

# ANALYSING THE INFLUENCE OF NIGERIA'S DOMESTIC POLITICS ON MUHAMMADU BUHARI'S FOREIGN POLICY DIRECTIONS (2019 – 2023)

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This study examines the impact of domestic political factors on President Muhammadu Buhari's foreign policy decisions during his 2015-2023 tenure in Nigeria. Utilising Putnam's Two-Level Game Theory and Allison's Bureaucratic Politics Model, the research analyses how economic pressures, security concerns, and political rivalries influenced Buhari's international engagements. The findings reveal that economic challenges drove a focus on economic diplomacy and foreign investment, while security issues, particularly the Boko Haram insurgency, shaped military cooperation and regional security initiatives. Domestic political rivalries influenced anti-corruption efforts and approaches to regional conflicts. The study also highlights the reciprocal effect of certain foreign policy decisions on domestic politics, such as the closure of land borders. This research contributes to the literature on Nigerian foreign policy by providing a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between domestic and international factors during a critical period. It offers valuable insights for policymakers and scholars on the multifaceted elements shaping Nigeria's engagement with the international community, despite established principles of Afrocentrism and non-alignment.*

## **KEYWORDS**

*Domestic Politics, Foreign Policy, Muhammadu Buhari, Nigeria*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Foreign policy, as a critical component of statecraft, has evolved significantly since the emergence of modern nation-states. The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 is often considered the birthplace of modern international relations, establishing the principle of territorial sovereignty [1]. Throughout history, various factors have shaped foreign policy, including national interests, ideological alignments, and global power dynamics. The Cold War era, for instance, saw the world largely divided into two camps, with many nations aligning themselves with either the United States or the Soviet Union [2]. In the post-Cold War period, the global landscape has become increasingly multipolar, with emerging powers challenging the traditional Western-dominated international order. This shift has been particularly evident in regions like Africa, where countries have sought to assert their independence and pursue their own development paths. The concept of "African solutions to African problems" has gained traction, emphasising the continent's desire for greater autonomy in addressing its challenges [3].

Within this context, Nigeria has emerged as a significant player in African and global affairs. Since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria's foreign policy has been guided by principles that reflect both its African identity and its aspirations for global influence. The country has consistently emphasised the importance of African unity and development, while also seeking to

maintain its autonomy on the global stage. This approach is exemplified by Nigeria's commitment to Afrocentrism and its adherence to the principle of non-alignment during the Cold War era [4]. Nigeria's role in regional organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) underscores its commitment to African integration and cooperation. The country has been instrumental in peacekeeping efforts across the continent and has played a leading role in mediating conflicts in countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone [5]. At the same time, Nigeria has sought to balance its regional commitments with its broader international engagements, maintaining relationships with major global powers while advocating for a more equitable global order.

However, Nigeria's foreign policy ambitions have often been constrained by domestic realities. The country's international relations have been significantly influenced by political transitions, security challenges, and economic instability. The interplay between domestic politics and foreign policy in Nigeria is complex and multifaceted, as explored in depth by scholars such as Cyril Obi in his work on Nigeria's foreign policy in the post-military era [6].

The administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, which spanned from 2015 to 2023, provides a compelling case study of this dynamic. Buhari came to power with a mandate focused on addressing pressing domestic issues, including corruption, economic stagnation, and the threat posed by the Boko Haram insurgency. His foreign policy approach initially emphasised regional cooperation and economic diplomacy, reflecting both Nigeria's traditional foreign policy principles and the urgent need to address domestic challenges [7]. As Buhari's tenure progressed, his administration faced increasing pressure to balance domestic priorities with international obligations. The government's handling of human rights issues and its response to economic challenges drew criticism both domestically and internationally. These pressures often resulted in complex trade-offs between domestic policy goals and foreign policy commitments, highlighting the intricate relationship between internal politics and external relations in Nigeria [8]. The Buhari administration's foreign policy choices offer valuable insights into how domestic politics can shape and constrain a nation's engagement with the world. Examining this period offers valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities Nigeria faces as it strives to maintain its leadership role in Africa while navigating an increasingly complex global landscape.

