



Nigeria's Foreign Policy and Insecurity: Addressing the Missing Links and Reoccurring Issues

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ABSTRACT

Insecurity is the biggest problem in Africa and nothing meaningful has been done by several sovereign states in Sub-Saharan Africa to stem the tide and its effects on nations all over the region. To this end, security has risen to be the dire need to be considered through the lens of foreign policy as an integral part of public administration and governance in Nigeria. Therefore, this paper specifically explored the missing links that gave rise to the problem of insecurity from foreign policy perspective; and the reoccurring issues that the ebb and flow of her foreign policy posed to Nigerian public space with major focus on Buhari's Administration. Secondary data was employed to analyse the broad and specific objectives of this paper through a descriptive and explanatory method. The missing link in Nigeria's foreign policy and security challenges spotted in the analysis are political ideology, globalization, poorly unchecked borderlands, and high rate of migration of criminal elements. The paper discovered some reoccurring issues in Nigeria's foreign policy and security challenges. The paper concluded that all is not well with the country, because while the protectionist policy under President Buhari to a great extent blocked foreign trade, it left security of borderlands at the mercy of corrupt security personnel. Based on this, all hands must be on deck to exterminate the current tide in the wave of insecurity ravaging the country at all costs.

Keywords: Political Ideology, Kidnapping, Terrorism

1 Introduction

Insecurity is the biggest problem in Africa and nothing meaningful has been done by several sovereign states in Sub-Saharan Africa to stem the tide and its effects on nations all over the region. To this end, security has risen to be the dire need to be considered through the lens of foreign policy as an integral part of public administration and governance in Nigeria. Hence, our major focus is on the foreign policy perspective. The rationale for this paper could be better understood as follows: "In fact, insecurity has assumed a pervading form in the country. The cause of this insecurity, now sophisticated and seemingly intractable, has been attributed to the government's nonchalant attitude" (Iregbenu & Uzonwanne, 2015). Given this, "there are arguments as to whether Nigeria is a failed or failing state. However, almost all stakeholders, especially those interested in sustained growth and development agree that Nigeria is not working" (Nwankwo, 2022:5). Since the 1960 independence of Nigeria, she has profusely declined economically sequel to poor policy practices and security challenges. Then we add that there are factors responsible for the problem of insecurity looming large here and there in a sovereign entity wrongly called the giant of Africa. For instance, Nwadiakor (2011) asserted that, "the deliberate concentration of Nigeria's capital resources to the development of a few cities in the name of federal and state capitals, culminating in the prevalence of a large population of rural and underdeveloped communities who later came to see the developing cities of Lagos, Port- Harcourt, Kano, Enugu, Ibadan, Kaduna and Calabar to mention but a few, as a different country has equally compounded the security of this country." Also, the foreign policy framework of the current administration is a source of worry to many. The President Muhammadu Buhari



from inception of his administration boldly adopted protectionist foreign policy. However, this has been widely chided by stakeholders within and outside Nigeria with her sister countries not left out in the criticism. Lucas (2020) corroborates this assertion by noting that, "Nigeria's neighbouring countries, together with its foreign trade partners, are also not left out among the critics of the protectionist policy of the administration." These development quagmires therefore call for a rethink. The need for this can be captured from the position of (Ukwuije (2015) who argued that foreign policy is an offshoot of the public policy of a state that cannot achieve certain aspects of its domestic policy posture without relating with other sovereign states in the international system.

