existence of an anti-corruption campaign or a diplomatic request is evidence of policy activity, not by itself proof that corruption declined or that Nigeria's international standing improved. In this light, Out, Agbaji, and Charles (2018) offer a comparative assessment of Nigeria's global image under Jonathan and Buhari that seem not to improve and that point and time despite every effort to project the country's image in positive light, while Idowu and Ogunbiyi (2024) provide subsequent analytical treatment of corruption and foreign image as mutually exclusive in determining global perception of Nigeria's reckoning within its foreign policy outlook. These scholarly works underpin the examination of Nigeria's reputation in relation to governance; however, this present study further distinguishes reputational claims from observable diplomatic engagement and implementation.

Moreover, a critical limitation in image-centred explanations is that they can overstate the autonomy of reputation from material interests. External partners may criticise domestic practices yet continue to cooperate with Nigeria because of shared security needs, commercial interests, regional stability or strategic considerations. Conversely, positive diplomatic messaging may not secure investment or cooperation if domestic institutions cannot implement commitments. This study therefore connects image to, but does not equate it with, diplomatic leverage. It assesses the way governance controversies shaped the context of external engagement while recognising that the consequences depended on the interests of Nigeria's partners and on the capacity to turn diplomatic activity into results.

2.4 Jonathan and Buhari Administrations and their Foreign Policy Orientations (2010-2019)

Comparative scholarship on the Jonathan and Buhari administrations identifies both changes in emphasis and continuities in the pressures confronting Nigerian foreign policy. Given the comparison, Akuche (2022) considers the relationship between national politics and foreign policy under President Jonathan as pivotal under the rhetoric of transformation agenda. The president sought to move away from Nigeria's traditional altruistic Afrocentricism towards domestic-first approach while utilising the twin-pillar statecraft of economic diplomacy and citizenship diplomacy. For Out et al. (2018), Nigeria's foreign-policy posture and global image under the Buhari administration was more about presenting the country as fighting corruption and regaining the country's confidence on integrity and legitimacy while rallying for support to fight terrorism and insurgency.

Akinrinde (2023); Chukwuemeka (2025) assess Buhari's foreign policy, including its priorities and challenges as one that promised to bring Nigeria out of the doldrum of a sickening corrupt reputation bedeviled with insecurity. Hence, while studies provide a basis for comparison, the particular focus of each account differs because some concentrate on one administration, while others emphasise posture, evaluation or international image. For instance, Jonathan's foreign-policy orientation was associated with the Transformation Agenda, economic diplomacy, regional engagement and efforts to protect Nigerian citizens abroad.

The administration sought to position Nigeria as an attractive destination for investment and continued to participate in regional security cooperation. Nevertheless, these ambitions unfolded alongside Boko Haram's escalating insurgency, the 2014 Chibok abduction, corruption controversies and international disagreement over the 2013 anti-gay legislation (Akuche, 2021, 2022; Out et al., 2018). These previous studies help establish that diplomatic priorities were pursued in a politically contested domestic environment. However, the important question is not simply whether the administration was active internationally, but how domestic constraints affected the credibility, urgency and implementation of its external objectives.

Buhari's first term placed stronger rhetorical emphasis on anti-corruption, counter-terrorism and economic recovery or diversification. Scholars like Akinrinde (2023); Chukwuemeka (2025) examine these priorities and the challenges associated with their implementation. Their observation is that Buhari's first term was not enough to fully assess whether the domestic environment was able to shape Nigeria's foreign policy outlook because most domestic policies initiated by Buhari in first term took longer time than necessary to be implemented. Out et al. (2018) provides a comparative frame for assessing the transition from Jonathan to Buhari. Their argument is that there was shift in orientation as Buhari had to discontinue to Jonathan's idea of transformation agenda that focused on economic diplomacy and citizenship diplomacy. Ikechukwu (2019); Urowayino (2019) assertion is that Buhari's external engagement was more conservative due to the peculiar nature of Nigeria's domestic front that was characterised tensed ethnic politics and insurgency that threatened the country's national security and sovereignty. Buhari projected Nigeria as one that need to survive from internal collapse and one that need to be recognised as a country with great potentials.

The comparison between Jonathan and Buhari reveals a combination of continuity and change. Both administrations relied on external partnerships to address insecurity and economic-development needs, and both faced

the challenge of protecting Nigerians abroad and sustaining Nigeria's regional role. The difference lies in the relative prominence and political framing of the instruments. Jonathan's agenda was associated with transformation, economic diplomacy and citizenship diplomacy, whereas Buhari was conservative and gave more explicit prominence to anti-corruption diplomacy, asset recovery, security assistance and external financing. These are differences of emphasis rather than wholly separate foreign-policy systems. As Ashaver (2013) argues in the broader context of continuity and discontinuity in Nigerian foreign policy, changes in leadership do not necessarily displace persistent national interests and structural constraints.