### **1.1. Statement of Problem**

Despite the acknowledged significance of domestic politics in shaping Nigeria's foreign policy trajectory, there remains a notable gap in research specifically focused on the intricate relationship between domestic factors and foreign policy decisions during President Muhammadu Buhari's administration (2015-2023). While existing literature provides valuable insights into Nigeria's broader foreign policy landscape and the Buhari era's domestic challenges, there is a need for more studies that systematically analyse how specific domestic political factors influenced Buhari's foreign policy choices.

This research gap is particularly striking given the unique domestic context within which Buhari ruled Nigeria. The Muhammadu Buhari administration faced a multitude of internal challenges, including a struggling economy, persistent security threats, rising ethnic tensions, and a polarised political landscape [9]. These factors, together with Buhari's leadership style as well as the internal dynamics of his political party, the All Progressives Congress (APC), probably had significant impacts on shaping his foreign policy decisions. However, the extent and nature of this influence remain under-explored in the existing scholarly discourse. The complexity of Nigeria's domestic political landscape during this period cannot be overstated. The country grappled with a recession in 2016, followed by sluggish economic growth and high inflation rates

[10]. The security situation remained precarious, with the ongoing Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast and escalating conflicts between herders and farmers in the Middle Belt region [11]. Additionally, separatist agitations in the Southeast and militancy in the Niger Delta posed significant challenges to national unity and stability [12].

These domestic issues inevitably impacted Nigeria's foreign policy priorities and engagements. For instance, the need to combat terrorism led to increased military cooperation with neighboring countries and Western powers [13]. Similarly, economic challenges prompted a renewed focus on attracting foreign investment and diversifying trade partnerships [14]. However, the precise mechanisms through which these domestic factors translated into specific foreign policy decisions remain insufficiently examined. The central research problem, therefore, can be articulated as follows: To what extent did domestic political factors shape President Muhammadu Buhari's foreign policy decisions during his tenure? This question aims to reveal the motivations and limitations that shaped Buhari's foreign policy decisions, highlighting the intricate balance between domestic influences and international factors in Nigeria's foreign policy-making process. This study aims to contribute to the broader understanding of foreign policy dynamics in Nigeria and offers valuable insights for policymakers and scholars alike. Focusing on the Buhari administration offers a contemporary case study that sheds light on the evolving nature of Nigeria's foreign policy amidst complex domestic challenges. Additionally, this research could inform future policy decisions by emphasising the need to consider domestic political contexts in the formulation of foreign policy.

## **1.2. Research Questions & Objectives**

### **Key Research Questions:**

- What were the primary domestic political factors influencing Buhari's foreign policy decisions?
- How did these factors manifest in specific foreign policy choices such as relations with neighboring countries, international trade agreements, and stance on global issues?
- Were there instances where foreign policy considerations shaped domestic political decisions in Buhari's era?

### **Research Objectives:**

- To analyse the interplay between domestic politics and foreign policy within Buhari's administration.
- To identify the most influential domestic factors and their impact on key foreign policy decisions.
- Contribute to the broader understanding of foreign policy decision-making in Nigeria.

## **1.3. Literature Review**

The relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy has been a central focus of international relations scholarship, yielding a rich tapestry of theoretical frameworks and empirical studies. This literature review examines the broader theoretical landscape, narrows its focus to the Nigerian context, and finally explores the specific case of the Buhari administration.

