

Nigeria's foreign policy and national security in the fourth republic: A general appraisal

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria's foreign policy from independence has not only been prosecuted towards earning foreign revenue for growing the economy for general development; but for ensuring sustainable national security and stable domestic environment. A safe and stable political and socio-economic environment will create a clean business environment that will be conducive for doing business. In spite of Nigeria's effort to ensure a stable domestic environment since the enthronement of civil democratic administrations in the country between 1999 and 2020; the country is still plagued with myriads of security problems. These security challenges serve as deterrents to Foreign Direct Investment, Foreign Portfolio Investment, home remittances, foreign goodwill, etc. that should be directed at industrialization and manufacturing. The study is a qualitative one where document method was adopted in generating data for the study through the scrutiny of secondary sources such as books, academic journals, magazines, newspapers, periodicals, and internet facilities. The data generated was analyzed through discourse and explanatory methods. The concepts of foreign policy, national security and convergence theory have been defined and clarified that served as framework for the study. At the end of the study, recommendations have been made towards efficiently prosecuting Nigeria's foreign policy foreign for attracting more foreign investors for increasing the production processes in the country that will ensure safe and stable domestic environment. Principal among which is, the need for Nigeria's political leadership and foreign policy managers to focus more on industrialization and manufacturing for the local manufacture of unique products in which the country has comparative competitive advantage in the international market. The high volume of production processes and activities in the country will sap-up idle youths off the streets of our cities where they will be positively engaged and economically empowered; with little or no time for crimes, criminality, insurgency and unnecessary agitations.

Keywords:

Nigeria's Foreign Policy, National Security, Stability, Clean Domestic Environment, Foreign Revenue, Foreign Investors.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's foreign policy from independence has not only been prosecuted towards earning foreign revenue for growing the economy for general development; but for ensuring sustainable national security and stable domestic environment. A safe and stable political and socio-economic environment will create a clean business environment that will be conducive for doing business. In spite of Nigeria's effort to ensure a stable domestic environment since the enthronement of civil democratic administrations in the country between 1999 and 2025, the country is still plagued with myriads of security problems. These security challenges are serving as deterrents to Foreign Direct Investment, Foreign Portfolio Investment, home remittances, foreign goodwill, etc. that should be directed at industrialization and manufacturing. A manufacture-driven economy will lead to the production of unique products in which the country has comparative competitive advantage in the international market. The sale of these unique products and goods would earn for the country more foreign capital and expand its foreign revenue sources; as well as augmenting the domestic revenue sources that will grow the domestic economy on a sustainable basis (Saleh, 2019). The period of military regimes of the late 1980s and mid-1990s created new security problems domestically, and also created a logjam at the international level via a disarticulated and poorly executed foreign policy where Nigeria became a lone-ranger; except for the sale of crude oil and buying of consumables. International security collaboration between Nigeria and other countries was at its lowest ebb or even void. The exception of course was its near unilateral intervention in Liberia and Sierra-Leone through the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). Even this effort was not based on genuine foreign policy goals or objectives; but as a face-saving measure for their internationally discredited regimes. The military managed with this staggered foreign policy and highly unsafe, unsecured and unstable domestic problems up to the forced handing over of power to the civilians on May 29, 1999 thereby ushering-in the Fourth Republic (Saleh, 2010). Acting on hindsight, successive civilian administrations of the Fourth Republic took bold steps at mending fences between Nigeria

and the international community through shuttle diplomacy at the highest level (through personal visits to countries by the four presidents). To further win and sustain confidence of the international community, they embarked on numerous domestic reforms such as security, upgrade of domestic infrastructures and the sanitization of the domestic environment (through anti-graft war, due process, transparency, etc.). They embark on all these, in order to launder the hitherto battered image of the country and to attract more foreign goodwill. In spite of all these efforts by the four civilian administrations of the Fourth Republic, the country's foreign policy is still undergoing dialysis, where the domestic security situation is becoming dire (at breaking point).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