The limitation of administration-centred accounts is that they may catalogue initiatives without tracing the domestic mechanism connecting each initiative to a policy pressure, or they may assess the administrations against different criteria. A more systematic comparison applies to the same questions to both periods: what domestic problem was politically salient; what foreign-policy response followed; what resources or institutional capacities were required; and what evidence is available about implementation? This study uses that common framework to connect the administration-specific literature to the broader domestic-determinants debate.

Research Gap

The extant literature reviewed establishes several important points. First, domestic institutions and political processes shape foreign-policy choices rather than merely surrounding them (Ambe-Uva & Adegboyega, 2007; Fearon, 1998; Hussain, 2011; Kaarbo, 2015). Second, Nigerian foreign policy has been analysed through historical evolution, national interest, economic development and unresolved policy questions (Ebegbulem, 2019; Osita, 2010; Ubi & Akinkuotu, 2014; Ujara & Ibietan, 2018). Third, governance and corruption have been connected to Nigeria's international image (David, 2021; Idowu & Ogunbiyi, 2024; Osegboun, 2023), while security studies demonstrate the importance of regional cooperation in responding to cross-border threats (Nwachukwu et al., 2019; Yusufu, 2022). Finally, studies of Jonathan and Buhari document administration-specific priorities and comparative changes in Nigeria's external posture (Akuche, 2022; Akinrinde, 2023; Out et al., 2018; Chukwuemeka, 2025).

These strands complement one another, but they do not always use a shared framework to explain how governance, economic pressures, insecurity and leadership priorities interacted across the same period. A study of international image may explain reputational concerns without fully accounting for security cooperation; an account of security diplomacy may not assess how economic capacity shaped implementation; and an administration-focused study may describe policy priorities without comparing them against a common set of domestic determinants. The gap is therefore one of integration and comparative explanation, not an assertion that previous scholarships have ignored domestic factors altogether.

This study addresses that gap through a period-specific comparison of the Jonathan administration (2010–2015) and Buhari's first term (2015–2019). It connects domestic pressures to external responses and considers both continuity and variation across the two administrations. Guided by the Innerpolitik paradigm, the analysis examines how domestic conditions were interpreted by political leaders and translated into security cooperation, economic diplomacy, citizenship diplomacy and image-management efforts. It also recognises that external partners and

international conditions mediated the results, so that domestic factors are treated as influential but not sufficient explanations.

Consequently, the study's contribution is analytical rather than a claim of unprecedented subject matter. It brings existing findings into a common framework, distinguishes policy declarations from implementation, and asks how the same broad categories of domestic pressure produced different emphases across successive administrations. The documentary design limits the strength of causal claims, and the absence of primary interviews means that the study cannot reconstruct private decision-making in full. Nevertheless, the synthesis offers a transparent basis for assessing the domestic mechanisms visible in the available secondary record and for identifying questions that future research can test through interviews, archival work or focused process tracing.

Materials and Methods

Research Design and Data Collection

The study adopted a qualitative research design and an ex post facto approach. The period and events had already occurred, so the analysis reconstructs the relationship between domestic conditions and foreign-policy choices from documentary evidence rather than manipulating variables. Data were collected through documentary review of scholarly books and journal articles, policy material, public statements and contemporary news reporting relevant to Nigeria's domestic governance and external relations.

3.2 Source Selection and Identification

Sources were selected for (a) direct relevance to Nigeria; (b) coverage of domestic political, economic, governance or security conditions and/or foreign-policy decisions; (c) relevance to the 2010–2019 period, while allowing earlier theoretical works and later retrospective studies; and (d) sufficient bibliographic or institutional identification to permit checking. Materials discussed in the manuscript were identified from the cited scholarly literature, policy and institutional material, and news reports. The source set was not generated through a documented systematic database search, and the manuscript does not retain a complete screening log; consequently, no total number of screened or excluded records is claimed.

Analytical Procedure

The documentary material was read against the two research objectives and organised using a thematic coding frame. The initial deductive codes were: (1) political governance and institutional capacity; (2) economic conditions and economic diplomacy; (3) insecurity and security cooperation; (4) leadership choices and policy priorities; and (5) international reputation, diplomatic leverage and implementation. Relevant passages were assigned to one or more codes according to their substantive content. The coded material was then compared across the Jonathan and Buhari administrations, noting continuities, differences and counter-evidence, including instances of diplomatic engagement despite domestic constraints. Themes were cross-referenced to the objectives: codes 1–3 informed the assessment of domestic conditions, while codes 4–5 informed the assessment of leadership, reputation and leverage. Conclusions were drawn where multiple items in the documentary record supported a recurring pattern; contested or single-source claims are treated cautiously.

Summary of Data Sources

The Table below shows the summary of data sources used in this study.