### **1.3.1. Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy**

The interconnection between a nation's internal political dynamics and its external relations has long fascinated scholars, resulting in a diverse array of theoretical approaches and empirical investigations. This body of work has evolved significantly over time, offering increasingly nuanced perspectives on how domestic factors shape foreign policy outcomes. One seminal contribution to this field is Putnam's (1988) "two-level game" theory [15]. This framework conceptualises foreign policy decision-making as a simultaneous negotiation process occurring at both domestic and international levels. Leaders must strategically balance the demands of domestic constituencies with the constraints and opportunities presented by the international system. Putnam's work has inspired numerous case studies and theoretical refinements, such as Moravcsik's (1997) liberal theory of international politics, which emphasises the primacy of societal actors in shaping state preferences [16].

Building on these foundations, scholars have explored various specific domestic factors that influence foreign policy. Economic conditions, for instance, have been shown to play a crucial role. Mansfield and Milner (2012) demonstrated how domestic economic interests shape a country's stance on international trade agreements [17]. Their work highlights how leaders must navigate competing economic pressures from different sectors of society when formulating trade policies. Political institutions also significantly impact foreign policy decision-making. Democratic peace theory, as articulated by Russett (1993), posits that democratic nations are less likely to engage in conflict with one another due to institutional constraints and shared values [18]. This theory has sparked extensive debate and research on how different political systems affect foreign policy outcomes.

Public opinion represents another critical domestic factor. Holsti's (2004) comprehensive study of American foreign policy illustrates how public sentiment can constrain or enable certain policy choices [19]. In an increasingly interconnected world, the role of public opinion in shaping foreign policy has only grown more pronounced, particularly with the rise of social media and instant global communication. Domestic security concerns also profoundly influence foreign policy. Farnham's (2004) research on the impact of political context on foreign policy decision-making demonstrates how internal threats can lead to more aggressive or isolationist foreign policies [20]. This dynamic is particularly relevant in countries facing insurgencies or separatist movements.

### **1.3.2. Nigerian Foreign Policy Studies**

There has been extensive research and findings on how the country's unique domestic landscape shapes its foreign policy. Nigeria's federal structure, ethnic diversity, and economic challenges have all been identified as key factors influencing its international relations.

Akinboye's (2013) comprehensive analysis of Nigerian foreign policy since independence highlights the enduring influence of domestic political structures on the country's international engagements [21]. He argues that Nigeria's federal system, with its complex power-sharing arrangements among different regions and ethnic groups, has consistently shaped the country's foreign policy priorities and decision-making processes. The impact of Nigeria's oil-dependent economy on its foreign policy has been another area of scholarly focus. Obi's (2018) study on oil politics and Nigeria's foreign policy demonstrates how the country's status as a major oil producer has influenced its diplomatic relations, particularly within Africa and with major global powers [22]. This research underscores the intricate links between economic interests and foreign policy objectives.

More recent studies have explored the influence of non-state actors on Nigerian foreign policy. Idowu's (2020) work on the role of civil society organisations in shaping Nigeria's foreign policy discourse highlights how these groups have increasingly influenced the country's stance on issues such as human rights and women's protection [23]. This research reflects a growing recognition of the diverse domestic stakeholders involved in foreign policy formulation. The impact of security challenges on Nigeria's foreign relations has also received significant scholarly attention. Omobuwajo's (2021) analysis of the Boko Haram insurgency's effect on Nigeria's foreign policy reveals how domestic security threats have prompted a more assertive regional security stance, particularly in the Lake Chad Basin [24]. This work demonstrates the direct link between internal security challenges and foreign policy priorities.

### **1.3.3. Buhari Administration Analyses**

While the broader context of Nigerian foreign policy has been well-studied, research specifically focused on the domestic-foreign policy nexus during the Buhari administration (2015-2023) remains relatively limited. However, several scholars have begun to explore this critical period in Nigerian history. Odubajo's (2017) examination of domestic environmental variables and foreign policy articulation under the Buhari administration provides valuable insights into how internal political dynamics shaped Nigeria's international engagements during this period [25]. The study highlights how Buhari's anti-corruption agenda and economic diversification efforts influenced the country's diplomatic priorities.

