

Assessment of Nigeria's External Image: The Buhari Administration Under Review

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined contending issues in Nigeria's external image management under the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari. Some of these issues have presented daunting challenges which have negatively undermined the capacity of the Nigerian state to meet the lofty aspirations of her citizens in the areas of security, unemployment and rising cost of goods and services to mention a few. This study is focused on dissecting these contending domestic challenges with a view to recommending actionable steps to forge a visible, robust and progressive posture in the international arena. This is core to Nigeria's national interest and foreign policy objectives as the debilitating effect of near gloomy and not-too positive image some of these lingering domestic challenges portend for the country cannot be left to rhetorically hang like sword of the Damocles over the country. The study discovered that the reticent nature of the Muhammadu Buhari administration since its advent administration in 2015, partly explains the escalation of some domestic challenges and subsequently snowballing into international miasma over the country's image. The study recommends increased budgetary allocation to Nigeria's foreign missions with special emphasis on those with high volume of immigrant traffic and economic ties. The Diaspora Commission should be retooled to immediately provide legal representation to Nigerians suffering from minor human right violations before it becomes full blown diplomatic rows.

Keywords: International System; Foreign Policy; National Interest; Image; Perception.

INTRODUCTION

Individuals, business, organization and most importantly sovereign nations in contemporary international system care and portray positive image to help improve their chances of success across phases of their engagement with the aim of amongst other things actualizing stated objectives and drive national aspirations. In this light, each country maintains and showcases image that portray its ideals in the international arena. The value of a country preponderantly lies on its image and practices in the international system. The image of a country, which is closely related to its identity, values, practices, internal actions and inactions, political and economic stability are amongst others, determinants of amount of power and influence it exerts and the basis for its negotiating powers and engagement with other countries in the international system. The configuration, nature of interaction and engagement in the international system are symbiotic in nature, leading to the notion that no country can exist on its own. Since no state can sustainably stand alone. States therefore must frame their interactions with the eternal world systematically and carefully to aid the advancement of national interests. Foreign policy and image management integral to the activities of the modern state desirous of a space in the international arena. Relevance in a globalised world, entails countries framing their foreign policy in a manner that prioritises the country's national interests. As Eze (2010) succinctly puts it, every nation's foreign policy is or should be in service of its national interests.

With the intensity of globalization, relations between nations of the world are rated and compared according to their economic development, political stability, effectiveness and morality of their national and

international policies or the attractiveness of their cultures (Werron, 2012). The image perception other countries of the world have towards a country is what determines the relationship they will have with that country. Kunczik (2003) asserted that cognitive representation with respect to its image, standing and recognition that a country holds about a given country has manifest effect on the success of a country's businesses, trade, tourism and diplomatic relations. For instance, peaceful or violent events repeatedly occurring in a country or around her will affect her image. That is, if the countries around are at peace, it will drive development and anything on the contrary will discourage the flow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into the country. This is couched as the 'neighborhood effect', (Oyewole, 2019). Also in Nigeria, it is believed that virtually all Nigerian leaders exhibit the proclivity for resolving violent conflicts at the continental level because of the normative assumption that peaceful coexistence is a correlate of economic development.

It is however interesting to note that; as nations developmental strides are measured based on some internationally acceptable criteria, no universally acknowledged scientific standard for perception measurement as it is pervasively subjective. Jackson (2001) averred in the same vein that human societies are complex, just as perception is a complex phenomenon. Negative image crisis engulfing the Nigerian state, as a result of negative perception of her as a country, poses difficult challenge of portraying or advertising Nigeria in the "diplomatic market". Jackson further submitted that laundering the battered image of the nation in the international arena is as difficult as trying to engage in image-making for international terrorist groups. Various socio-economic and political factors contribute to the battering. This forms the crux of this study, as to understanding how the President Muhammadu Buhari's civilian administration has managed to grapple with this onerous image management since her inception in May 2015. This paper further interrogates events, domestic policies and actions of the Nigerian government under the administration and in the course of routine exercise of power, day-to-day governance, actions and inaction, dissent management, human right questions, and many other controversies that are likely to attract the world's attention and form the general perception of the image of the country.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts the qualitative methodology. Qualitative analysis records people's attitudes, feelings and behaviors in great depths. The study uses qualitative analysis because, this form of analysis creates openness, avoids pre-judgements, provides depth and looks deeper into the issue and stimulates people's individual views and or perceptions. Data for this research was sourced from both primary and secondary sources. The purposive sampling method was used in sampling specific individuals and organizations interviewed for the study. This shall serve as the primary source. Also, professionals in the field of International Politics and strategic Studies will be interviewed. In addition, structured interview guidelines will be employed. The secondary sources on the other hand comprise of data collected from journal articles, reports, books, unpublished works, and articles from the internet, magazines, newspapers,

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

A country's standing in the international system although dependent on some other factors, is highly dependent on her image perception being positive or negative. The perception of a country by members of the international system, how a country pursues its relations with others, and particularly, the behavior of its citizens at home and abroad combine to determine the country's image (Zimako, 2009). Thus, image making is an essential feature of a nation's foreign policy.