Then this is where administration comes into play. Administration itself is primarily concerned with getting things done either at the micro or macro level of the society (Chioke, 2022a:59). The policies implemented by government personnel include but not limited to domestic policies. Hence, there are foreign policies, and they are coined to regulate functions and interplays between the inside and the outside. In light of this, foreign policy lives and thrives in an environment. By environment, we mean the environment of public administration which supports the influx or exodus of allied elements and demands in form of policies. Policies shape and reshape security and security itself is about structures. What is now the question is: Did all and sundry actually bargain for the prevalent conditions sequel to Nigeria's foreign policies in terms of the ravaging security challenges all over the country? As participant observers, we do not think that Nigerians (poor masses) had fairly gotten what they bargained for in terms of the security travails here and there. As awful as it is, security challenges in Nigeria defied curatives because the government lacks the political courage to tame the menace. As such, there is need for a rethink. In this sense, "administration requires cooperative human actions. It requires mutual respect and partnership. And on the other hand, whatever else may be said, government is about conflict resolution. It is the clearing house in regard to group interests and the path forward. It is what gives directionality to society notwithstanding the myriad of mighty workings apparently pulling towards other directions. Therefore, instability and incessant crisis are the antithesis of government. They only indicate aberrations" (Udenta, 2007).

Given the above view, it is added that where there is group interest, therein lies the quest for protection from uncomfortable ordeals. Push – pull factors are responsible for migrations across territories. So, this present paper throws up this question: How do sovereign entities respond to external impulses which are the basics for any effective foreign policy in terms of migration? Accordingly sovereign states conduct strict review of relevant immigration laws in order to checkmate illegal migrants. Corroboratively, in 2019, Nigeria's House of Representatives urged the federal government to review the immigration procedures at the land borders to ensure complete adherence to the relevant laws (Nwabughio, 2019). In this regard, the role of states towards ensuring safety cannot be over emphasised. Based on this, it should be added that: "It is the responsibility of each State to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity" (United Nations, 2005). Great scholars like Aristotle stated that man is a social being. Adopting the blueprint of the country's foreign policy makes it difficult for one to align with the social nature of man as everyone mostly in this side of the globe lives in fear of the unknown – as we have really gotten to the elastic point of known problem being made, masked and marketed as unknown gunmen. We add that, Nigeria as country has been overwhelmed by communal conflicts. Hence, the matter is apparently stultified and made gargantuan with a lot of political undertones. To this end, while focusing on Buhari's Administration, this paper was rooted in qualitative approach with a view to exploring the causes herein seen as (missing links) and effects (herein referred to as reoccurring issues) of the ebb and flow of Nigeria's foreign policy.

There are several missing links (causes) that could propel and constitute major hiccup to the security architecture in Nigeria. For instance, "dried logs of wood, oil drums, as well as rims of tyres are observed to be in use to demarcate the national borders which makes the borders to be disorganized, poorly managed and insecure" (Akinyemi, 2013). One major factor which encouraged insecurity in Nigeria is the porous frontiers of the country, where individual movements are largely untracked (Achumba, et al, 2013). It is against this backdrop (porosity of the Nigerian borders) that the country (Nigeria) has experienced unwarranted influx of migrants from neighbouring countries like Republic of Niger, Chad and Republic of Benin (Adeola and Oluyemi, 2012). These migrants that are some of the perpetrators of crime in Nigeria (Achumba, et al, 2013).

However, apart from the foregoing, other missing links have not been given proper qualitative review and analysis. To this end, the problem of the study is to qualitatively address the missing links in Nigeria's foreign policy and insecurity.

Over the years, the spate of insecurity has been left to flourish mainly because of the nature of the country's foreign policy templates. Today, the reoccurring issues in Nigeria's foreign policy and insecurity herein called, the reoccurring issues seem to be vast and seemingly insurmountable. But what are these issues? "Recently, students have become cheap target of notorious kidnappers in Nigeria with its antecedent consequences on individuals, schools, government and the society at large" (Olaniyi & Aminu, 2021). This is just an example. Then what about other nagging reoccurring issues which are the aftermaths of the country's foreign policy approach? Within the purview of this present study, the authors are geared towards analytically presenting the reoccurring issues with Nigeria's foreign policy and insecurity.

Therefore, while the broad aim of this study is to examine Nigeria's foreign policy and insecurity by addressing the missing links and reoccurring issues, the specific purposes of this paper were to: study the missing links in Nigeria's foreign policy and the problem of insecurity; and examine the reoccurring issues with Nigeria's foreign policy and the problem of insecurity.

2 Conceptual Framework

To achieve the cardinal objectives of this paper, we briefly conceptualise key terms that constitute this topic. We begin with foreign policy.