Table 1: Summary of data sources

Source category	Examples represented in the manuscript	Analytical contribution
Academic literature	Studies on Nigerian foreign policy, domestic determinants, governance and international image, including Ambe-Uva and Adegboyega (2007), Ebegbulem (2019), Ujara and Ibietan (2018), David (2021), and Idowu and Ogunbiyi (2024)	Conceptual framing; comparison with previous findings; interpretation of domestic determinants.
Policy and institutional material	Public policy statements, government announcements and institutional material cited in relation to security cooperation and foreign-policy initiatives	Evidence of stated priorities, official positions and policy responses.
Contemporary reporting and public statements	News reports and public accounts relating to Chibok, counterterrorism cooperation, diplomatic visits, asset recovery and economic engagement	Chronology of events and corroborative context for specific episodes.
Retrospective and administration-focused studies	Studies of Jonathan's and Buhari's foreign-policy orientations, including Out et al. (2018), Akuche (2022) and Akinrinde (2023)	Comparative evidence on policy orientation, continuity and change.

Source: Compiled by Authors (2026)

3.5 Methodological Limitations

The study relied on secondary documentary sources and does not include interviews with policymakers, diplomats or civil-society actors. The evidence may reflect the selection and framing choices of original authors and news organisations. The analysis also operates mainly at the national level and cannot fully capture differences among Nigeria's states or the internal workings of particular agencies. The thematic procedure makes the interpretation more transparent, but it does not eliminate interpretive judgement or establish causal effects with the certainty of a design using primary data and explicit process-tracing tests.

Theoretical Framework

4.1 The Innerpolitik Paradigm and Domestic Determinants

The Innerpolitik perspective treats domestic political and socioeconomic forces as central to explaining foreign-policy preferences and choices. It directs attention to how political institutions, leadership beliefs, social pressures and economic structures shape the goals leaders pursue abroad. This emphasis overlaps with foreign-policy analysis that examines the domestic politics of decision-making and with scholarship on the interaction of domestic structures and international conduct (Andriole et al., 1975; Fearon, 1998; Katzenstein, 1976; Kaarbo, 2015). Rose's

(1998) discussion of neoclassical realism is also relevant because it connects systemic pressures to intervening domestic perceptions and state capacity.

In this study, the paradigm is used comparatively rather than as a general assertion that domestic factors determine everything a state does abroad. For each administration, the analysis examines how political legitimacy and leadership choices, economic constraints, and security pressures affected stated foreign-policy priorities, the pursuit of external partnerships and the capacity to implement decisions. The comparison is designed to identify how similar structural problems could be interpreted and addressed differently by successive leaders.

Conversely, a domestic-centred explanation can understate the independent influence of external actors, international power asymmetries and unexpected events. It can also treat 'the state' as unitary and overlook the influence of civil society, public campaigns, opposition parties, bureaucracies and violent non-state actors. These limitations matter in Nigeria, where Boko Haram violence, public mobilisation around the Chibok abductions, legislative scrutiny and external partners' decisions affected the policy environment. The study therefore treats domestic conditions as influential but mediated because they shape policy through leaders and institutions, while external opportunities and constraints affect what can be achieved. Its contribution is to apply this qualified Innerpolitik lens to a paired comparison of two Nigerian administrations over a defined period and to connect domestic governance pressures to both diplomatic orientation and implementation capacity.

5. Results and Presentation of Data

5.1 Domestic Political, Economic and Security Conditions

5.1.1 The structure of the Nigerian domestic environment and the crux of national politics.

The domestic environment reflects the territorial space within a given sovereign state and influenced by the dynamics of socio-cultural, political, and economic realities. The domestic environment is shaped by how the state is organised and governed. "The domestic environment encapsulates those crucial features, factors and forces that make the state unique and which impact on foreign policy formulation. The domestic environment is characterised by factors such as the geographical location of the state, its peculiarity, natural and human resources, the nature of the political system, quality of leadership, the nature of the interaction among groups in society." (Otubanjo, 1999, p. 9 cited in Ambe-Uva & Adegboyega, 2007, p. 47).

It is glaring that domestic variables such as the system of the state, its relations with society, its identity, as well as the decision-making process and bureaucratic policy, internal competition for power and government change, the emergence of opposition movements, the ideology and legitimacy of the political system, and internal stability affect the state's foreign policy and so a change in these variables will lead to a change in foreign policy (Elsheikh, 2000, p. 13 cited in Moshref, 2020).

Kegley and Blanton (2013) assert that the scope of foreign policy is within the decision-making process of a country's domestic polity that seeks to allow for binding laws and principles tailored according to the preferences and priorities of individual actors who are the political leaders. The leaders' inclination towards foreign policy formulation and

implementation confluences with domestic structure under the socio-cultural, economic, and political realities that must be in tune with the external environment. There have been protracted issues of bad governance, insecurity, terrorism, and the mushrooming of ethnic nationalities agitating for secession. Additionally, socio-economic inequality has led to acute level of poverty amid economic challenges and widespread corruption in institutions of government. These circumstances constitute the domestic front and have directly influenced the outcome of foreign policy formulation with regards to Nigeria's external relations.