Accordingly, a nation's dogged pursuit of image-building forms an important determinant of how well the country is doing at home and abroad and is simultaneously an essential element in the strategy for foreign policy formulation and implementation. Drawing from Chidozie et al (2014) and Holsti (1996), it may be safe to state that just as image-making can be objective, it is also relative or subjective in that, images are

either good or bad. Both good and bad perceptions have their consequences. But nations, according to their own standards or leader's perception, perpetually endeavor to have a good image among the comity of nations. Hence, it may appear intangible but the benefits and advantages flowing from a good image are inestimably unquantifiable. Chidozie et al (2014:51) wrote that:

A good image constitutes a source of goodwill and patronage for a country. Investors largely consider this factor in determining where to direct investment funds. It also explains the level of unfriendliness. It is therefore understandable why every government seeks to promote, at all times, a better image nationally and internationally... A good image results in respect, influence and prestige. While, a bad or negative perception of a country's image implies that such a country lacks respect, influence and prestige in the international system.

Indeed, the image issue is a product of perception. There is yet no universally acknowledged scientific standard for perception as it is pervasively subjective. To the extent that human societies are complex, perception is a complex phenomenon (Zimako, 2009).

According to Grant (2016), strategy is the overall plan for deploying resources to establish a favourable position, and whether in the military or the business sphere, strategic decision has common characteristics which include the fact that, they are important; they involve a significant commitment of resources; they are not easily reversible; and they are long term.

Writing on strategy, Bernard (2015), remarked that strategies denote a program and deployment of, resources towards the attainment of comprehensives. They also explain further that strategy is concerned with the direction in which human and material resources will be applied, in order to maximize the chance of achieving a selected objective. Thompson (2016) also noted that nation's strategy is a pattern of moves and approaches devised by management to produce successful organization performance, and that it is a managerial game plan for running the nation.

A somewhat general definition is proposed by Sharplin (2015), according to him, strategy is a plan or course of action which is of vital, pervasive or continuing importance to the Nation as a whole. In spite of the diversity of the definitions presented, there are common threads of thoughts that run across them.

Michael Putt (2015) noted that even though strategy has been traditionally defined in only one way, it has long been used implicitly in different ways. It is however, the explicit recognitions of the multiple definitions that can help people manoeuvre through the difficult field. It is from that perspective that he presented terms of five P's. Henry Mintzberg first wrote about the five P's of strategy in 1999. According to him different types of strategic thinking and approaches are required as per situations and conditions. These may be inter-related and compatible.

Image Management

Nigeria's image crisis is rooted in her history, nature of her independence, character of her federalism and complexities of her ethnic composition (Agbodike, 2008). In short, it is rooted in the "national question" as a recurring and nagging issue in her national discourse (Alapiki, 2005). An understanding of Nigeria's national question is an understanding of her image crisis. Jonah Onuoha (2010) captures the interpenetration of the concept of national question and foreign policy enterprise most succinctly thus:

Essentially, the national question involves not only the territorial integrity of Nigeria, power sharing and management of Nigeria's resources in terms of access, control and distribution, but also the issues of minority interests, ethnicity, citizenship, revenue allocation, the creation of states as well as religious, linguistic, cultural and educational policies. It is about resolving the antagonistic contradictions between the

majority and minority ethnic groups, combating tribalism, racialism and any form of ethnic crisis

Over the years, Nigeria's global image has been smeared by various elements which has portrayed it in a negative way. The different administrations since independence in 1960 have attempted to rejuvenate the negative state of Nigeria's global image. Some of the attempts have yielded positive results, the Nigeria Diaspora Commission, etc, while some have been successful, though arguably some have been unsuccessful.

Under the presidency of Goodluck Jonathan, of the national security challenges facing the country involving the Boko Haram Islamic insurgency, was considered as the most damaging factor to Nigeria's international image and the litmus test of the administration's ability to manage Nigeria's national question (Onuoha, 2014). The Buhari administration also inherited these security issues which have grown to other security issue in other states of the country as banditry, kidnapping and secession movement.

Nigeria, with its large population, economy and political influence, is a country which has a large impact not only on its immediate neighbors but also more widely in other regions of West Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. Nigeria has cordial relations with all its Neighbors – Chad, Niger, Benin, Cameroun and Equatorial Guinea as well as with other countries in the region with most of which it has bilateral economic and political agreement with. Therefore, the factors of size, population conferred on Nigeria has placed a leadership role in Nigeria over Africa, presently Nigeria is the most populous and resource full country on the continent. Since our independence in 1960 from the Brits, Nigeria's foreign policy has been Afro-centric in nature in which Africa has been the center piece of our policy. With this Nigeria has placed Africa has one of our interest point.