2.1 Foreign Policy

Kegly and Wittkopt (1993), defines foreign policy as the goals that the officials representing nation-states seek abroad, the values that underline these goals and the means (instruments) used to pursue them. Here, they seem to limit foreign policy process to the domain of public officials to the exclusion of any other inputs either from the private sector or even from the majority of the citizenry. It is the position of this study, that when inputs from other critical stakeholders (such as the private sector and the general public) are, captured and aligned with the national foreign policy goals, it will result in more rewarding foreign policy outputs through economic relations. Frankel (1978) refers to foreign policy as a dynamic process of interaction between the changing domestic demands and support, as well as the changing external circumstances. His view has the highest likelihood of engendering the good conduct of external relations more especially under an administration operating good governance where the demands of the domestic elements have not only been met by those who governed; but their inputs incorporated into the country's foreign policy. Under this condition the foreign policy outputs will be, supported by the citizens. Toeing the line of Frankel above, Holsti (1978) views foreign policy as the action of a state towards the external environment, which is, determined by the dynamics of the domestic environment under which these policies are, formulated. That foreign

policy is the articulated action of states in their relations with other states. To add to his position, a well-planned foreign policy takes its root from the domestic environment by taking into consideration the realities of events in the local scene such as the dynamics of governance. Akindele (2005) is of the views that the effective use of structures for the formulation of a well-articulated foreign policy is so required; where he concentrated on the institution and described the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the central statutory machinery for the conduct and management of Nigeria's external relations. This according to him is, derived from the political nature of the Nigerian public bureaucracy. Since we are under the forces of globalism (characterized by multilateral exchange of goods and services), Akindele's view implies that a technically efficient public bureaucracy is germane for a reward-yielding foreign policy that will lead to the recovery of Nigeria's looted funds from foreign countries in tandem with the interdependence theory.

2.2 National Security

Even when National Security has been subject to polemics, its being narrowed down to military and territorial domain by most political scientists according to Daniel Yergin (1978); implies that the State can be seen as a "Security State" (Police State) or a situation in which security overrides all other contending public demands. Almost in the same tune with Yergin (1978); Barry Buzan (1991) on his part called this situation a "Garrison State" where pockets of military personnel saturate every nook and crannies of the country. The over-emphasis on defense and security sub-sectors of the economy leads to the jettisoning of other sectors and sub-sectors of the economy. This has counter-productive effects even on the security sector itself. The Econo-centric (Non-Strategic) School as a variant of National Security thinking is synonymous to economic development (economic wellbeing of citizens). This School believes that non-defense spending is as important as spending on the defense sub-sector itself. While the Development School of Thought, as another variant of National Security thinking is synonymous with development. This school which was spearheaded by Robert McNamara (1968); a former US Secretary of State, is of the view that if there is no development, there can be no security. That the tendency in the past; was to reduce National Security to National Defense. Rather, National Security should not be viewed differently from National Development, but a sub-set of it that should be prosecuted holistically (McNamara, 1968).

2.3 Convergence Theory

The Convergence Theory propounded by Bailey Saleh in 2008 also served as a theoretical framework for this study. According to him, this theory is aimed at the promotion of positive interdependence among actors (state and non-state actors) in the international scene devoid of antagonism. That the adoption of planetary democracy with accompanying planetary civilization is expected to diminish the threats of wars across the world. Under this theory, interests of all nations/countries will be harmonized through globalization; such that divisive tendencies will be eradicated. The theory believes in the absolute empowerment of the United Nations to be able to enforce all her resolutions on deviant and in the extreme, recalcitrant regimes across the world (Saleh, 2008). Therefore, Nigeria's domestic and foreign policy formulation and implementation cannot be seen and treated as Nigeria's domestic affairs alone, rather it is minutely viewed and 'X'-Rayed by the international community. Hence, the national re-branding campaigns of Presidents Yar'adua and Jonathan between 2007 and 2015 were deliberate domestic policies aimed at ensuring attitudinal change among Nigerians towards projecting their country in good light. These domestic policies were expected to complement foreign policies that were expected to result in good conduct of external relations and the projection of positive global image for the country (Saleh, 2008; Saleh, 2019).