Salawu's (2024) assessment of Nigeria's external image under the Buhari administration offers a comprehensive view of how domestic policies and challenges affected the country's international standing [26], highlighting the complex interplay between internal governance issues and external perceptions of Nigeria. Obasogie and Okeibunor's (2024) analysis of public opinion in Nigerian foreign policy-making during the Buhari era sheds light on the growing influence of popular sentiment on diplomatic decisions [27]. Their work reveals how increased access to information and social media activism have amplified public voices in foreign policy debates. Despite these contributions, there remains a need for more in-depth studies that systematically analyse the specific mechanisms through which domestic political factors influenced Buhari's foreign policy decisions. The complex interplay between Nigeria's economic challenges, security threats, political dynamics, and Buhari's leadership style in shaping foreign policy outcomes requires further exploration.

This research gap presents an opportunity to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of Nigerian foreign policy during a critical period in the country's history. Examining the specific domestic challenges and political dynamics that influenced Buhari's foreign policy choices aims to clarify the complex decision-making processes guiding Nigeria's international relations during his tenure. This analysis can provide valuable insights for both policymakers and scholars, contributing to the broader discussion on the domestic determinants of foreign policy in emerging powers.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study employs two prominent theoretical frameworks to analyse the interplay of domestic and international factors in shaping President Buhari's foreign policy: Putnam's Two-Level Game theory and Allison's Bureaucratic Politics Model.

## **2.1. Two-Level Game Theory**

Robert Putnam's Two-Level Game theory (1988) proposes that foreign policy decision-making occurs simultaneously at two interconnected levels namely the international arena (Level I), where national governments engage with other states, and the domestic sphere (Level II), where various internal actors, including political parties, interest groups, and public opinion, influence government decisions [15].

In the context of Buhari's foreign policy, this theory can illuminate the strategic calculations and trade-offs he faced in balancing domestic priorities with international obligations. For Instance, Nigeria's relationship with China. On Level I, Buhari sought to attract Chinese investment and infrastructure development to bolster Nigeria's economy and fulfill his domestic promises of job creation and poverty reduction. However, on Level II, he faced domestic concerns about debt sustainability, environmental impact, and potential loss of sovereignty due to excessive reliance on China [28]. Buhari's approach involved negotiating deals that prioritised technology transfer and local content, while also seeking diversification of Nigeria's partnerships to mitigate risks. This demonstrates the complex interplay between Buhari's pursuit of international cooperation and his need to address domestic anxieties, showcasing the intricacies of the two-level game in Nigeria's foreign policy decision-making.

## **2.2. Bureaucratic Politics Model**

Graham Allison's Bureaucratic Politics Model offers an alternative perspective by emphasising the role of diverse government agencies and actors in shaping foreign policy. This model suggests that foreign policy decisions do not originate from a single rational actor but instead result from the complex interactions and negotiations among various bureaucratic entities, each with its own interests and viewpoints [29].

In the case of Buhari's administration, this model can shed light on how different ministries and agencies, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, and the National Security Adviser's office, influenced foreign policy decisions. For example, the decision to deploy Nigerian troops to The Gambia in 2017 to enforce the results of a disputed election can be analysed through this lens [30]. Various actors within the Nigerian government likely held different views on the risks and benefits of intervention, resulting in a complex decision-making process marked by negotiation and compromise.

Applying these two theoretical frameworks to this study helps to provide a well-grounded understanding of the factors that shaped President Buhari's foreign policy decisions. The Two-Level Game theory clarifies how strategic decisions involve balancing domestic and international interests, while the Bureaucratic Politics Model reveals the internal dynamics and power struggles that shaped the decision-making process.

## **2.3. Methodology**

The research employed a qualitative methodology, utilising both primary and secondary sources to gather comprehensive data on President Buhari's foreign policy decisions and the domestic political context within which they were made.