5.1.2 The influence of the domestic environment on Nigeria's foreign policy.

The domestic environment is one of the two determinants of foreign policy, the other being the external environment. These two determinants of foreign policies according to Ebegbulem (2019) shape the orientation of a state in the international system. However, the domestic environment remains the main influence because it is through the domestic environment that a country conducts its political business which invariably determines the foreign policy of that country (Gambari 1981 cited in Ebegbulem, 2019). "The domestic factors which include the country's economy, the personality and character of her leaders, geography, pressure groups and the country's constitution has great influence on the perception, formulation and implementation of Nigeria's foreign policy" (Ebegbulem, 2019, p.7).

Osita (2010) indicates that foreign policy is seen as the basis on which a state engages countries or other subjects within the frames of international law, such as international organizations. Foreign policy shows the operational code that form the operational reality of world politics as designed by world countries and their respective leaders (Rourke, 2013). Hence, we can attempt a critical assessment of the term Nigeria's foreign policy based on the country's outlined general objectives towards the external environment and how it relates with other countries in the international system.

As a regional actor with great influence in Africa, Nigeria is known to have outlined multilateral policy that aligns with her hegemonic status since gaining independence in 1960 (Talibu, 2016). Nigeria's foreign policy over the years has been grossly sabotaged and undermined by ineptitude, corruption, nepotism, leadership deficit and poor democratic credentials, which have negatively affected the international reputation of the country (Nwoke, 2014, p. 9 cited in Akuche, 2021). The perception of Nigeria's failing leadership by counties in the international arena has led to the country's leaders being reluctant in taking seriously other countries' foreign policies. The consequent of this is that Nigeria's domestic front has limited Nigeria's active role in international politics. The country is not respected the way she should be respected despite her status in West Africa as well as being regarded as the giant of Africa.

Ezirim (2010, pp. 12-13) cited in Akuche (2021, p. 72) argues that foreign policy "must be defined in accordance with those goals a nation needs to officially seek in attaining relevance abroad." Thus, Nigeria's foreign policy ought to articulate her culture and values that bring about those desirable objectives through diplomatic instruments necessary to pursue those set goals while considering other nation's prevailing foreign policies that may be established against our national interest. Nigeria in the present regime is not following this global tenet, and this is hurting the country badly in the international community. There has been the lack of interest by Nigeria to address issues in her domestic environment that will enhance her external

image. This is despite the country's huge human and material resources which obviously puts her at an advantage in playing crucial role in the international arena through her well-articulated foreign policy objectives (Akuche, 2021).

The perception about Nigeria's domestic polity by other nations is that the country's foreign policy thrust presently is rudderless and when it comes to international politics, other well placed countries in the international system readily take advantage of our domestic issues and challenges to rub into our faces the fact that we are not 'giants' as we erroneously keep thinking we are even when we try to express such through our foreign policy (Ezirim, 2010 cited in Akuche, 2021). Therefore, without any contradiction, Nigeria's foreign policy in contemporary context must be premised solely on national interest with emphasis on national security and welfare, regional and global peace, as well as robust multilateral diplomacy that is tailored along strong strategic partnership with friendly states in the global arena. (Akinboye, 2013). However, the domestic front continues to dwarf the country's potentials in the international system where relevance needs to be accorded the African nation.

Due to the precarious economic situation of Nigeria laden with inflation, poverty, high level of unemployment and rising debt profile, the country lacks the needed economic fibre to firmly pursue and sustain its declared foreign policy goals. The country over relies on crude oil as the major source of its foreign exchange. As a mono-economic country, the economic strength needed to play international politics is consequent to the rise and fall of crude oil sales. Hence, for Nigeria's foreign policy to be stable and consistent, there is the need for concrete steps to be taken in the diversification of the economy. The diversification of the economy will allow for the rapid economic growth and development that will not just improve the lives and living conditions of Nigerians but place the country on a better pedestal in world politics as one of the countries with viable economy (Omenma, 2015; Idowu & Ogunbiyi, 2024).

5.2 The Jonathan Administration, 2010-2015

The Death of President Umar Musa Yar'Adua on 5th May 2010 led to his vice president, Goodluck Jonathan becoming an acting president. However, there was tensed politics by some northern politicians that try to oust Goodluck Jonathan becoming a substantive president. Hence, Akuche (2022) notes that while national politics was heading towards chaos on who succeeds the late president, Umar Yar'Adua, the twist and turns of the politicking brought about deep-rooted division between the northern and southern politicians bringing about disunity in the country.

To save the country from the looming leadership crisis, the Doctrine of Necessity was invoked by the National Assembly, and this paved the way for Goodluck Jonathan to become the president. He was later to win a presidential election in 2011 and become a substantive president through electoral mandate. As soon as Goodluck Jonathan assumed the mantle of leadership, his task was to unify the country divided along ethnic, religious, and political lines. Jonathan did not harp much on the seven-point agenda of his predecessor but was bent on uniting the country and strengthening the country's nascent democracy through credible elections (Ojieh, 2015).