2.1 Foreign Policy Defined

One is not wrong to state that the way and manner a sovereign state responds to friendly gestures or threats from the outside depicts the state's foreign policy. Bojang (2018) was in conformity with this perspective by defining foreign policy as the behavior of the state towards other sovereign state. Offiong Duke *et al.*, (2018) contend that, "the goal of every foreign policy is to establish and maintain a cordial relationship with other nations, as well as to build a good image for the nation; to meet its national and domestic interests." By Nigeria's foreign policy, we mean the objectives, values and activities of the country vis-à-vis her interactions on bilateral or multilateral levels with other sovereign states within West African sub-region, African region and the rest of the global village. "Broadly interpreted, foreign policy is about the fundamental issue of how organized groups, at least in part strangers to each other, interrelate" (Hill, 2003). In line with this, how strangers in Nigeria or Nigerians interact with representatives of the receiving sovereign state in her foreign mission is a question of foreign policy. Also, it has been stated that, "Foreign policy was not a bridge between two distinct realms, but something that both divided and joined the inside and the outside, the state and the interstate system" (Campbell, 1998). Thus, foreign is a link between you that is here and those outside the shores of this. Bringing it home, Nigeria's foreign policy blueprint had given fillip to the kind of political entities that she interacts with both within and outside on either bilateral or multilateral basis. Therefore, commenting on foreign policy, Leira (2019) observes that, "It was producer, and the product, of the modern state and state system." This means that it is foreign policy objectives that guarantee the level of the interrelatedness of representatives.

2.2 Insecurity: A Synopsis

Insecurity is a condition in which a place or person's mind is characterized by vulnerability in a singular or many dimensions. As (Iregbenu & Uzonwanne, 2015) put it, "Insecurity only portrays the absence of Security." In a similar sense, Achumba *et al.*, (2013) defined insecurity as "the antithesis of security." Put differently, (Béland, 2005) averred that insecurity is, "the state of fear and anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection." In Nigeria, there is great dearth of protection arising from the poorly crafted foreign policy and relationships thereof in recent time. Significantly, Nwadiakor (2011) contend that, the problem of insecurity, which used to be one of the lowest in the hierarchy of social problems facing Nigeria, seems to have assumed an alarming proportion since the end of the Nigerian civil war which ended in 1970.

Studies have shown that most countries especially the third world countries have always conducted public administration of their countries from federal – state – local government as if the masses outside the metropolises need no security that guarantees peace, national stability and development. Sequel to this, there is great level of insecurity as those outside the cities also security problems. The citizens outside the major cities have resorted to stealing, vandalism, arson and other hideous crimes in order to survive and make their voices heard on issues of concern to their general well-being.

Conclusively, while foreign policy is rules guiding the operations of the state with other climes, insecurity is a worrisome challenge troubling the safety of properties and lives of people in a country. In Nigeria, the problem has remained disturbing to a worrisome degree. Accordingly, Achumba et al (2013) perceived that an unprecedented level of insecurity has witnessed in recent times in Nigeria.

3 The Missing Links in Nigeria's Foreign Policy and Insecurity

There are noticeable factors that intermingle to shape the activities of a country locally and at the global scene, however a lot issues are working against. Thus, an analysis of the causes of security challenges in Nigeria from a foreign policy perspective is presented below. These causes are herein contextualised as the missing link.

Poorly checked borderlands: While President Buhari has maintained a protectionist policy as regards Nigeria's international relations, the borderlands remain poorly checked against the entrance of bandits and terrorists from neighbouring countries. The degree of management of a territory's (country) determines the extent of safety her citizens will enjoy. It is so because, "borderlands are both meeting points and security hot spots which are often neglected in the development strategies of post-colonial states, but they are arenas for cross – border crime and represent a dynamic place of historically fostered cultural and socio-economic exchange at the same time" (Akpan & Umelo, 2020). The implication of this is diverse. For example, "border management is essentially an expression of a state's sovereignty as failure to effectively manage a country's border is capable of undermining its domestic and international legitimacy" (Akpan & Umelo, 2020). Thus, poor management of the border puts question marks on her legitimacy at the global level. In this sense, the situations observed by scholars encourage the spate of insecurity in this country. For instance, "dried logs of wood, oil drums, as well as rims of tyres are observed to be in use to demarcate the national borders which makes the borders to be disorganized, poorly managed and insecure" (Akinyemi, 2013). This ugly scene shows the kind of foreign policy that the country has operated with over these lengthy years of independence.