Nigeria's Foreign Image under President Buhari's Administration

The diplomatic trips by President Muhammadu Buhari to the Lake Chad after his inauguration in 2015 were intended to garner support for the country's fight against the Boko Haram insurgency. This was in line with his initial proclamation of making national interest come first in Nigeria's interactions with other nations, followed by the interests of the West Africa sub-region. In a comparative analysis of Nigeria foreign policy under Muhammadu Buhari military and civilian administrations, Bello, et al (2015) observed that "the main foreign policy under President Buhari government includes improving relations with its neighbours in order to jointly fight Boko Haram which assumed a multinational or transnational dimension..." Apart from combating terrorism, the Buhari's administration is also devoted to fighting corruption and more importantly, improving the nation's economy.

With an understanding of Nigeria's foreign policy from previous governments, Ofodile (2020), noted that "Nigeria is paying a very high price – economically, diplomatically, territorially, politically and militarily – for poor foreign policy choices of yesteryears. As the president of Africa's most populous nation, President Buhari would do well to be fully aware of the wide range of foreign policy challenges that currently exist or that are on the horizon. Most important, he must formulate and unveil to the Nigerian public, strategic and reasoned responses to key foreign policy challenges. With a lot of political capital on his side and the goodwill of the governments of many countries behind him, President Buhari must begin to lay the foundation of what could be an informed and strategic foreign policy agenda.

Ofodile (2020) went further to point out the various foreign policy challenges to President Buhari's government, among which is Boko Haram/ISIS/global terrorism, which he categorized as a domestic, regional and global problem. Others consist of regional integration, foreign direct/bilateral investment treaties/investor-state dispute settlement, food security/food safety, global governance, the global drive for energy security, and the need for new products and new markets.

It is from the President's success at tackling national issues at home that the country will begin to gain

confidence from the international system. Along this line of argument, Akinterinwa (2020) stressed that the variously unresolved corruption issues under the President Buhari's government will need to be resolved before Nigeria's foreign image can be improved under President Buhari.

The leadership of a country to a large extent directs and structures the purpose of the country's foreign policy. In other words, the foreign policy of a country is influenced by the leadership's reasoning and ethical view of the international system. This observation could arguably justify the use of the leadership personality model as a framework of analysis for understanding a nation's foreign policy and engagements, (Adeseyinwa, 2019). The leadership personality model places emphasis on the personal property or qualities of a leader. It views the personality of the leader as key in determining the kind of foreign policy such a leader embraces. The individual personality of a leader as a level of analysis simply deals with an actor-specific approach to international relations. It focuses on the fact that all international actors' interactions are based on actions or inaction of human decision-makers acting singly or in groups. To further support their position on the importance of the leadership in international relations (IR) and foreign policy, Hussain, and Shakoor, (2018), posited that, "the goals, abilities, foibles of individuals are crucial to the intentions, capabilities, and strategies of a state.' Implicit in their words is the idea that individuals are part and parcel of the state's capabilities, and therefore, wield considerable influence on state policies and actions." The leadership personality model examines how the traits of a leader influence the leadership style and foreign policy decisions of the state.

The "...traits include belief in the ability to control events (BACE), conceptual complexity (CC), need for power (PWR), distrust of others (DIS), in-group bias (IGB), self-confidence (SC) and task orientation (TASK)."

Leadership personality model focuses on the personalities and leadership styles and qualities of presidents or leaders of a state in explaining foreign policy decision making. Taking a cue from China to explain leadership in Nigeria, Abdullahi observed that China under Deng Xiaoping, had a purposeful leadership which reorganised the country's government. This made leaders after him build on the already established structure, leading to growth and development for the nation. Therefore, China's transformation is historically rooted in the quality of its leadership. Nigeria, on the other hand, has hardly been lucky to have many of such quality leaders over the past years. However, considering the strong leadership Nigeria experienced in 1984, under General Muhammadu Buhari, there were high hopes when he returned as a civilian President in 2015 that he was going to reenergise the quality of leadership in the country. The question of if he has been able to do that so far begs for answer.

Leadership goes a long way in improving the status of a country both domestically and in the international scene. The hope of such good leadership, arguably, contributed to President Buhari's victory during the 2015 general elections. The president enjoyed a reputation for integrity and discipline which began to repair Nigeria's image, this granted him an invite to attend the G-7 summit at the time. Gamawa, stated that; "The invitation of President Buhari to attend the G-7 summit in Germany even before he was sworn in as President is a pointer to the confidence that the group of the world's most powerful states have on the person of President Muhammadu Buhari." As a result of personality traits of the president, Nigerians and the international community supported president Buhari. From the foregoing, it can be understood that a leader's personality influences their decisions and style of leadership, and even the way such a leader projects his country in the international system. It can therefore be argued that the current foreign policy decisions and direction of Nigeria are the resultant influence of the personality traits of the leadership.