The Goodluck Jonathan's Administration had a domestic policy mantra termed "transformation agenda". It was from this transformation agenda focal point that President Jonathan was able to synchronize Nigeria's national interest with the formulation of his foreign policy objectives. The

Jonathan's Administration was focused on ensuring economic prosperity for the country as the country witnessed huge revenue generation from crude sales. However, the issue of insecurity, corruption and gay rights politics became commonplace (Ojieh, 2016).

As President Jonathan struggled to balance economic prosperity with the issue of national unity, insecurity, and terrorism, he found out that the international community was not happy with his administration as the Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces as he was accused of human rights abuse from military personnel conducting the fight against Boko Haram insurgents in the northeast (Ojieh, 2016). In another twist, the signing into law of the anti-gay laws in 2013 also put the country in bad light coupled with high level of corruption by officials in his administration.

Prosecuting the war against terror with the help of the international community became a problem as most countries like the U.S, Israel, and the U.K refused to sell arms to the country because of bad leadership laden with corruption and human rights abuses. The leadership problems of the country manifest in politicisation of foreign and national policy processes, corruption among other anomalies. For instance, a former British Prime Minister, David Cameron, had accused Nigeria's ex-president Goodluck Jonathan of being the reason the kidnapped Chibok school girls were never rescued during his administration. The international community's perception was that President Jonathan's ineptitude led to his inability to engage Nigeria soldiers in participating in strategic military operations the U.S and U.K forces organised for the rescue of Chibok school girls because the military has been politicized with politically appointed generals (Nwafor, 2019).

The lack of clear-cut implementation of Nigerian foreign policy under the Goodluck Jonathan administration made the international community condescend on Nigeria's relevance in the international system. Nigerian citizens were often the targets of all manner of attack. Nigerians were being executed in countries with harsh laws on drug and financial crimes which include countries as Singapore, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. There were also the mass deportations of Nigerians from the United Kingdom, European Union countries and Australia (Nwafor, 2019). The image of the country was so bad that Nigerians were cheaply labelled as criminals in the wake up the surging cyber fraud across the globe.

On the positive side, the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan through its transformation agenda embedded in his foreign policy outlook, did unlock huge potentials for Nigeria in terms of capital and foreign investment (Out, Agbaji & Charles, 2018). According to Ukwuije (2015); Akuche (2022) Nigeria's foreign policy under President Goodluck Jonathan brought about an opened global business Community where the country became Africa's number one destination for foreign investors. Within the first six months of 2014, a total of US $9.70 billion or N1.51 trillion flowed into the national economy as Foreign Direct Investment-FDI. The country rebased its Gross Domestic Product-GDP for the first time in over a decade and this led to Nigeria becoming the largest economy in Africa, overtaking South Africa and Egypt in 2014.

Moreso, President Jonathan's foreign policy outlook ensured that "Nigeria became the first country in West Africa to host the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2014" (Out, Agbaji & Charles, 2018). Other aspects of Nigeria's foreign policy reflected in good neighbourliness in Africa where the country was involved in the restoration of peace in Cote d'Ivoire at a time where Laurent Gbagbo was violently ousted. In bringing about peace in the erstwhile French colony, President

Jonathan's foreign policy promoted Nigeria's image in the global community thereby promoting her external relations in the international system. It was under the President Goodluck Jonathan's administration the U.S-Nigeria Bi-National Commission was strengthened after its establishment under the President Yar'Adua's administration in April 2010 (Ubi & Akinkuotu, 2014).

The Goodluck Jonathan administration ensured that Nigeria's name was delisted from the U.S. government classification of Nigeria as a terrorist country because of Umar Abdul Mutallab's terror actions on Christmas day of 2009 where he tried to bomb a U.S. passenger jet enroute the Netherlands. President Jonathan visited President Obama on this account and ensured the delisting of Nigeria from countries regarded as terrorist haven. President Jonathan was also hard on the erstwhile Libyan strongman, Muammar Gaddafi who had suggested that Nigeria should disintegrate along religious lines (Osegboun, 2023; Idowu & Ogunbiyi, 2024). The remarks of the Libyan leader led to President Jonathan recalling the Nigerian Ambassador to Libya at that material time which was in 2010.

The Goodluck Jonathan administration orchestrated the formation the formation of the Nigerians in Diaspora Organization (NIDO) to protect Nigerian citizens living in all countries of the world. NIDO as a foreign policy instrument was designed to strengthen Nigeria's citizenship diplomacy under the Jonathan administration and beyond. Reciprocity was also seen as crucial aspect under citizenship diplomacy if any government treats Nigerians unjustly. The deportation of Nigerians by South Africa during the Jonathan administration did not go down well with the Nigerian leader. However, President Jonathan diplomatically quelled tension between both countries (Nigeria and South Africa). The Nigerian leader frowned at the South African's leader, Jacob Zuma on not doing enough to accommodate Nigerians in his country (Idahosa & Adebayo 2017; Ikechukwu, 2019)

To further strengthen citizenship diplomacy, the Arab Spring that brought about crisis in North Africa was another instance where stranded Nigerians in Libya and Egypt were rescued by the Nigerian government between 2011 and 2012. In addressing the issue of irregular migration that led to Nigerians being trapped in Libya, Nigeria hosted the Nigeria/European Union Dialogue in 2012 to help mitigate the impact of illegal migration crisis in the Mediterranean.