### 2.3.1. Data Collection

- **Content Analysis:** The study conducted a systematic content analysis of a range of primary sources, including official speeches delivered by President Buhari and other government officials, press releases from the Presidency and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, policy documents such as the National Security Strategy and Economic Recovery and Growth Plan, and transcripts of some interviews and analyses. This analysis concentrated on identifying consistent themes, patterns, and contradictions in the rhetoric and language used to explain and justify foreign policy decisions. The research explored content analysis by reading through government documents and publicly available papers or news publications. This included scrutinising official government websites, such as those of the Nigerian Presidency, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State House, NCTC, SEC and several others to access policy documents, and press releases. Additionally, the study examined reputable Nigerian and international news sources, academic journals, and publications from think tanks specialising in Nigerian and African politics.
- **Secondary Data:** The research equally relied on a wide range of secondary sources, such as reports and analyses from respected think tanks and research institutions, along with academic literature on Nigerian foreign policy and domestic affairs. These resources offered crucial context and insights into the domestic political environment, economic conditions, security issues, and public sentiment that likely shaped Buhari's foreign policy choices.

### 2.3.2. Data Analysis

- **Qualitative Analysis:** The collected data underwent rigorous qualitative analysis, employing a thematic approach to identify recurring themes, patterns, and contradictions in the discourse surrounding Buhari's foreign policy. This analysis focused on identifying the underlying motivations and rationales behind specific foreign policy choices, as well as the extent to which domestic political factors, such as economic pressures, security concerns, and political and public opinion, influenced these choices.
- **Case Studies:** To gain a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between domestic and international considerations, the research conducted in-depth case studies on select foreign policy decisions made during Buhari's tenure. These case studies were justified by their ability to provide concrete examples of how domestic factors influenced specific foreign policy decisions, offering a more nuanced understanding of the decision-making process.

The case studies focused on three key areas:

1. Economic Pressures
2. Security Concerns
3. Political Rivalries

These areas were chosen because they represented significant challenges faced by the Buhari administration and were likely to have a substantial impact on foreign policy decisions. The qualitative method enabled an in-depth examination of the core motivations, perceptions, and power dynamics that influenced Nigeria's foreign policy during this pivotal time.

### **3. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The examination of President Muhammadu Buhari's foreign policy decisions reveals a complex and dynamic interplay between domestic political factors and Nigeria's international engagements during his two-term tenure. Three key domestic factors emerged as particularly salient in shaping Buhari's foreign policy choices: economic pressures, security concerns, and political rivalries. These factors align closely with Putnam's Two-Level Game theory, demonstrating how domestic considerations significantly influenced Nigeria's international relations under Buhari's administration.

#### **3.1. Economic Pressures**

Buhari inherited an economy grappling with the aftermath of falling oil prices, a significant source of Nigeria's revenue. The resultant dwindling foreign reserves and rising inflation necessitated a foreign policy that could attract foreign direct investment, diversify the economy, and stimulate growth. This economic imperative underpinned several key decisions, illustrating the domestic level (Level II) of Putnam's theory in action.

Buhari's administration actively sought partnerships with countries like China, securing infrastructure loans and investment deals in exchange for access to Nigeria's vast market [31]. This approach was driven by the need to address Nigeria's infrastructure deficit and stimulate economic growth. In 2018, Buhari's government entered into a significant partnership with China, securing a \$328 million deal for support on the Mambilla Project, while the Chinese government equally pledged 50 million Chinese Yuan to support the Nigerian Military and Buhari's fight against terrorism [32]. This initiative reflects Nigeria's ongoing efforts to attract foreign investment by showcasing the potential for stability and economic returns.