2.4 Assessment of Nigeria's Foreign Policy and National Security in the Fourth Republic

The upsurge in crimes, criminality and other negative vices in the society are backlashes of leadership failures of not strategically prosecuting foreign policy that will attract more investors that will domesticate their industries and manufacturing outfits to increase production processes in the country. Lack of adequate production processes in the country that ought to engage our teeming unemployed youths; has serious implication for national security and development. It is based on this that Karim and Saleh (2017), stated that many people go through the backdoor (i.e. through corrupt means) to achieve their objectives because they have little or no access to opportunities. That hindrance to opportunities could induce one to commit crime. This deprivation in the extreme, breeds violence and lawlessness in the society. More worrisome is the statistics of unemployed Nigerians given by the National Bureau of Statistics which put it at 70% of the total population of the country as at 2012 (NBS, 2012). This explains why Mohammed Yusuf, leader of the Jama'atu Alisunna Liddawatu Wal-Jihad (Boko-Haram) was able to win so much followership because he

grants them free capital (ranging from ₦5,000.00 to over ₦100,000.00) to start businesses. Here, he was filling-in the *employment and economic empowerment gap* created by corrupt governmental frameworks. This retinue of large followership in their thousands later became his "willing foot-soldiers" that prosecuted the insurgency in the North East region from 2009 to date (2022). So many of these unemployed youths all over the country are sitting on the fence awaiting any similar kind of the 'Yusufia' largesse; and are ready to die in defense of their financiers (Oladele, 2016; Karim & Saleh, 2017).

Another dangerous dimension of ill-conceived and badly prosecuted foreign policy on national security and development is the prevalence and widespread violence all over the country in the Fourth Republic. Lack of adequate and functional FDI-driven manufacturing outfits that ought to engage and empower this unemployed youths, left them at the mercy of criminal merchants and disgruntled politicians. This according to Robert (2012), is as the result of the deprivation of the majority of the citizens who have been deliberately - sidelined, marginalized and alienated from enjoying the abundant economic resources of their country. These groups, he maintains who are from each of the six geo-political zones of the country utilizes violence as a "bargaining power" to struggle for the control of political power at the Federal level (center) since this is the only way to control the national resources. Such struggles have given birth to ethno-religiously colored militia/assertive political groups like; the Oodua People's Congress (OPC), Afenifere, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV), Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF)/Boko-Haram. Their activities have succeeded in causing serious security disequilibrium to the country in their bids to ensure the success of their "sons" as Presidents of this country from 1999 to date (2022). Such include former President Olusegun Obasanjo (for the OPC/Afenifere), former President Goodluck Jonathan (for MEND/NDV) and President Muhammadu Buhari (for ACF/Boko-Haram). This does not only have disruptive effect on security but the development of the country where much energy is continuously being wasted on unhealthy struggles for the control of central political power at the expense of sustainable security and development. If this dangerous security threat is not checked, it will lead to the dismemberment of this country. The direct involvement of politicians in creating and funding these ethnic militias; was affirmed by the statement of the PANDEF leader Chief Edwin Clarke after meeting with Acting President Yemi Osinbajo on 4th August 2017. In response to journalist question on whether Jomo Gbomo was in attendance at their summit with the Acting President; he declared emphatically that Jomo Gbomo is a *ghost* name which does not exist as a human (Robert, 2012; Orngu, 2014; Saleh, 2014; Core TV, 2017).

