UNCHARTED WATERS: ANALYZING PRESIDENT BUHARI'S DIPLOMATIC ADAPTATIONS TO INTERNATIONAL SECURITY THREATS, 2015-2023

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ABSTRACT
This study examines how Nigeria's foreign policy under President MuhammaduBuhari adapted to the global challenges that emerged from 2015 to 2023, filling a gap in the literature on adaptive foreign policy theory in the African context. The study is rooted in the theoretical framework of adaptive foreign policy theory, which asserts the need for nations to flexibly adjust their foreign policy objectives and approaches in response to evolving international conditions. The study utilizes a literature-based approach, integrating academic and non-academic sources, to provide a comprehensive analysis of President Buhari's diplomatic adaptations during this critical period. Three overarching themes emerge from the thematic analysis: strategic responses to the US-China Trade War and resultant global economic disruptions, concerted efforts in stabilizing regions affected by coups and political instability in Africa, and a balanced approach towards the Covid-19 pandemic encompassing global health security and national well-being.The findings reveal Nigeria's adeptness in managing the economic impact of the US-China Trade War by diversifying economic partnerships, thereby bolstering economic stability. Additionally, the study underscores Nigeria's diplomatic dexterity in tackling regional instability through a complex foreign policy, which includes diplomatic negotiation with coup leaders, judicious use of sanctions, and strategic deployment of troops. Moreover, Nigeria's response to the Covid-19 pandemic reflects a multifaceted approach that prioritizes both global health security and national welfare. While the study sheds crucial light on Nigeria's global strategy and its adaptability in safeguarding its interests, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The examination is delimited to a specific period and context of Nigeria's foreign policy, potentially limiting its generalizability. Furthermore, reliance on secondary data sources may introduce

bias or inaccuracies. To enhance the robustness of these findings, future research should explore different periods, contexts, data sources, and methodological approaches, while considering diverse theoretical frameworks or perspectives.

Introduction

The period from 2015 to 2023 marked an era of uncharted waters for Nigeria's foreign policy. It was a timewhereby President MuhammaduBuhari made diplomaticchoices on wordaffairs that jeopardized international security. These includethe signing of the Paris Agreement, the geopolitical decision of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union, US-China trade war, the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, the emergence of regional coups in Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso and Guinea-Bissau, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.Not only do these incidents put collective international security at risk, they created complex issues that were interconnected, compelling the Nigerian government under President Buhari to adopt an adaptive foreign policy. For example, trade tensions between the US and China as well asuncertainties surrounding Brexitworsened the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Nigeria(Chidume et al., 2021).Similar to this,regional coups in Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Guinea-Bissau escalatedregional conflicts in the Sahel, which placed pressure on Nigeria's role in the region(Elischer & Lawrance, 2022).According to Anaele and Clark (2023), there has been a noticeable effect of Russia's incursion into Ukraine on the global energy markets, leading to an increase in oil prices and thus in Nigeria's inflation rates.The primarypremise of this study is that the period between 2015 and 2023 was a time of uncharted waters for Nigeria's foreign policy, as the country encountereda number of unprecedented global events that presented significant threats toglobal security.

Since 1960, Nigeria's foreign policy has seen several leadership changes, but its core tenets of non-alignment, afrocentricity, a just global economic system, and world peace have remained constant (Akindele& Ate, 1986). The nation has taken the lead in advancing African unification and has provided backing for the establishment of regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU).On the continent, Nigeria led anti-colonial and anti-apartheid initiatives, such as movements for the independence of Southern Africa (Abdul & Ibrahim, 2013). There is no shortage of literature about Nigeria's peacekeeping efforts in Sierra Leone and Liberia (McGregor, 1999; Vines, 2018). Nigeria too bases its foreign policy on fostering cooperation and economic expansion. Enhancing trade and investment ties with other African countries and major world powers such as the US, UK, and China has been a priority for the administration (Ajaebili, 2011).

The research problem centres on the unbelievable global obstacles encountered by Nigeria's foreign policy under former President MuhammaduBuhari's administrationbetween 2015 and 2023. The US-China Trade War, Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic, African coups, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 created new security challenges for Nigeria. The inquiry pertains to the manner in which the government of President Buhari deliberately modified Nigeria's foreign policy in reaction to a sequence of unparalleled global occurrences, including the signing of US-China trade war, the Covid-19 epidemic, and regional coups.