The pursuit of bilateral trade agreements with countries like the United Arab Emirates further highlights this economic focus. Moreover, Nigeria's active participation in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) negotiations and eventual signing in 2019 demonstrates a strategic move to leverage regional integration for economic gain [33]. This decision exemplifies the complex interplay between domestic economic needs and international economic diplomacy, as described in Putnam's model. The administration placed significant emphasis on strengthening ties with European nations, which resulted in enhanced collaboration in security and economic development sectors. In 2016, President Buhari pursued a €50 million loan from France aimed at bolstering the National Power Training Institute of Nigeria (NAPTIN). This funding was intended to address the shortage of technical skills in Nigeria's power sector and to stimulate broader economic activity [34]. This move illustrates how domestic economic challenges directly influenced foreign policy decisions, aligning with the Level II considerations in Putnam's theory. However, these economic-driven foreign policy decisions were not without domestic pushback, highlighting the complexities of the two-level game. Concerns emerged regarding the possible negative impacts on local industries, highlighting the challenging balance needed between protecting domestic markets and pursuing wider economic objectives. For example, various stakeholders and local industry groups voiced their concerns about Nigeria's increasing debt to China. Critics argued that the growing debt burden could lead to loss of sovereignty and economic independence, emphasising the need for transparent and sustainable borrowing practices [35]. These concerns were particularly pronounced given the lack of clarity surrounding the terms of the loans and potential implications for Nigeria's strategic assets.



### 3.2. Security Concerns

The persistent threat of Boko Haram, coupled with escalating farmer-herder conflicts and renewed militancy in the Niger Delta, significantly shaped Buhari's foreign policy decisions. These security challenges exemplify how domestic issues (Level II) can drive international engagements (Level I) in Putnam's model. National security concerns prompted a multi-pronged approach, encompassing both military and diplomatic measures. The government pursued military collaborations with neighboring nations and Western allies, resulting in a rise in defense expenditures and active involvement in regional security efforts such as the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) [36]. These efforts aimed to contain the insurgency and stabilise the region, demonstrating how domestic security challenges necessitated international cooperation.

The administration also engaged with international partners for advanced military training and intelligence sharing. In 2021, Nigeria reached an agreement with the United States to acquire 12 A-29 Super Tucano aircraft, a strategic move aimed at enhancing its capabilities in the battle against Boko Haram and other insurgent factions [37]. This deal highlighted Nigeria's reliance on foreign military support to enhance its counter-terrorism capabilities, further illustrating the intersection of domestic security needs and international relations.

However, the emphasis on security also brought unintended consequences, showcasing the complexities of the two-level game. The government's assertive approach to addressing security threats faced backlash from both domestic and international human rights organisations. These groups have condemned the administration for alleged abuses and extrajudicial killings [38]. This created a dilemma for Buhari, as he had to balance the imperative of national security with the need to uphold human rights standards and maintain a positive international image. The controversial actions of the Nigerian military, including allegations of excessive force during the #EndSARS protests, further strained relations with human rights organisations and added complexity to Nigeria's international diplomacy [39]. These security-driven foreign policy decisions and their consequences demonstrate the intricate balance Buhari's administration had to strike between addressing domestic security concerns and maintaining positive international relations, a key aspect of Putnam's two-level game theory.

### 3.3. Political Rivalries

Nigeria's domestic political landscape, characterised by intense rivalry between the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) and various opposition parties, also influenced Buhari's foreign policy. This aligns with Allison's Bureaucratic Politics Model, which emphasises how different political actors and their interests shape foreign policy outcomes. Buhari's anti-corruption crusade, with its focus on recovering stolen assets stashed abroad, resonated with a population weary of endemic corruption [40]. This served to bolster his domestic popularity and consolidate his political base. The administration leveraged international anti-corruption partnerships to gain political capital, exemplifying how domestic political considerations influenced foreign policy decisions.

For example, the collaboration with the United Kingdom in the return of looted funds, exemplified by the repatriation of the "Ibora loot," was publicised as a major victory in the fight against corruption [41]. This bolstered Buhari's image as a leader committed to transparency and accountability, demonstrating how foreign policy successes were used to strengthen domestic political positions.