2.5 International Collaborative Efforts in Tackling Problems of Insecurity in Nigeria in the Fourth Republic

President Olusegun Obasanjo on assuming the mantle of political leadership of Nigeria on 29th May, 1999 embarked on high level personal diplomatic shuttles where he sought for international collaborative efforts to help stem the tide of security challenges bedeviling the country. First before him was the problem of agitations and militancy in the Niger Delta region considered to be the major revenue spinner for the country. The activities of the plethora of militant groups in the region almost paralyzed economic activities in the country. Another security problem which Obasanjo was confronted with from the outset of his administration, was the Sharia Law debacle started by an infamous Governor of Zamfara state Ahmed Sani. This was followed by destructive activities of a Terror group called the "Taliban" in Geidam, Yobe state; which he 'militarily' summarily suppressed. Obasanjo also personally ensured that the lingering Bakassi border issue between Nigeria and Cameroon was brought to an end by heeding to the verdict of the International Court of Justice in 2002 where the Island was ceded to Cameroon. As he was solving the Bakassi issue, the Jos ethno-religious crisis grew out of proportion where Obasanjo had to declare a state of emergency in Plateau state. He staggered with these weighty security problems up to the end of his eight-year tenure (Saleh, 2010). President Umaru Musa Yar'adua inherited seemingly intractable security problems more especially in the Niger Delta region, which his predecessor could not resolve decisively. The activities of these militant groups continued and posed dangerous threat to not only national security, but also almost paralyzed economic activities in the country. The activities of plethora of Niger Delta militants in vandalizing oil pipelines and kidnapping of foreign oil workers; made some of the main oil companies to shut-down (closed) production and left the shores of the country. Oil being the major source of foreign revenue to the country, made Yar'adua to come up with the Amnesty programme where the Niger Delta militants were talked into abandoning their militancy, and surrendering their arms in

exchange for foreign training and other largesse. In fact, Yar'adua's Amnesty programme was a magic wand that brought to an end the protracted Niger Delta militancy that had lingered on for over three decades. Apart from the singular act of dousing the Niger-Delta militancy; Yar'adua's effort to stabilize the national security equilibrium and make the domestic environment clean enough for doing business, was plagued by other domestic factors. Such include infrastructural reversal/comatose (epileptic power/energy supply), Boko Haram insurgency, cattle rustling, ransom abductions/kidnappings, criminal-gang activities, culture of impunity and massive corruption that characterized his three years in office. The massive paralysis experienced in his anti-graft war capped by his introduction of plea-bargain made those convicted of the same offence to fight-back through their cronies that unleashed terror on innocent citizens. All these made foreign investors and international business/development partners to be scared and afraid of bringing foreign capital to invest in an unpredictable and risky domestic environment (Oladele, 2016).

In his effort to obtain foreign collaborative effort to tackle the problem of insecurity in the country, President Umaru Yar'adua began his African engagement with the country's immediate neighbors such as Niger, Cameroon, Chad, Benin, Cape Verde, Ghana as well as Sao Tome and Principe where he made periodic consultations with them on diverse issues principally security and economic. However, as from 2009, more emphasis was on security because of the rising challenges of terrorism (Boko Haram), Sea piracy and other criminal activities within this region. He continued with joint economic programmes such as the Niger River Basin Commission and the Chad Basin Commission. Pursuant to this, and as the result of the Boko Haram insurgency in Maiduguri Borno State, both Nigeria and Chad held bilateral summit in Maiduguri on December 8, 2009 to build on the first summit held in 2008. The Summit principally discussed economic and security matters between the two countries. Its main thrust was to solicit for strong cooperation and collaboration between Nigeria and its contagious neighbors towards setting up a Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to patrol their common land and maritime borders (MFA-AR, 2012; Karim & Saleh, 2017; Oladele, 2016). On assumption of office in October, 2010, President Jonathan maintained that active intra-African collaboration will be vigorously pursued by his administration towards combating rising trans-border crimes like sea piracy, armed banditry and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons that have been used to fuel conflicts across the African continent. Jonathan visited Niamey, Niger Republic where he and his Nigerian counterpart, President Mohammedu Yousufu signed a Joint Security Pact. Jonathan was in Ankara Turkey in February, 2011 where he and his counterpart signed many bilateral agreements on Education Cooperation, Cultural Agreement, Agreement on Immigration, Agreement on Military and Protocol of Cooperation between the Foreign Ministries of the two countries. Similarly, the signing of Trans-Border Security Cooperation Agreement with Cameroon in 2012 and the strengthening of the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) under the aegis of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) comprising Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger was pursued by President Jonathan for more effective joint border patrols to contain the activities of the Boko Haram on the North East region of Nigeria. (MFA-AR, 2012).