As earlier stated, President Buhari promised, during his campaign, to tackle three major challenges facing the country, which include insecurity (the Boko Haram insurgency), corruption, and dwindling economy. It is, however, noteworthy that Nigeria's domestic problems are not limited to the ones stated, some others as indicated by Akinterinwa include "intermittent polarization and instability, high level of unemployment and

poverty, mono-cultural economy and low industrial and agricultural productivity...the problems of institutional corruption, declining quality of education and ethical standards, as well as infrastructural deficit”, and the list could go on. All these challenges are obstacles to Nigeria’s image on the international scene; some of these challenges are discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

The Boko Haram insurgency group gained prominence with the adoption of 276 Chibok school girls in 2014, and this prompted the world to join in the international activism to ensure the rescue of the girls. The fight against Boko Haram insurgency was one of the objectives of President Buhari’s administration towards the 2015 election. Being a retired general, he was shocked at the way a terrorist group was able to attack Nigeria and its military installations at will. With all the effort of the Nigerian government and collaborations with its neighbouring countries, years down the line, 112 Chibok girls are still missing. According to Charles Onunaiju, an International Affairs expert, in an interview with Mohammed, the relations with these countries consist of a diplomatic achievement for the country. This is because they are Francophone countries who would normally give ear more to Paris other than their neighbours. As such, attempting to engage them using the sub-regional mechanism is regarded as a major success of President Buhari’s foreign policy output. The relevance of this initiative is evident in the setting up of a Joint Commission of the three countries in tackling Boko Haram’s insurgency. Cooperating with these countries paid off in considerably reducing the insurgent’s attacks at that time, although, it is not unlikely that such multilateral corporation may result in some security complications which are obviously not captured in this study. However, from the end of 2018, the attacks by the terrorist group increased and the conflict is yet to be brought to resolution.

Insecurity is a major threat to sanctity of life in the nation, as such, it is a dent on the image of the country with over 30,000 Nigerians killed in the last 10 years by the Boko Haram. Many have had to flee their homes to become refugees in neighbouring countries like Niger. According to Akinboye, terrorism and insurgency are major sources of the image crisis that Nigeria experiences, and until they have been successfully tackled, Nigeria’s aspiration to be a regional influential nation will not be realisable. Moreover, if the country cannot be as influential as it would love to be regionally, such an aspiration will be more difficult in the global setting. In addition to the Boko Haram terrorism, killer herdsmen have become another growing security challenge for the President Buhari’s administration. In 2017, the killer herdsmen were estimated to have killed at least 598 Nigerians and by first quarter of 2018, over 1000 persons had lost their lives in the hands of the herdsmen. More recently, from January 2019 to March 2019, they were recorded to have killed about 179 people. Adekunle (2020) noted that the “ With these insistent attacks by killer herdsmen on villages and people, the country continues to be painted in a bad image in the face of the world. This is adversely affecting foreign investments as investments may not thrive in an unstable country with insecurity as a bane.

President Buhari’s administration is argued to have inherited a battered economy, due to mismanagement and corruption of past administrations. As such he is faced with the task of reviving the economy and bringing Nigeria back to its respectable status in Africa. This dire economic situation, among other economic challenges like inflation, unemployment and poverty, are responsible for the growing committing crimes against humanity and genocidal massacres against Christians in central Nigeria. Fulani militias” have been brain-drain syndrome ravaging almost every sector of the Nigerian economy. Consequently, many Nigerians continue to put their lives at risk by taking illegal route through the Mediterranean Sea to get to Europe, only to end up losing their lives on the journey; others who choose to cross over to Europe through Libya become victims of enslavement. Excessive reliance on crude oil as the dominant source of foreign exchange is another factor militating against Nigeria’s economic prosperity.

The economy of Nigeria cannot be mentioned without the effects corruption has had on it, and tackling of corruption is the third cardinal objective of president Buhari’s government partly because it is an

impediment and a major image deplete for the nation in foreign relations. According to Chukwuemeka, Bartholomew and Ugwu, corruption in Nigeria is pervasive and has an image tarnishing effect on the country. For this reason, foreign nationals have for long started exercising extreme caution in entering into business transactions with Nigerians. This condition has obviously weakened the economic sector of Nigeria. To support this assertion, Akinboye further clarified that Nigeria has struggled against its image crisis for about three decades, under the inhibiting influence of corruption, a condition that cannot be overcome until the government shows seriousness in fighting corruption.⁴⁷ Accordingly, in order to improve the image of Nigeria and for Nigerians to enjoy better identity abroad, the fight against corruption in every sector of the Nigerian government becomes important. However, the government has been criticized for being selective in its handling of corruption allegations and cases, using the battle against corruption to victimize members of the opposition party.

Foreign Policy as a tool for Image Management

The basis of foreign policy as a platform for establishing interaction and strategic engagement between nations in the actualization of their respective national interest and aspirations has been established across studies. In this light, Ade-Ibijola (2013) sees foreign policy as the objectives which constitute a comprehensive plan that serve as goals that a country hopes to achieve in its relation with other members of the international community. In other words, Ade-Ibijola (2013) states that every country constructs a plan with certain key goals that it seeks to achieve in its relations with other states in the international system so as to avoid steering without direction in the waters of international relations.