Additionally, the administration's reserved stance on regional conflicts, including the political turmoil in The Gambia, appears to be a calculated strategy aimed at steering clear of foreign engagements that might risk alienating domestic supporters or introducing new complications for an already strained military. Similarly, Nigeria's tempered response to the conflict in Cameroon's Anglophone regions reflected concerns about exacerbating regional instability and its potential spillover effects on Nigeria's border states [42]. The handling of Nigeria's diplomatic relations with South Africa following the xenophobic attacks on Nigerians in 2019 also highlighted political considerations. The government's measured response, including recalling its ambassador and seeking diplomatic resolutions, aimed to protect the interests of Nigerian citizens while avoiding a full-blown diplomatic crisis that could impact bilateral trade and political alliances [43]. This case illustrates how domestic political pressures influenced Nigeria's diplomatic stance, aligning with both Putnam's two-level game theory and Allison's bureaucratic politics model.

### **3.4. Feedback Loop**

The relationship between different layers of domestic politics and foreign policy under Buhari was not a one-way street, further emphasising the complexity of the two-level game. In some cases, foreign policy decisions had a significant impact on domestic political dynamics, creating a feedback loop that influenced subsequent policy choices. The closure of Nigeria's land borders in 2019, aimed at reducing smuggling and boosting domestic production, serves as a notable example [44]. While initially popular among some segments of the population, the closure led to unintended consequences, including rising food prices and economic hardship for border communities. This sparked widespread criticism and ultimately forced the government to reverse the policy. This example demonstrates how foreign policy decisions, driven by domestic economic considerations, can have far-reaching impacts on the domestic political landscape, potentially altering the dynamics of the two-level game.

Another instance of this feedback loop can be seen in Nigeria's engagement with international financial institutions. In 2020, Nigeria secured a \$3.4 billion emergency financial assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to address the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic [45]. While this decision was driven by urgent domestic economic needs, it also came with conditions that influenced subsequent economic policies. The government's implementation of these conditions, such as exchange rate adjustments and fuel subsidy reforms, had significant domestic political implications, illustrating the complex interplay between international commitments and domestic political realities.

President Buhari's foreign policy was inextricably linked to the domestic political context within which he operated. Economic pressures, security concerns, and political rivalries were not merely background noise but active forces shaping Nigeria's engagement with the world. The analysis underscores the intricate and evolving relationship between domestic and foreign policy, stressing the importance of a deep and nuanced comprehension of how these two areas interact within Nigeria's political framework. The application of Putnam's Two-Level Game theory and Allison's Bureaucratic Politics Model provides a robust framework for understanding the multifaceted nature of Nigeria's foreign policy under Buhari. These theoretical perspectives help elucidate how domestic factors significantly influenced international engagements and how foreign policy decisions, in turn, shaped domestic political dynamics. As Nigeria continues to navigate its role in an increasingly complex global landscape, future administrations will likely face similar challenges in balancing domestic imperatives with international obligations. Understanding the intricate relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy, as

demonstrated during Buhari's tenure, will be crucial for crafting effective and sustainable foreign policy strategies in the years to come.

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

### 4.1. Recommendation

The findings of this research underscore the critical need for future Nigerian administrations to adeptly manage the intricate nexus between domestic and foreign policy. Given the complex interplay of political, economic, and security factors, several actionable recommendations can be made to ensure that Nigeria's foreign policy is both responsive to domestic concerns and effective on the international stage.