Conceptual Clarification

It is important to comprehend the context in which key terminologies (e.g uncharted waters, diplomatic adaptations and international security threats) are utilizedso as to offer conceptual explanation of their application within the larger literature. The term "Uncharted Waters" is utilized metaphorically to suggest a situation or time with the absence of precedence (Kokores, 2023). It has nothing to do with a body of water or actual sailing on open waters. In contrast, "Uncharted Waters" depicts how the geopolitical landscape is shifting globally as seen in the works of Hepburn (2020) on Brexit; Wong & Jie (2019) on trade war;and(Rosenau, 1970), Kokores (2023) on international finance. According to the study, between 2015 and 2023, Nigeria's diplomatic initiatives and foreign policy encountered unprecedented obstacles from the global scene. Rosenau (1970) defined diplomatic

adaptation as the ability of a country to adjust its policies and practices in response to the ever-changing character of international relations. According to Petersen (1977), diplomatic adaptation is the intentional and calculated adjustment of a country's foreign policy to take into account shifting international circumstances. The term "adaptive foreign policy" goes beyond the definition of "diplomatic adaptations" to refer to a state actor's responsive actions in response to new opportunities and problems (Smith, 1981). Foreign policy adaptation may be impacted by the kind and intensity of external threats and opportunities, the cost and accessibility of resources and skills, the political and social climate at home, the norms and values of the state and society, and the expectations and input of other players (Rosenau, 1970). Another important phrase in the research is "international security threats," which describes situations, things that happen, or forces that endanger global peace, stability, and well-being (Moses, 2018). The definition of international security threats, according to the study includes military conflicts, cyberwarfare, terrorism, transnational crime, natural disasters, pandemics, and economic downturns.

Methodology

This qualitative study examines how the administration of President Buhari strategically modified Nigeria's foreign policy in response to challenges to international security using a literature-based methodology. A literature-based approach often referred to as desk-based research or a literature review is a research methodology that entails combining data from peer-reviewed publications in order to provide a response to the research question (Al-Ababneh, 2020). The primary sources of articles were JSTOR and SCOPUS, two research databases. The study searches the literature from 2000 to 2023 using specific search phrases, boolean operators, and keywords generated from the research topic. The Boolean operators AND, OR, and NOT were utilized to further filter the search results. Based on the study topic, themes were created and then examined utilizing a thematic analytical method. Thematic analysis makes it easier to arrange and combine data in a purposeful manner that addresses the research question(Aramo-Immonen, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

The foundation of the theoretical framework is Adaptive Foreign Policy, which maintains that nations use foreign policy to pursue both transformation and maintenance (Smith, 1981). According to this idea, governments want to better their security and interests by changing the international system or their place within it, but they also seek to preserve the status quo in order to avert instability and conflict (Rosenau, 1970). The idea holds that governments trade off these two commodities, and that their choices, capacities, and expectations influence how they behave in foreign policy (Roo et al., 2020).The theory also implies that depending on the nature and extent of external threats and opportunities, nations may respond by hedging, bandwagoning, buck-passing, or appeasing. Yet, the hypothesis has a number of serious flaws. Foreign policy ignores the influence of civil unrest, interest groups, political opposition, and public opinion. The subtleties of Nigeria's foreign policy, where domestic concerns directly affect foreign policy decision making, are obscured by this absence (Adefuye, 2004). Although the Adaptive Foreign Policy theory offers a fundamental explanation, the fact that it does not take into consideration domestic repercussions indicates the necessity for a more thorough approach that acknowledges the interplay between domestic and international concerns when defining foreign policy.