Ota & Ecoma (2015) identify foreign policy as a strategy that is properly articulated and designed in a coordinated manner by institutionally-designated decision-makers in a bid to influence the international environment to achieve identified national objectives. This conception presents foreign policy as an instrument of power via which states can react to events in the international environment by its actions or inactions for the purpose of advancing national goals.

In explaining the interplay between domestic and foreign policy, Ukwuije (2015) conceives foreign policy as an offshoot of public policy that cannot actualize certain aspects of domestic policy without full and proper interaction with other countries. This assertion connotes that public policy subsumes foreign policy, therefore foreign policy serves the purpose of achieving domestic policy on the international front.

The objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy have, since the attainment of independence or nationhood in 1960 been broadly outlined by successive administrations governments as outlined in the constitution. The first and main of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives and also the foreign policy of any other country of the world, is to promote and protect the country's national interests. The foreign policy of Nigeria has over the years continued to evolve. These policies have remained with some amendments in order to capture international practices.

Nigeria's External Image under the Buhari Administration: an Analysis

Over time, various incidences of internal conflict, have affected Nigeria's external image. The internal issues have stalled development, affected international relations more often than not. The various internal incidences are ranging from leadership crisis, terrorism and insurgency, human rights abuse, economic insecurity etc. There is no investor whether local or foreign that will be motivated to invest in an unsafe and insecure environment in a globalized world, investors are not only looking for high returns on their investments but also safe haven for their investments, thus the alarming level of insecurity in Nigeria has made the economy unattractive to foreign investors, and this has impacted negatively on economic growth and development. Therefore, a country's image needs to be framed adequately in order to gain respect and relevance in the international system. Nigeria's image in the comity of nations has reduced drastically due to

the activities of Niger-Delta militants in the South South, the Boko Haram insurgents in the northeast and other parts of the country, the Fulani herdsmen in the Middle Belt and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) (Campbell, 2017). Nigeria is ranked the third most terrorized country on the globe after Iraq and Afghanistan by the Global Terrorism Index (GTI, 2017).

According to a respondent, rising insecurity constitutes the major element responsible for the denting of the image of the country in the international scene and agrees with the position advanced by Ajayi (2021) who noted that, a state with an image crisis is difficult to advertise in the “diplomatic market”. Another respondent noted that,

Nigeria security issues have a lot of political implication in the relation of Nigeria with other countries of the world. Insecurity has given the country a bad image. Insecurity in the country is a setback on our foreign policy because our standing abroad depends to a large extent on our internal domestic conditions

Agreeing with the above the Former Commonwealth – General Chief Emeka during a delegation of the Presidential Advisory Council on foreign policy to President Goodluck Jonathan, stated that, except Nigeria was able to tackle the excesses of violence across the country its image on the global scene would continue to suffer. Also thousands of displaced and hundred refugees that are in other West African state have been devastated and relocated to other states. A flow of Nigeria displaced into neighboring state generate social problem such as unemployment, increase crime rate and shortage of social infrastructures in the host state and sometimes conflict may be transfer to displaced people camp in another states before it was reverse to the state of Chadians, Liberian citizens entering into Nigeria..

Corroborating the above, another respondent states that “the rising banditry and kidnapping is also another rising factors that determines the foreign perception a country has in the global arena”. Since government is supposed to be the protector of the citizen, this is the number one function bestowed upon the government but it can be asserted that the government have failed thereof. (Olayinka 2012) The bombing of Nigeria Police Force Headquarters in Abuja on June 16, 2011, the U.N House in Abuja on August 26, 2011 and other high profile bombings attest to this assertion carried out in the country. The Boko Haram insurgency has not only caused economic downturn but it has punctured Nigeria’s image in the international arena.

The kidnap of 300 Chibok school girls to Sambisa forest, opened a new stream in the activities of Boko Haram and its further dampened Nigeria’s external image, as the kidnap draw the attention of the whole world and this led to the famous global campaign of (Bring Back our Girls)“BBOG”. The kidnap of the school girls and the internal crisis within the Armed forces that led to the dismissal of some officers from the frontline exposed the weaknesses of the counter insurgency measures of the Nigerian government before the world. This gave Nigeria a bad look and attracted negative suspicion globally, especially by international right groups and humanitarian bodies, some of which started giving negative reports in their writings. This act went a long way in reducing the sympathy countries had for Nigeria and further dampened its image (Eseoghene & Efanodor, 2016).

States in the North East registers the highest number of deaths, Borno is by far the most threatened state, inthat, Boko haram has caused 34,000 deaths. According to Varrela (2021), Between 2011 and 2021, Boko haram was responsible for thousands of deaths in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger. Nigeria is the country mostly affected by the terrorist groups attacks.