Furthermore, Akuche (2022) argues that the President Goodluck Jonathan's administration through his foreign policy objectives responded towards security collaboration in the formation and activities of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) that relatively addressed terrorism where Boko Haram and IS-WA insurgent activities had crippled the Northeast region of the country. Between late 2014 and March 2015, Nigerian troops in collaboration with Chadian forces were did recapture most territories captured by the Boko Haram insurgents.

The foreign policy orientation of President Jonathan revolved mainly around economic and citizen diplomacy and the reinforcement of Nigeria's role in regional politics in Africa especially the West African Sub region (Ebegbulem, 2019). There was a paradigm shift in the country's foreign policy from being focused on Afrocentrism, good neigbourliness and the preservation of Nigeria's independence towards utilizing internal needs and dynamics of the country to construct progressive external relations (Lawal & Daiyabu 2015).

Conversely, Jonathan's foreign policy marked a low downturn in Nigeria's foreign relations. This is because, he was regarded as a passive leader whose passive leadership reflected in Nigeria's foreign policy posture. In

this instance, the country was not accorded the kind of status it deserved due to a lack of action internationally by Jonathan's administration (Kayode 2016).

Under the President Goodluck Jonathan's administration, Nigeria's foreign policy was said to be on the low as the domestic environment overshadowed Nigeria's relevance abroad. The issues of insecurity cum terrorism, leadership incompetence, corruption, economic stagnation, ethnic crisis, religious division, inter-communal violence, democratic consolidation, and the threats to the national integration of the Nigerian state, were prominent and this impacted negatively on the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy (Kayode 2016).

Hence, it is deduced here that, the Jonathan administration, like most other political administrations in the past had beautiful blueprints regarding foreign policy formulation, however, the lack of implementation of such policies has always been the bane of Nigeria's foreign policy (Chidozie et al. 2014). In this vein, it is implied that the Jonathan administration lacked the political will to actively conduct foreign policies because those that would have soundly do so would have been seasoned technocrats and career diplomats instead, politicians have been more involved in the formulation and implementation of Nigeria's foreign policies.

5.3 The Buhari Administration, 2015-2019

President Muhammadu Buhari succeeded Goodluck Jonathan and assumed the mantle of leadership on the 29th of May 2015. President Mohammadu Buhari's first tenure as a civilian president ran between May 29, 2015, and December 31, 2019. He was returned elected again following the February 23, 2019, presidential election that ushered him into office for the second time as president which will last until 2023. Buhari assumed the presidency in 2015 on the premise of three cardinal campaign issues which were to prosecute the war against terrorism and insecurity, fight against corruption and help improve the economy while creating job opportunities for the citizens. On assuming office, the president embarked on so many foreign trips trying to convince the West to return looted funds starched in foreign banks. The president's foreign trips served as motivation in the fight against corruption (Chukwuemeka, 2025).

The president along some diplomats went into negotiations with countries where past corrupt Nigerian officials have kept the country's looted funds and try to repatriate those funds stashed abroad. As the President Buhari try to make Nigeria an economically viable country, he also promised to diversify the country's economy away from oil dependency while aiding technological advancement. As an ex-military dictator and one that does not condone corruption, President Buhari became the fear of the unknown that dawned on the domestic environment as corrupt politicians began to adjust their penchant for corruption. The international community had welcomed Nigeria's stand to fight corruption, and the Buhari administration received external support in that regards with the repatriation of stolen funds (Nwachukwu, Oddih & Ibekwe, 2019).

The administration of President Buhari started courting both the traditional Western powers and China so that it could achieve socio-political and economic stability in the domestic front anchored on bringing about robust national security, corrupt free society, and technological advancement. Buhari's foreign policy articulated under these three cardinal objectives was welcomed in the international community (Ashaver, 2013). The president pushed for greater security

collaborations with neighbouring Benin, Niger, Chad, and Cameroun and between May and July 2015 he had made contacts with these countries mentioned above which constitute the Multinational Joint Task Force- MNJTF as he advocated for the upgrade of the regional security outfit to fighting terrorism in the Lake Chad region (Out, Agbaji & Charles, 2018).

The erstwhile administration of President Goodluck Jonathan had only provided for the initial take-off one million dollars for the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in February 2013 (Nwachukwu, Oddih & Ibekwe, 2019). By the time the Multinational Joint Task Force went on a full-scale operation, the coalition forces under the MNJTF had delayed its operations beyond July 31,2015 because of the lack of funds and political willingness to drive the operations pragmatically (Nwachukwu, Oddih & Ibekwe, 2019). However, President Buhari's commitment towards funding resurrected active onslaught against the terrorist groups in the Lake Chad region. President Buhari further sought external help from countries of the European Union and U.S in the fight against insurgency. For the sake of security collaboration in the fight against terrorism, the president had in July 2018, visited the Kingdom of the Netherlands as he met with the Dutch Prime Minister who gave his assurances of aiding Nigeria fight against terrorism and insurgency in the country and the Lake Chad region (Agbakwuru, 2018).