Three themes of adaptation are identified by the study: economic, diplomatic, and health. The doctrine of adaptive foreign policy is utilized to elucidate how the administration of President Buhari tactically modified Nigeria's foreign policy in response to a series of unanticipated international developments. According to Central Bank of Nigeria (2022), the rationale for Nigeria's entry in 2019 into the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is that it served as a buffer against the negative effects of Brexit and the US-China trade war on the country's economy.The concept also elucidates Nigeria's choice to participate in the COVAX project in 2020 (William, 2020), a concerted international endeavour to get Covid-19 vaccinations and mitigate the pandemic's detrimental impacts on health and humanitarian circumstances. The theory can also explain why Nigeria responded to regional coups in Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Guinea-Bissau with military intervention and mediation as a strategy to find a compromise between maintaining regional stability and safeguarding Nigeria's

security and interests (Akinola&Uzodike, 2022). Nigeria's foreign policy at the time of uncharted waters may be broadly explained by the idea of adaptive foreign policy. Nevertheless, the theory has flaws, such as dismissing civil unrest, interest groups, political opposition, civil society, and the media, all of which might have an impact on foreign policy decisions (Beach & Pedersen, 2020). This limitation has led scholars to propose that theories that fail to take into account the impact of domestic factors on the creation of foreign policy be enhanced by liberal constructivism, which highlights the role of ideas, norms, and values in determining foreign policy (Bayraktar& Wang, 2004; Bisceglia, 1982).This study looks at Nigeria's adaptive behaviour under President Buhari, emphasizing important diplomatic decisions made, the factors that influenced those decisions, and the consequences those decisions had for Nigeria's interests and security.

Thematic Analysis

The study identifies three broad topics that correspond with the research question. The topics revolvearoundthe strategic response to (1) US-China Trade War and global economic disruption; (2) Regional coups and political instability in Africa (3) Covid-19 pandemic and global health security. These topicsfocused on critical examination of strategic adaptations to the aforementioned events.

US-China Trade War and Global Economic Disruption

Boylan, McBeath, and Wang (2021) define the trade war as the direct economic confrontation between the United States and China in 2018 and 2019. The Trump administration imposed $350 billion tariffs on Chinese goods in response to allegations of unfair trade practices and intellectual property theft (Bown, 2019). China responded by taxing US exports by $100 billion (Ciuriak, 2019), which set off a chain reaction of increasing tariffs and trade barriers between the two biggest economies in the world. The battle highlighted the rising strategic rivalry between the two superpowers in the context of geopolitical worries. This competition affected the national security of several nations where vital technologies such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and 5G were in jeopardy (Cali, 2018). The trade war caused a disruption in the global supply chain, which had an immediate impact on developing economies like Nigeria. Table 1 provides an overview of Nigeria's trading connections with the US, China, India, and Sub-Saharan Africa in order to assist in comprehending the situation.

Table 1: Nigeria's Trade Relations: Pre-Trade War, During Trade War, and After Trade War

Period	US Imports	US Exports	China Imports	China Exports	India Import	India Export	Africa Imports	Africa Exports
Pre-Trade War (2017)	$2,494,134	$5,672,187	$5,847,733	$721,261	$1,528,779	$7,938,340	878,738	5,048.181
During Trade War (2019)	$4,678,026	$2,822,001	$1,665,029	$12,060,017	$5,702,665	$8,263,326	$10,945,604	$14,608,095
After Trade War(2021)	$3,176,683	$2,002,265	$12,879,007	$1,846,031	$4,598,984	$7,733,674	$6,002,189	$1,081,917

Source: Adapted from WITS World Bank (2023)

Nigeria's commercial relations, particularly with the US and China, were impacted by the US-China trade war, as seen by the figures in Table 1. Nigeria experienced a $1,856 million trade deficit between 2017 and 2019 as a result of a 50.3% decline in exports to the US to $2,822 million and an 87.6% increase in imports to $4,678 million (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). This demonstrates how Nigeria was badly impacted by trade tensions between the two biggest economies in the world. The decline in exports and increase in imports show how vulnerable Nigeria's trade balance is to changes in international commerce. Nigeria's trade with China was impacted by the trade war, nevertheless. Nigeria's trade imbalance was 10,395 million in 2019 due to a rise in exports to China of 1,573.9% to $12,060 million and a decrease in imports of 71.5% to $1,665 million (CEIC Data, 2023). Nigeria's trade deficit increased to $11,033 million in 2022 due to a 673.9% rise in imports from China ($12,879 million) and an 84.7% decrease in exports to China ($1,846 million) (WITS World Bank, 2023). In order to lessen the consequences of the trade war, President Buhari developed new initiatives in response to the changing dynamics of the conflict. One of these initiatives was broadening commercial relations, particularly with Africa and India.