The sum of \$98 million was granted to Nigeria by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) to assist the country in fighting the Boko Haram insurgency. This donation was made in February, 2015 during Muhammad Buhari's visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as President-Elect. This when added to the earlier \$98 million given by the same IDB, will give a total of \$196 million. On 14th March, 2016 Nigeria-Equatorial Guinea relations was 'caped' with President Muhammadu Buhari's two-days visit to Malabo for a bilateral security summit in the company of Nigeria's Minister of Defense – Mansur Dan Ali, Security Adviser – Gen. Mungonu (retired). President Buhari and President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo signed agreements on Maritime policing and security patrols to check sea piracy, crude oil theft, ransom abductions, drug trafficking and other criminal gang activities in maritime waters between Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea. In furtherance of international collaborative efforts to address the protracted problem of insurgency in the country; an International Islamic Conference on Insurgency was held in Abuja Nigeria on 20th March, 2016 with President Muhammadu Buhari delivering the opening speech. The two-day visit of President Paul Biya of Cameroon to Nigeria on 4th May, 2016; where he met with President Muhammadu Buhari was to further strengthened the already existing strong bond of bilateral security relations between Nigeria and Cameroon. This came at a time when North Eastern borders between Nigeria and Cameroon serve as hiding zones for the Boko Haram insurgents (Saleh, 2018).

2.6 Summary of Nigeria's Foreign Policy and National Security in Monetary terms in the Fourth Republic, 1999-2020

Summary of the benefits of a sustainable national security drawn from Nigeria's Foreign Policy in the Fourth Republic indicated a steady but modest improvement in the inflow of foreign revenues to the country from foreign sources. The main sources are: USA \$243,568bn (11%), Russia \$76,034bn (3%), China \$110,901bn (5%), Brazil \$145,140bn (6%), Italy \$191,825bn (8%), EU \$67,305bn (3%), D8 \$71,500bn (3%), World Bank \$222,705bn (10%), WMT/WCST \$673,785bn (30%), Home Remittances \$199,500bn (9%), Foreign Goodwill \$65,216bn (3%), FDI \$215,195bn (9%), and Recovery of Looted Funds from foreign countries \$2,393bn (1%). The total foreign revenue inflow to Nigeria for the period of the study stands \$2,281,131tr with a cumulative annual average of \$1,412,128.77tr. The cumulative source average stands at \$108,841.19bn for the same period This is as presented in Figures 1 and 2 below:

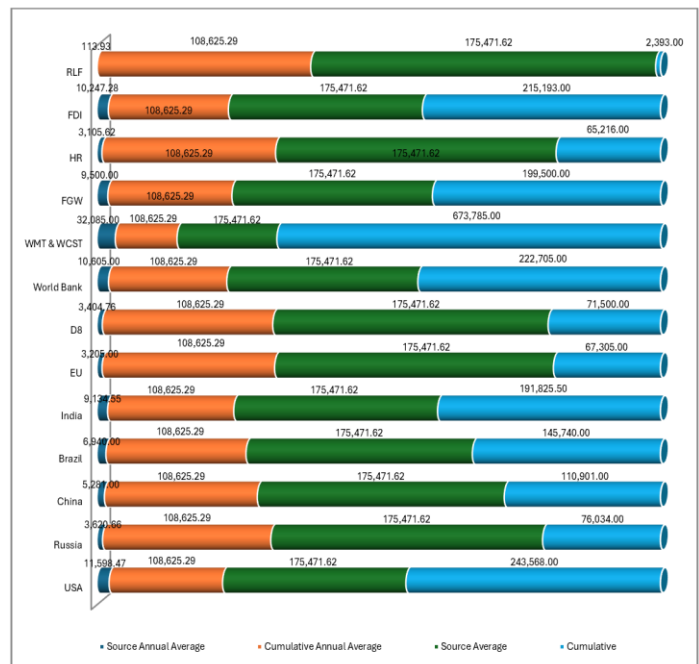


Fig. 1: Foreign Revenue Inflow to Nigeria in the Fourth Republic, 1999-2020 (in \$ Billions)

Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2025 as adapted from; World Bank, 2010; MPI, 2013; Mandara, 2013; USSD-CBJFO/USCBFT, 2012; Hurst, 2006; IHCN, 2011, World Bank, 2014; Saleh, 2008; Awolusi, 2012; Onakoya, 2012; USAID 2016; World Bank, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019/20

Key: USA = United States of America, HR = Home Remittances, EU = European Union, D8 = Developing Eight countries, FDI = Foreign Direct Investment, RLF = Recovery of Looted Funds, FGW = Foreign Goodwill, WMT = World Merchandize Trade, WCST = World Commercial Services Trade

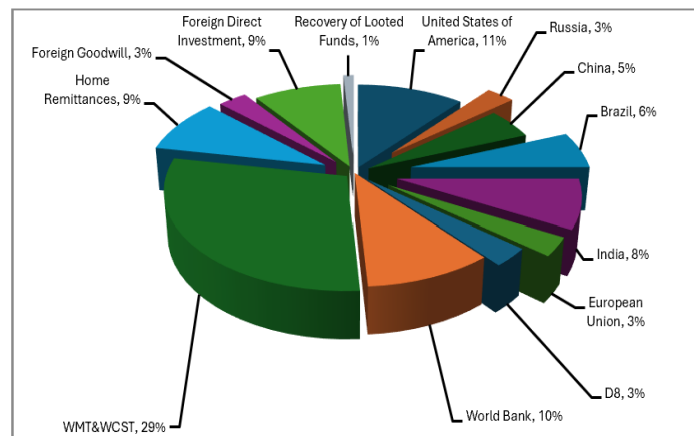


Fig. 2: Foreign Revenue Inflow to Nigeria's in the Fourth Republic, 1999-2020 (in Percentage)

Source: Generated by the Researcher in 2025 as adapted from; World Bank, 2010; MPI, 2013; Osinbajo, 2015; Mandara, 2013; USSD-CBJFO/USCBFT, 2012; Hurst, 2006; IHCN, 2011, World Bank, 2014; Saleh, 2008; Awolusi, 2012; World Bank, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019/20

3. CONCLUSION

From the analysis so far, conclusion can be drawn that Nigeria's foreign policy and the national security performance of the four civilian administrations of the Fourth Republic have earned the country great benefits and rewards. In spite of the protracted Boko Haram insurgency and banditry, the domestic reforms in security, infrastructures, and more particularly the amnesty granted to the Niger Delta militants helped to stabilize security situation in the Niger Delta that ensured the continuous exploitation of petroleum oil largely for exports. As the result, statistical data indicated that World Merchandize Trade & World Commercial Services Trade have been improving during the period of the study. The study has also indicated that Nigeria's economic relations with China and USA are the most rewarding and beneficial among state actors in the Fourth Republic. Foreign goodwill and inward home remittances are the emerging great foreign revenue sources of the study. Particularly there is sudden and steady rise of home remittances by Nigerians in the Diaspora (NIDO) where it was placed as the fourth highest source of foreign revenue for the country for the period. The performances of Nigeria's active business partners such as China and India however fell below expectations in terms of home remittances. In spite of this modest performance, the four administrations of the Fourth Republic underperformed in the area of directing the attracted FDI and other foreign revenues into the industrial and manufacturing sector and sub-sector, which would have engaged majority of our unemployed youths and stem the tide of crimes and criminality in the country. The manufacture of unique finished products with comparative competitive advantage in the international market will serve as major sources of foreign revenue to the country. This is based on the fact that most serious countries like USA, China, Japan, Germany and France depends less on fossil fuel or other exhaustible energy sources to power their industries and grow their economies. As such, manufacturing is not only a vogue, but also a global requirement for sustainable security and economic growth in the 21st Century. Nigeria therefore must strategically key into this if she wants to attain her aspiration of being one of the twenty greatest global economies for the rest of the 21st. Century.

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