On the economic aspect, President Buhari focused on economic diplomacy as he was involved in shuttle diplomacy for bilateral and multilateral visits to the U.S., Germany, France, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, as well as attending the G7 and G20 Summits where he sought for FDI (Out, Agbaji & Charles, 2018). It is on record that between April 11 and 15, 2016, President Buhari travelled to China on the invitation of the Chinese President, Xi Jinping. The essence of the travel was to talk about Chinese loan that will be needed in financing of some capital projects involving rail infrastructures leading to rail transport that will open the Nigerian economy to Chinese investment (Urowayino, 2019, pp.1-2; Out, Agbaji & Charles, 2018).

At the twilight of the Barack Obama presidency in the U.S., President Buhari was invited by President Obama on July 20,2016, and while at the Oval, the U.S had declared her willingness to strategically aid Nigeria in prosecuting the war against terrorism in Nigeria, President Buhari further requested for the U.S assistance in recovering government looted funds stashed in U.S. banks by corrupt government officials from Nigeria. The envisaging of a recovery programme on looted funds also included "the curtailing of corruption and reforms in the energy sector by stopping oil theft' (Out, Agbaji & Charles, 2018).

Furthermore, President Buhari continued with his economic diplomacy through shuttle diplomacy to Russia and on October 24, 2019, the Nigeria president had met with the Russian leader, Vladmir Putin for a bilateral meeting during a "three-day Russia-Africa summit in Sochi, Russia, between October 23 and October 25" (Urowayino, 2019, pp.1-2). In that meeting, President Buhari sought for the economic support of Russia in line with his foreign policy objectives on the economy and technological advancement as well as security.

With President Buhari improving on Nigeria's relations with the outside world especially among the big players in international politics such as the U.S., China, Russia, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates etc., the country was able to project its national interest and build on its foreign policy objectives around security, economy, and technological advancement. The Buhari administration went to secured loan facilities with commitments towards investments to the tune of US $ 6

billion worth of loans from the Chinese government and some her private companies (Out, Agbaji & Charles, 2018).

The Buhari administration had taken advantage of the lukewarm nature of Nigerian foreign policy under the Goodluck Jonathan administration bring alive the pursuit of Nigeria's national interest because the world believed that President Buhari is the messiah that can tackle the endemic issue of corruption in Nigeria. The Buhari led government between 2015 and 2019 did get the massive support of the international community and the country was to benefit from infrastructural development such as the building of Railways, the upgrading of the Mambilla Dam and the refurbishing of our airports all to be carried out using the loaned facilities from China.

There was also the Simens power interventions from Germany that was to boost Nigeria's energy sector. President Buhari also got the Sukuk bond from Saudi Arabia and the Middle East while also strengthening citizenship diplomacy by ensuring that Nigerians in diaspora are protected and treated well especially Nigerians living in South Africa who became targets of hate crime in South Africa (Ajayi, 2019). President Buhari did harp on citizenship diplomacy and ensured that Nigerians living in South Africa need to be treated right and not to be taken for granted as they go about their businesses.

Consequently, President Buhari strained relations with South Africa on the account of the attack on Nigerians in South Africa in September 2019. The Nigerian leader had criticized his South African counterpart Cyril Ramaphosa for not doing enough stopping the attacks against Nigerians especially and Africans in general living in South Africa who came under the senseless attack of September 2019. The Nigerian leader had to ask his foreign affairs minister, Geoffrey Onyeama to summon the South African High Commissioner to Nigeria in September 2019 while sending an envoy to South Africa to meet President Ramaphosa and convey in harsh terms Nigeria's displeasure at such callous attack against Nigeria.

To show how displeased Nigeria was against her citizens being treated bad in South Africa, Nigeria decided to boycott the 2019 World Economic Forum-WEF that held in Cape Town, South Africa. Nigeria's position was supported by some other African countries as Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Malawi all pulled out of the World Economic Summit of 2019 in South Africa (Ikechukwu, 2019).

Table 2: Comparartive summary of the Jonathan and Buhari administrations, 2010-2019

Dimension	**Jonathan administration (2010–2015)**	**Buhari first term (2015–2019)**	**Foreign-policy implication**
Security	Boko Haram violence, the Chibok abductions and criticism of counterterrorism capacity featured prominently.	Counterterrorism remained a central priority; cooperation with regional and international partners continued.	Security needs increased the importance of intelligence, military and multilateral cooperation.
Governance and leadership	Corruption allegations and concerns about the government's response to insecurity affected domestic and external	Anti-corruption was a defining political commitment; criticism also concerned policy implementation,	Domestic credibility and implementation capacity shaped how priorities were received and pursued.

	perceptions.	appointments and security leadership.	
Economic diplomacy	Transformation agenda, investment promotion and citizen diplomacy were prominent themes.	Economic recovery, external investment, asset recovery and high-level bilateral engagement were prominent.	Economic vulnerability encouraged external engagement but could constrain the resources available for sustained action.
Continuity and change	Regional engagement and efforts to sustain Nigeria's standing remained important.	The administration sought to renew relationships with major powers while continuing regional security cooperation.	Different leadership emphases coexisted with continued reliance on external partnerships.