In order to take advantage of regional markets, Buhari's answer includes Nigeria's admission to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Nigeria's imports increased by 1,146.3% to $10,946 million, while its exports to Africa increased by 189.3% to $14,608 million. This rise in trade volumes suggests that Nigeria's diversification strategy toward Africa was influenced by Buhari's emphasis on the AfCFTA. Trade statistics also demonstrate President Buhari's diplomatic attempts to strengthen relations with important nations, including India. Despite a decline in trade between the two nations, Nigeria's trade surplus with India increased from 22.5% to $3,135 million in 2022 (WITS World Bank, 2023). It's possible that Buhari's diplomatic efforts to establish a solid and mutually advantageous economic relationship with India contributed to Nigeria's trade resilience in the face of global issues. Suratu (2023) claims that President Buhari also created the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM), indicating that he acknowledged the diaspora as a possible source of investments, markets, and remittances. NIDCOM is a conscious way of leveraging diaspora contributions for national development, even if the immediate impact on trade figures may not be evident. President Buhari took decisive action to create a thriving and sustainable economy when he signed a nine-point development agenda in December 2020 (TheCable, 2020b). Although it is uncertain from the data how the agenda will affect trade diversification, Nigeria is better able to withstand external economic challenges because of its emphasis on infrastructure development and economic sustainability.

Regional Coups and Political Instability in Africa

Between 2015 and 2023, there was an increase in regional coups in Africa, endangering the stability of governments. Military coups occurred in Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Chad, and Burkina Faso (Musavengane& Zhou, 2021). Colonel AssimiGoita ousted Mali's President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita and acting President Bah Ndaw in August 2020 and May 2021, respectively..Colonel MamadyDoumbouya ousted President Alpha Conde in Guinea, who had secured a disputed third term in 2020(Moses & Ige, 2023). There were also coups in Gabon, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Niger which Nigeria considers to be a risk to regional stability(Amoateng, 2022). Nigeria responded to these coups through adaptive foreign policy stancewhich included that of non-interventionism, a focus on regional cooperation, and the use of conditional sanctions.In contrast to earlier periods, especially from 1990 to 2000, when Nigeria adopted a more assertive foreign policy in Africa, the years 2015 to 2023 witnessed a change in the degree of direct involvement, with Nigeria shifting its foreign policy to more of condemning coup leaders instead of removing them (Mojeed, 2017).An exception to this was Nigeria's response to the coup in The Gambia in 2017, when the country sent troops under the codename ECOMOG NIBATT 1, which included 200 soldiers from the Navy and Air Force to the 7,000-strong joint force under the command of Senegalese Commander General Francois Ndiaye, with its headquarters located in Dakar (Jeremiah, 2018). Through ECOWAS, Nigeria took action against persons in Mali and Guinea-Bissau and other West African nations that had experienced coups.

Covid-19 Pandemic and Global Health Security

Following its outbreak in Wuhan, China, the coronavirus disease was declared a global public health emergency by the leadership of the World Health Organization (Cucinotta&Vanelli, 2020). It posed a serious danger to Nigeria's and other nations' international security. The virus infected over 771,549,718 and 6.9 million fatalities worldwide(World Health Organization, 2023).President Buhari adopted a proactive and flexible stance in his reaction to the COVID-19 outbreak. This included actively engaging with outside partners, diversifying the medical supply chain, and advocating for funding to minimize the economic harm caused by the pandemic. (2020, Adetayo). Buhari's approach placed a strong emphasis on global collaboration and engagement. Nigeria actively participated in international initiatives such as the COVAX facility to ensure equitable access to Covid-19 vaccinations. The Buhari administration made an effort to diversify its medical aid sources. This strategy was successful, as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund announced that by September 2021, COVAX had given Nigeria almost 4 million vaccine doses, highlighting the significance of international cooperation in vaccination campaigns. Securing a consistent supply of medical supplies was the aim.