Table 3: Death rates per state in Northern Nigeria

State	Number of deaths
Borno	34,534
Zamfara	5,155

Kaduna	4,900
Adamawa	4,086
Benue	3,636
Yobe	3,123
Plateau	3,128

Source: *Statistia 2021*

Based on terrorism index report in African countries as at 2020 Nigeria was ranked 1st in the index. In 2020, the terrorism index in this West African country stood at 8.6, the highest in Africa. Furthermore, it recorded the second largest number of deaths related to terrorism worldwide, after Afghanistan, Somalia, Congo, and Mali.

Table 4: Terrorism Index of African Countries as at 2019

Country	Index 1-10
Nigeria	8.3
Somalia	7.6
Congo	7.2
Burkina Faso	7
Cameroon	6.8
Egypt	6.4
Mozambique	6.4
Central African Republic	6.3
Libya	6.2
South Sudan	5.7
Niger	5.6
Kenya	5.6

Source: *Statistia 2020*

Advancing the above an informed respondent noted that, “the Boko Haram insurgency has also affected Nigeria’s image by exposing the security lapses of security outfits in Nigeria, especially those involved in information gathering. It has shown that the security agencies are not adequately equipped with enough apparatus to gather information on impending attacks to nip them in the bud”. These lapses account for these agencies not being proactive enough to expose planned attacks by the insurgents before they take place. The attacks on institutions such as various police stations and the United Nations building in Abuja, or the kidnapping of the Chibok girls were a result of this weakness.

The security situation became so precarious that the Nigerian leadership became suspicious of the incompetence of their military commanders. This suspicion has led to their regular replacement. The inadequacies and incompetence allegations were validated by Air Chief Marshal Alex Badeh, former Nigerian Chief of Defense Staff (CDS), who was quoted as saying that “the military he headed lacked adequate equipment to fight Boko Haram.” Boko Haram has plunged its area of operation into long-time insecurity and danger. Troops of the Nigerian Army have reported cases of mines along the routes frequented by people, which only military engineers have the technical knowledge to breach. It is, however,

doubtful if the Nigerian Army engineers have such sophisticated modern equipment (Oluwadar and Abdallah, 2015).

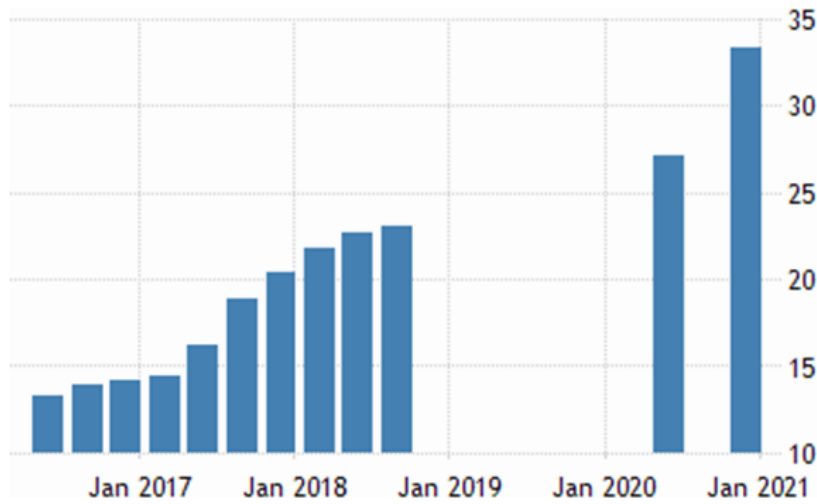


Figure 1. Showing the trend analysis of Unemployment in the country.

Source: *statistia 2021*

Table 5: Nigeria: Unemployment rate from 2015 to 2020

Characteristic	Unemployment rate
2020	9.01%
2019	8.53%
2018	8.45%
2017	8.39%
2016	7.06%
2015	4.31%

Source: *statistia 2021*

This unemployment issue was noted to have ripple effect brain drain syndrome, this brain drain syndrome is caused by the inability of the Government and the economy of the state to be able to satisfy the needs of individuals in the state. Brain drain from Nigeria is the exodus of Middle-class and highly skilled Nigerians which has been occurring in waves since the late 1980's till present day, which is mainly sparked by an economic downturn following a period of economic boom in the 1970's and 1980's propelled by the discovery of oil wells in Nigeria. In 2021 the Nigeria security team of the Department of state security (DSS) forcefully stopped the recruitment and migration process of Nigeria medical doctors at the Saudi Arabian Embassy. The DSS explained that medical schools and residency training centers in Nigeria are supported by the government subvention and Nigeria is one of such countries which have lost more than \$2billion since 2010 to training doctors who later Migrate. Over half of the doctors registered with the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN) practice outside the country. The Doctor patient ratio is 1 doctor per 5,000 people as against the WHO recommended 1 per 600 people.