Source: Compiled by Authors (2026)

6. Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study support the central proposition of the Innerpolitik perspective: domestic political, economic and security pressures shaped the priorities and practical conditions of Nigeria's foreign policy. They do not, however, support a deterministic conclusion that domestic problems automatically translate into diplomatic decline. Nigeria continued to host international events, pursue bilateral visits, engage in regional security arrangements and seek cooperation from major powers. The more defensible conclusion is that domestic conditions influenced the agenda, credibility and implementation demands of external engagement.

First, insecurity redirected diplomacy towards counterterrorism assistance, intelligence cooperation, arms procurement and regional coordination. Under Jonathan, Boko Haram's violence and the Chibok abductions intensified the need for external support while drawing international attention to the government's security response. Under Buhari, counterterrorism remained central and cooperation with partners continued. This pattern is consistent with research that treats domestic security pressures as a significant determinant of foreign-policy priorities (Akuche, 2022; Nwachukwu et al., 2019), while also demonstrating that the availability and terms of assistance depend on external partners.

Second, governance and corruption concerns affected Nigeria's international image, but reputation and diplomatic leverage should not be conflated. David (2021); Idowu and Ogunbiyi (2024) emphasise the reputational consequences of governance problems. The present comparison adds that reputational costs can coexist with pragmatic cooperation when partners share interests in counterterrorism, trade or regional stability. The implication is not that image is unimportant, but that its effects are mediated by the issue area and the interests of counterpart states.

Third, the administrations differed in their political narratives and diplomatic emphases, yet both used external relations to address domestic priorities. Jonathan's transformation agenda and citizen/economic diplomacy sought investment, regional influence and protection of Nigerians abroad. Buhari foregrounded anti-corruption, security and economic recovery and pursued high-level engagement and asset-recovery initiatives. This finding complements comparative work on the two administrations (Out et al., 2018; Akinrinde, 2023) by showing that shifts in policy branding did not remove structural

constraints associated with insecurity, economic vulnerability and institutional capacity.

Finally, the gap between domestic ambitions and implementation has practical consequences. External partnerships can provide resources and diplomatic support, but cannot substitute for accountable institutions, effective security coordination, transparent public finance or sustained economic policy at home. This qualifies a purely domestic account: governance is a critical explanatory factor, but foreign-policy outcomes emerge from the interaction of domestic capacity, leadership decisions and the international environment. The study's added value lies in showing these interactions across a defined period rather than ranking Nigeria's global influence without a consistent measure.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 Conclusion

This study examined how domestic conditions shaped Nigeria's foreign policy during the Jonathan administration and Buhari's first term, 2010–2019. The documentary evidence indicates that insecurity, governance concerns, economic constraints and leadership choices affected the priorities and implementation of external policy. The administrations differed in emphasis, but both relied on foreign partnerships to address security and economic objectives. The findings are consistent with an Innerpolitik explanation insofar as domestic pressures shaped policy agendas; they also show why domestic explanations must account for external partners and international constraints. The contribution is a comparative synthesis linking governance, security and economic pressures to both diplomatic orientation and implementation capacity.

7.2 Recommendations

In the light of the study's findings, the following are recommended for Nigerian government to:

1. Strengthen accountable governance and public welfare. Federal ministries and relevant oversight bodies should publish measurable implementation targets for anti-corruption, service delivery and public spending, with periodic public reporting. This responds to the finding that governance concerns affect credibility and the capacity to sustain external commitments.

2. Improve security-sector coordination and accountability. Security agencies should strengthen intelligence-sharing, inter-agency coordination and civilian-protection monitoring, while providing transparent reporting on the use of resources for counterterrorism. This follows from the centrality of insecurity in shaping Nigeria's external security partnerships.

3. Professionalise foreign-policy appointments and implementation. Appointments to diplomatic and foreign-policy roles should give demonstrable weight to diplomatic experience, regional expertise and technical competence. Career diplomats and relevant specialists should be involved in policy design, negotiation and evaluation.

7.3 Limitations and Future research

The conclusions are bounded by reliance on secondary sources, the absence of interviews with policymakers and diplomats, and the national-level focus. Future research could test these interpretations through interviews with foreign-service officials, security-sector actors, civil-society organisations and legislators; compare Nigeria with other African states; and trace specific episodes such as counterterrorism assistance, asset recovery or investment agreements from

domestic decision-making to implementation outcomes.

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