1. **Transparency and Inclusivity in Policy Formulation:** Future administrations must prioritise transparency and inclusivity in the foreign policy decision-making process. This can be achieved by institutionalising mechanisms that allow for the regular involvement of a diverse range of stakeholders, including civil society organisations, business leaders, academic experts, and regional representatives. A more inclusive approach ensures that foreign policy decisions are not only reflective of a broader spectrum of domestic interests but are also more likely to gain public support and legitimacy. For example, establishing a Foreign Policy Advisory Council comprising representatives from these various sectors could serve as a platform for comprehensive consultation and deliberation on key foreign policy issues.
2. **Strengthen and Diversify Economic Diplomacy:** Nigeria's economic diplomacy is vital, especially given its current challenges. Future administrations should enhance the skills of Nigerian diplomats in economic analysis, trade negotiation, and international economic law, supported by specialised training and dedicated economic desks at embassies. Beyond traditional partnerships, Nigeria should actively engage with emerging markets and regional blocs. Additionally, Nigeria should pursue technology talent opportunities to boost soft power, partnering with global tech giants to create opportunities for its tech-savvy youth. This strategy would not only strengthen Nigeria's economic resilience but also improve its international standing by showcasing its growing influence in the global technology sector.
3. **Comprehensive National Security Strategy:** Nigeria's foreign policy must be underpinned by a robust and well-coordinated national security strategies that addresses both internal and external threats in every form. This strategy should prioritise the integration of domestic and foreign policy objectives, ensuring that actions taken on the international front are aligned with efforts to enhance domestic security. A key component of this strategy should be conflict resolution and prevention, with specific focus on diagnosing the root causes of insecurity in the country, such as poverty, inequality, and political marginalisation. Moreover, the strategy should emphasise the importance of regional security cooperation, particularly within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), to combat transnational threats like terrorism and human trafficking.
4. **Prioritise Human Rights and the Rule of Law:** Nigeria's foreign policy should be guided by a strong commitment to human rights and the rule of law, both at home and abroad. Current and future administrations should recognise that these principles are not only moral imperatives but also strategic assets that can enhance Nigeria's credibility and influence in the international arena. To this end, Nigeria should be more proactive in promoting democratic values within regional and international forums, while also ensuring that its domestic policies reflect these same values. This alignment between domestic

practices and international advocacy can position Nigeria as a leading voice for human rights and democracy in Africa.

5. **Public Engagement and Awareness:** To achieve greater public understanding and support for foreign policy decisions, the Nigerian government should invest in public engagement and awareness initiatives. This can be done through regular public forums, media outreach programs, and the incorporation of foreign policy issues into educational curricula. More specifically, leveraging the power of digital platforms and social media can provide a more interactive and accessible means of engaging the public, particularly younger demographics. Actively involving the public in foreign policy discourse allows the government to build a more informed and engaged citizenry, which is crucial for ensuring the legitimacy and effectiveness of its foreign policy.

## 4.2. Conclusions

President Buhari's foreign policy analysis reveals a multifaceted and dynamic interaction between domestic political factors and Nigeria's international engagements. Economic pressures, security challenges, and political rivalries significantly shaped Buhari's foreign policy decisions, highlighting the importance of understanding the domestic context when evaluating Nigeria's external relations. The application of the Two-Level Game theory and the Bureaucratic Politics Model provides valuable insights into the strategic calculations, trade-offs, and internal dynamics that influenced these decisions. It becomes evident that while external factors were influential, domestic political considerations often took precedence in determining Nigeria's approach to international issues. This research contributes to the broader literature on Nigerian foreign policy by offering a comprehensive and nuanced examination of the domestic foreign policy nexus during President Buhari's tenure. The study fills an important gap in the existing scholarship, providing a detailed analysis of the factors that shape Nigeria's foreign policy in the context of domestic political dynamics. The findings highlight the interconnected nature of domestic and foreign policy, showing that actions taken in one area can significantly impact the other.

The recommendations offered in this paper are intended to inform future policymakers and scholars in their efforts to navigate the complex interplay between domestic and international politics. Adopting a more transparent, inclusive, and strategically aligned approach to foreign policy will enable future Nigerian administrations to craft strategies that are more effective and responsive, better reflecting and advancing the country's national interests. The integration of economic diplomacy, national security, human rights, and public engagement into a cohesive foreign policy framework will be essential in positioning Nigeria as a formidable and respected player on the global stage. In conclusion, a well-managed domestic-foreign policy nexus is not only crucial for Nigeria's international standing but also for the country's internal stability and prosperity.

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