To prevent over-reliance, the Buhari administration spread out its supply of medical supplies. As a result of this strategy, Nigeria simultaneously received donations and supplies from other nations. For example, China provided protective suits, ventilators, test kits, face masks, and protective gear in exchange for medical experts sharing their knowledge of pandemic management (TheCable, 2020a). Likewise, India provided Nigeria with 100,000 Covishield COVID-19 vaccinations (BusinessDay, n.d.). AstraZeneca vaccination doses totaling 859,600, solar-powered refrigerators, oxygen concentrators, ambulances, cold chain equipment, and infection control supplies were provided by Japan (Premium Times Nigeria, 2022). Nigeria received €50 million, or 21 billion naira, in humanitarian relief from the EU, a major ally (European Union, 2020). The United States allocated $505 million as humanitarian aid to Nigeria in fiscal years 2020 and 2021 to support the COVID-19 response in that country (United States Agency for International Development, 2023). Additionally, the UK gave Nigeria £105 million in humanitarian aid to help in its fight against the Omicron Covid-19 variant (BusinessDay, 2021). Undoubtedly, diversifying medical supply chains was President Buhari's administration's calculated approach to the COVID-19 outbreak. On the other side, this strategy made it easier for the country to meet the urgent requirements of the pandemic and laid the groundwork for a more resilient and flexible healthcare system. However, Nigeria's dependence on foreign aid for health-related issues may not be sustainable in the long-term, further emphasizing the necessity of regional industrial capacity and self-sufficiency.

Conclusion

This study evaluates Nigeria's foreign policy under President MuhammaduBuhari from 2015 to 2023 and how it responded to global security threats using a qualitative research technique, with a bias for literature-based studies. According to the analysis, Nigeria successfully handled the economic fallout from the US-China Trade War between 2015 and 2023 by broadening its commercial ties to lessen the impact of disruptions on the country's economic stability. The research also discovered that Nigeria used military deployment, sanctions, and diplomatic negotiation with coup leaders to modify its non-interference foreign policy and control the unrest in the sub-region. The investigation also revealed that Nigeria used a multifaceted and aggressive approach in addressing the COVID-19 outbreak. It changed its foreign policy to put national welfare and global health security over multilateralism. The results corroborate the notion of adaptive foreign policy, which holds that countries should modify their foreign policy objectives and strategies in response to shifting global circumstances. The results reflect Nigeria's international policy to safeguard its interests. The ability of the government to handle economic fluctuations, resolve local conflicts, and give priority to global health security demonstrates the significance of flexible foreign policy in contemporary international relations. The study did, however, have major shortcomings. First, the study looks at a particular time period and context for Nigeria's foreign policy, therefore it might not be representative of other periods. Second, secondary data—which might be skewed or inaccurate are used in the study. Third, a qualitative case study was adopted in the research, which can have an impact on generalizability. Therefore, to validate and generalize the results of this study, further empirical research employing other times or settings for Nigeria's foreign policy, various data sources or methodologies, and various

theoretical frameworks or viewpoints is required.

Recommendations

According to the study, President Buhari's flexible foreign policy—which favored diversification, multilateralism, and non-interventionism—was not enough to protect the administration from the consequences of the US-China trade war and from security threats brought on by the pandemic and regional coups. Nigeria must make diplomatic attempts to resolve trade conflicts top priority in light of these weaknesses, particularly when dealing with major economies such as the US and China. Strategic market targeting is required in light of Nigeria's involvement in the AfCFTA (Amodu, 2020). Additionally, economic sustainability and infrastructure development must be given top priority in foreign policy for Nigeria in order for it to endure external economic crises, putting the nine-point approach into practice when carrying out strategic development initiatives. Keeping a flexible foreign policy centered on cooperation and non-intervention in the face of regional unrest will benefit neighboring nations as well. In order to preserve regional peace, Nigeria should thus become more involved with ECOWAS (Omo-Ogbebor, 2017). Finally, Nigeria has to make investments in its industrial and healthcare sectors if it hopes to maintain its independence during pandemic-related problems. Nigeria should put a renewed emphasis on sustainable development, global health security, and economic resilience in its foreign policy.

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