Political ideology: Political ideology is simply the political perceptions and views of political leadership that determine and explain how the state functions in terms of its domestic relations and international relations/foreign policies. With this, political ideology influences the foreign policy of a country in either a positive or negative sense. Nigeria being the giant of Africa makes her foreign policy pro-Africa. That is, Africa had long assumed the centerpiece of the country's foreign policy. Today, we have a mixture of political ideologies forming and reshaping the foreign policy of Nigeria with allied outcomes. It is clear from several indications that, political ideologies like authoritarianism, ethnic nationalism and identity politics are critical trappings of the Buhari's led federal government of Nigeria. Having the elements of ethnic jingoism, the federal government has continued through body language to pay deaf ears to the influx of herders mostly Fulani from Fulfulde speaking countries in African region.

Globalisation: Scholars like Akpan & Umelo (2020:229) are of the opinion that the "challenges facing Nigeria in managing her borders are compounded by globalization which is tearing down traditional borders through advancement in technology and transformation of international relations". The foreign policy template of Nigeria has remained friendly to all sorts of marriages of inconveniences and globalisation has been spotted as one. Surprisingly, as germane as globalisation is, it is not without critical deficits and as such, one is right to aver that it has been inimical to security of lives and properties here and there. With the operation of the world as a global village, one can monitor the activities of sovereign entities. This to a

great extent negates the idea of foreign policy which involves the shielding of national interest at the global scene.

High rate of migration of criminal elements: Push and pull factors are apparently responsible for the choice of migrants to move from one territory to another. Today, these factors contribute to the movement of miscreants and culprits of diverse colors. From time immemorial, “Migration can be conceived as the movement of people from one place to another usually in search of better living conditions. Migration may be divided into several categories based on origin and destination, distance travelled and length of stay” (Peil, 1977). Migration between the two Ethiopian urban centres of Adigrat and Addis Ababa gave room for young people to move into upward mobility called middle class (Breines, 2021). However, the situation in Nigeria is not similar to the above scenario in Ethiopia as migration between one community and another in a state in Nigeria is mostly parasitic and migration and her neighbouring countries has increased Boko Haramism, banditry, religious and ethnic crisis. Migration is good but in the present circumstances, migration has caused more harm to the territorial sovereignty, health and the entire wellbeing of Nigerians. This is because despite the fact that the Buhari’s foreign policy, ‘protectionist policy,’ includes the closing of the country’s borders; insecurity has increased on daily basis due to high rate of migration of criminals. Owing to this, Nigeria is suffering from high rate immoral behaviours and inhuman actions such as assault and battery against the female folk. Unfortunately, the closure of borders at the inception of Buhari’s administration ought to have achieved a great height in curbing the migration of criminals who perpetuate this evil; but the opposite is the predominant ordeal in almost all corners of this country. What the present foreign policy has done is to close the doors of business to foreign investors through the insensitive and counterproductive foreign policy approach of Nigeria’s government. This has a far-reaching implication for the continent. Thus, (UNCTAD, 2020) rightly stated that investment flows in Africa are set to drop from 25% to 40% in 2020.

Having gone thus far in the discourse and analysis of the missing links, we pause to explore the effects of the country’s foreign policy on security of lives and properties in Nigeria.