More so, increased cybercrimes in Nigeria has smeared Nigeria's global image. Some Nigerians responsible for the projections of a bad image are corrupt government officials, drug and human traffickers, and fraudsters who operate online and offline, duping foreigners and citizens of their financial resources. Some examples include: the sentencing of five Nigerians to various jail terms in the UK for the theft of £610,000

from business bank accounts which they successfully carried out by using stolen data, impersonation and false representation (Odunsi, 2017); The arrest and conviction Of Ramon Abbas for a fraud of 50 million dollars; three Nigerians who were sentenced in the United States for a cumulative 235 years for defrauding victims through dating sites, mail fraud, identity theft, credit card theft and theft of government property; another Nigerian who has been charged with 269 counts of wire fraud and money laundering which he executed by claiming to be a wealthy Nigerian prince willing to share his inheritance (Adekunle, 2017); and five Nigerians arrested in India for drug and human trafficking which they confessed to after being found in possession of cocaine, ganja and amphetamine tablets (Editorial, Daily Post, 2017), to mention but a few.

The abuse of human right that has been seen to cloud the country's armed forces and security agencies is a situation that contributes to the detriment of the country. The police have been noted to carry out excess use of force against citizen and especially the youth. The police have been characterized with abuse of function, weapons and authority. Countless of citizens have been lost to the parade of the police. A country beclouded by human right violation cannot be perceived as a leader, the country cannot be placed at the fore front for other countries to look up to.

The NHRC Executive Secretary Toy Ojukwu, said "despite the progress made in the nation's democracy, the country continues to suffer human rights violations resulting from security challenges, youth unemployment" he further said there was the need to entrench the respect for human rights and fundamental freedom to curtail the current challenges bedeviling the country. He went further to list Recurring mass atrocities and crimes, kidnapping, incessant extra-judicial killings and torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, discrimination, injustice and gross inequalities, rape sexual and gender based violence, impunity, weak institutions and lack of political will to hold perpetrators accountable for several types of human rights violations. As at 2020 the Commission reported a total of 800 human right abuse coming from the Government.

It was asserted by a respondent that "constructive perception affects both present and future relations between state as ideas are being created which therefore serves as bases for interaction between the states. Security wise the terrorism enlistment and the various action the terrorist sect carried out has served as a denting element negatively staining the country's image. He further asserted that, the implications of Boko Haram on Nigeria's foreign relations are enormous especially as it manifested in the diminishing image of Nigeria in the international realm".

First and foremost, the listing of Boko Haram group as Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) by the United States of America and Canada has led to a renewed campaign of calumny against Nigeria in which many western nations have advised their nationals to desist from travelling to Nigeria, especially the North East region where suicide bombing, kidnapping and killings has become rife (Aro, 2013). The United States and most European countries through their embassies in Nigeria have constantly issue travel warning to their citizens not to visit the north-eastern part of the country, particularly after the killing of a British hostage. This implies that Nigeria has now be grouped along with such terrorist states as Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, Pakistan, Libya, Iran and Iraq, where people lives in perpetual fear, and are constantly at the mercy of the insurgent in other to live. The implications remain that it image of being a terrorist state has reduce its role in the international realm, (Bamgbose, 2013). Also, is the suspicion of most Nigerians at international airports in some countries, as they are subjected to intense scrutiny before being allowed to board the air flight.

Corroborating the above positions, another interviewee avers that, Nigeria's status in Africa and international organizations has continued to be threatened. The activities of the insurgent groups have negative implications on the giant of Africa role Nigeria play to other African nations, preaching and promoting peace, equity and justice, ethnic terrorism have sent a wrong signal. Therefore, her status as the 'giant' of Africa is at stake. This is made prevalent as some countries in Africa contest the leadership

position with Nigeria. For every available position in which Nigeria has an interest, there are usually some other countries which compete with her and, in some instance defeating the nation due to the image problem.

It was furthermore asserted, the current economic turmoil besieging the Nigerian economy leaves a sour taste in the mouth when one thinks of how richly blessed the nation is. He asserted that the economy situation of the country and how the economy of the country is being handled is a strong determinant that shapes the country image in the international scene. Respondent 4 and 5, are of the Believe that the Nigerian economy has been simultaneously experiencing heightened inflation of the prices of goods and services and an economic recession since 2016. This recession, it is believed, is caused by a multiplicity of factors like the sabotage of oil wells, oil pipelines, and oil consortia's facilities in the Niger Delta region by the Niger Delta Avengers that has significantly reduced Nigeria's output from 2.2 million barrels per day to less than 1.4 million barrels per day (Raval, 2016), fall in the price of crude oil in the international market, and the mono-cultural nature of the Nigerian economy. Now, living in Nigeria is difficult as people find it difficult to feed let alone using monies for recreational activities. Another issue is the Nigerian exchange rate volatility, i.e., the weakened or depreciated value of the Nigerian currency. Under the Buhari administration, the Nigerian currency, Naira, experienced a downward move away from the US Dollar. This means that prices of things will be costlier in the nation owing to the fact that Nigeria will require a huge amount of money to service its dependent economy that has high rate of importation due to the depreciation of the naira.