4 The Reoccurring Issues in Nigeria’s Foreign Policy and Insecurity

Public administration which focuses on capacity building has some challenges bedeviling the realization of sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Nigeria (Chioke *et al.*, 2020). Bearing this in mind, we explore in this qualitative analysis, the predominant effects (reoccurring issues in Nigeria’s foreign policy and security challenges that have constituted critical disturbances to the sovereignty and development of Nigeria. All this effects account for the bad governance in Nigeria. Viewed from the lens of the reoccurring issues and allied perspectives; the paper agrees that bad governance generates insecurity. Precisely, “Bad governance is when we have something or so many things bad – totally unacceptable on the basis of good conscience, equality, equity and fairness in the modus operandi of government at the local administrative unit, state level and federal level” (Chioke, 2022b). There are factors that interplayed to plunge Nigeria into a state of bad governance, which insecurity is an indicator of it (bad governance) vis-à-vis the foreign policy debate of this paper. Critical among these issues are:

Terrorism: Terrorism is a variant of insecurity. Be that as it may, Oriakhi & Osemwengie (2012) from a relative perspective argued that “insecurity and terrorism are two inseparable phenomena.” In view of the trending news here and there, one is not far from the reality to state that terrorism has been allowed to hold sway within many components units of the country because of its bonuses to a few elites. Hence, a continued display of sheer nonchalance over security of lives and properties. The rate of terrorism in Nigeria is therefore mindboggling. One may argue that the geometrical rate at which terrorism has been perpetuated in Nigeria is responsible for a lot of deficiencies witnessed in our internal bureaucracies. For instance, it is unfortunate that, “Organizations in the Nigerian context have suffered supply shortage, and this has remained an ugly reoccurring decimal in the nation’s public enterprises and Civil Service, and one cannot therefore look askance at this and wallow in the pretense that all is well with the sovereign entity wrongly

called the giant of Africa” (Chioke *et al.*, 2020). Of a truth, the sophisticated weapons in the armory of terrorists in Nigeria make the crude weapons used by security operatives a child’s play.

Farmers and herders clashes: Farmers and herders clashes are obnoxious outcome of prebendalism paved by the political ideology of ethnic chauvinism seen through the lens of the foreign policy in Nigeria. “Astonishingly, the farmers and herders crisis/clashes have been spotted by me as one form of corruption in Nigeria because the ruling elites, non-ruling elites, and bourgeoisie are beneficiaries to the loots thereof. The loots thereof are chiefly weapons of political propaganda and antagonism. The so-called farmers and herders clashes are political gimmicks and weapons of antagonism. It is an act of corruption and with this ferocious weapon, Nigeria cannot be sustainably developed” (Chioke, 2020). Scholars have proved beyond reasonable doubts that the herders that are responsible for the inferno, maiming and killing of unsuspecting farmers are those said to have been allowed to majestically migrate into Nigeria through the country’s borders. This has obvious negative outcomes on the peace and tranquility of Northern, Southern, Western and Eastern Nigeria.

Armed robberies: Scores of robberies have been perpetrated by illegal immigrants from neighbouring states in Africa. Apart from this, illegal immigrants have been accused of fueling incessant religious crises rocking Nigeria and other African countries with porous borders and poorly managed foreign policy frameworks. Lugubriously, the Nigeria police force which is constitutionally bound to secure and ensure internal peace has now turned to be tax collectors on federal highways, state and local roads. What a shame! If one is to subject the performance of Nigeria Police Force to quantitative appraisal, we are certain that the responses of respondents on the performance in terms curtailing armed robberies in Nigeria will be very low extent. Nigerian police have been caught extorting money from transporters. To drive home these points, the following was espoused by Adejumo (2018) is thrown up as follows: “Two police officers have been caught on camera extorting motorists along Ijebu Ode-Ibadan road in Ogun State.” Then, what could be the reason for this? The reason could be attributed to loss of national consciousness/values or the dominance of poor values among police officers which are below international standards of policing.