According to the Bureau of Statistics, the economy of Nigeria advanced by 4% year-on-year in the third quarter of 2021, following a 5% expansion in the prior period, which was the strongest since the last quarter of 2014. It is the fourth consecutive quarter of growth since the pandemic-induced recession in 2020 driven by the non-oil sector which grew 5.4% (vs 6.7% in Q2). Conversely, the oil sector shrank 10.7%, following a 12.7% plunge in Q2, reflecting lower oil output as the average daily crude oil production stood at 1.57 million barrels per day, down from 1.61 mbps in Q2 and 1.67 mbps a year ago.

Furthermore, poor funding has seen the nation unable to meet some diplomatic obligations as routine as keeping up with the rent at the Nigerian embassy in Hungary. It has also affected the welfare of Nigerians abroad, officials say. In November, when the House committee on foreign affairs chairman, Yusuf Yakubu, faulted Nigeria's lukewarm attitude towards the maltreatment of Nigerians abroad, Foreign Affairs Minister, Geoffrey Onyeama, blamed it on the poor funding of foreign missions.

Mr Onyeama lamented how foreign missions were becoming a "terrible embarrassment" for the country at the global stage as small budgetary allocations are affecting their effectiveness in responding to the expansive structure of diplomatic services. "For the size of a country, the giant Africa, we are supposed to defend the interest of Africa and the black race around the world," Mr Onyeama said. "We have a vast network of technical assistance programmes to the pacific, to the Caribbean and to other Africa countries, and we want to be a big player, which sits at the table as one of the countries running the world, and to be able to do that, we just need many resources. "Nigeria cannot get its international image to fit into the acceptable module of the international community, if its foreign missions remain underfunded," the Foreign Affairs minister said. In the face of a dwindling economy, the Federal Government is set to cut down on billions of Naira spent on foreign missions following a presidential directive.

Finally, it was added that poverty rate also serve as a detrimental factor that affects the image of the country, The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) recently released the "2019 Poverty and Inequality in Nigeria" report, which highlights that 40 percent of the total population, or almost 83 million people, live below the country's poverty line of 137,430 naira (\$381.75) per year.

According to the NBS data, (2019), on average, 21.4 percent of the population in Nigeria has experienced hunger between 2018 and 2020. People in severe food insecurity would go for entire days without food, due

to lack of money or other resources. Over the last years, the prevalence of severe food among Nigerians has been increasing, as the demand for food is rising together with a very fast-growing population.

Table 6: Poverty headcount rate in Nigeria as of 2019, by state

Characteristic	Percentage of people in poverty	Total Population
Sokoto	87.73%	3,702,676
Taraba	87.72%	2,294,800
Jigawa	87.02%	5,590,272
Ebonyi	79.76%	3,490,383
Adamawa	75.41%	3,178,950
Zamfara	73.98%	9,279,112
Yobe	72.34%	2,321,339

Source: Bureau of Statistics 2019

Against this backdrop, the NBS report is based on data from the latest round of the Nigerian Living Standards Survey, conducted in 2018-2019 with support from the World Bank's Poverty Global Practice and technical assistance from the LSMS program. The Nigerian Living Standards Survey (NLSS) is the official survey that is the basis for measuring poverty and living standards in the country and is used to estimate a wide range of socio-economic indicators including benchmarking of the Sustainable Development Goals. Between September of 2018 and October of 2019, the National Bureau of Statistics conducted the latest round of the NLSS, a decade after the previous one. The World Bank provided technical support to the NBS throughout the entire survey implementation, introducing several methodological improvements that led to the availability of reliable data for the poverty estimates.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nigeria's image in the global world has always been a core matter to our leaders, though some leaders have one way or the other in their action and inaction smeared the image of the country. From the research various elements have been established to be factors that smears the image of the country amongst it includes corruption, leadership traits, actions and inactions of the government, rising insecurity etc. Consequently, the paper makes the following recommendations;

Government should equally fix social Infrastructure as roads, schools, health centers and vocational centers, as lack of youth empowerment contributes immensely to social insecurity. By extension this will enable them to be self-reliant and of course take them away from criminalities and criminal tendencies

The need for Nigeria to adopt a social economic policy as a fundamental prerequisite for conducting effective foreign policy cannot be over emphasized, since all foreign policy spring from the economic base of a state. Nigeria domestic economic basic should be re-oriented in such a manner that the country dependency structure will be removed and a national economy that is capable of sustaining a realistic foreign policy will be built.

Promotion of the Rights of Nigeria abroad as one of the foreign policy Objectives has suffered a setback because less proportion of the budget is allocated to fund the Foreign Service abroad resulting to poor performance of the Nigerian Foreign Mission. Insecurity crises in Nigeria has greatly affected her foreign policy as she seeks the support of its African neighbors and the international community to fight insurgency and support her ailing economy. So the government has to focus more on the protection of its citizens right

making sure that the international protocols on arrest, detention and litigation of foreign individuals are being explored.

The primary concern of a foreign policy is security which holds for Nigerian State therefore the polity should note that the first line of security after the physical territory of Nigeria is West African Sub-region. Nigeria must seriously be concerned about their welfare for her to be at peace. Nigeria should continue to project her leadership image and regional power status particularly in West Africa.

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