Kidnapping: In criminal law, kidnapping has been viewed as unlawful transportation and confinement of a person against his or her will, or false imprisonment by means of abduction, both of which are separate crime that when committed simultaneously upon the same person they are merged as a single crime called kidnapping (Olaniyi & Aminu, 2021). Like the case of armed robberies, kidnap in Nigeria are perpetrated by Fulani herdsmen who migrated to Nigeria. For instance, it was reported that, “Mr. Ejiofor ended up spending four days in the den of Fulani kidnappers inside the thick forest of Okene” (Okezie, 2017). The crime called, kidnapping usually takes place where the victim was forcefully taken to a location against his/her wished and/or concealed so that his/her loved ones will not have unrestricted access to him/her. From the recent happenings and empirical studies, “Kidnapping has become a serious concern and burden in the recent years in Nigeria. The phenomenon of kidnapping is growing in the recent years like a wide fire that knows no bound” (Olaniyi & Aminu, 2021). Lack of well fenced school premises is one of the rationale behind the wanton rate of kidnapping in Nigerian public schools and beyond. Thus, Okezie (2017) rightly contended that the menace of so-called Fulani herdsmen kidnappers and highway robbers has got to a height that the Presidency should intervene decisively, in the interest of Nigerian road users.

Instability: National stability according to Cole (2014) signifies a feeling of well-being or contentment among the citizens of any country; a contentment driven by the level of the citizens’ engagement with the system that governs them. In contradistinction, Held & McGrew (1998) see national security as the acquisition, deployment and use of military force to achieve national goals. Viewed from the preceding angle, Iregbenu & Uzonwanne (2015) were right to have insisted that, “...insecurity threatens the stability of any nation.” From the lens of this discourse, many who concur that foreign policy of the country grossly affects the stability of the country are not in error. This is because, “Nigeria’s border lack protection and have not been seen to have been accorded their deserved standard of importance resulting to the expected vulnerabilities of threats to security which unavoidably has translated to various criminal activities and to

the prevalent terrorist attacks that befall the country as well as the unrestrained influx of migrant through the routes.”

5 Conclusion

We have seen the missing links and reoccurring issues thrown up into the system, which constitute the way in which Nigeria’s foreign policy contributes to injecting allied troubles in the security of the country. From the review, the paper concludes that all is not well with the country, because while the protectionist policy under President Buhari to a great extent blocked foreign trade, it left security of borderlands at the mercy of corrupt security personnel. Based on this, all hands must be on deck to exterminating the current tide in the wave of insecurity ravaging the country at all costs. To provide a guide on how all hands should be on deck, panacea-based methods should be introduced through the framework (structure and ideas) of this paper. Hence, we throw up solutions in the following paragraphs. Based on the issues raised, the following panacea-based approaches should be put into practice:

Adequate funding: To tackle the adverse rate of migration of criminal elements pretending to be herders, border security should be looked into. To achieve this, border management and monitoring should be enhanced via adequate funding.

Improved weapons: Since terrorists in Nigeria are better equipped with state-of-the-art weapons, the federal government should be proactive in refurbishing all security operatives in Nigeria for an effective war against terrorism.

Use of ADR mechanisms: To deal with the problem of farmers and herders clashes, alternative dispute resolution (ADR) methods should be used in settling conflicts before it degenerates to crises and communal/tribal wars.

Security reform: Police as a security agency in Nigeria has undergone a number of reforms, but none is working as a result of its lopsidedness, non-implementation and associated woes. Therefore, the police reform herein canvassed is the one that is proactive in nature. The high rate of armed robberies and kidnapping of the citizenries in Nigeria calls for a rejigging of the ailing system. To get this done, urgent step should be taken to reform the Nigerian Police Force. Lastly, to avoid kidnapping of school children, schools should be properly fenced. This is apt as most schools are not fenced, those fenced are already with cracks and about to collapse, while those schools whose fences are not about to collapse are with dwarf fence.

Interestingly, these panaceas are to address the issue of bad governance currently disturbing the country’s development. As part of this paper’s final analysis, we add that insecurity in Nigeria is a mark of bad governance birthed by the foreign policy approach of President Buhari. Therefore, the implication is that if proper policy is adopted, insecurity will be checked through proper foreign policy framework.

6 Declarations

6.1 Competing Interests

The authors declare that there is no financial interest or any other interest to declare which may have arisen from this paper.

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