

The Role of Nigerian and United States Air Forces in Implementing Nigeria's Foreign Policy Against Boko Haram Terrorism in 2014-2021

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Penelitian ini menganalisis peran pemerintah Nigeria dan Angkatan Udara Amerika Serikat dalam mengimplementasikan kebijakan luar negeri Nigeria melawan terorisme Boko Haram dari tahun 2014 hingga 2021. Rumusan masalah berfokus pada bagaimana kerja sama militer antara Nigeria dan Amerika Serikat, khususnya melalui kekuatan udara, mendukung Nigeria dalam memerangi ancaman Boko Haram. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, dengan menggunakan sumber data sekunder seperti laporan pemerintah, artikel akademis, dan pernyataan resmi. Kerangka teoretis didasarkan pada konsep kepentingan nasional dan kerja sama internasional, meneliti bagaimana faktor-faktor ini membentuk hubungan bilateral dan strategi militer. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kerja sama antara angkatan udara Nigeria dan AS secara signifikan berkontribusi pada upaya Nigeria untuk mencapai tujuan keamanan nasionalnya, dengan menekankan pentingnya kolaborasi internasional dalam mengatasi tantangan keamanan yang kompleks.

Kata Kunci: Kebijakan Luar Negeri, Boko Haram, Nigeria, Amerika Serikat.

Abstract

This research analyzes the role of the Nigerian government and United States Air Forces in implementing Nigeria's foreign policy against Boko Haram terrorism from 2014 to 2021. The problem statement focuses on how military cooperation between Nigeria and the US, particularly through air power, supported Nigeria in combating the Boko Haram threat. The study employs a qualitative approach, using secondary data sources such as government reports, academic articles, and official statements. The theoretical framework is based on the concepts of national interest and international cooperation, examining how these factors shaped the bilateral relationship and military strategies. The research concludes that the cooperation between the Nigerian and US air forces significantly contributed to Nigeria's efforts to achieve its national security goals, emphasizing the importance of international collaboration in addressing complex security challenges.

Keywords: Foreign Policy, Boko Haram, Nigeria, United States.

Introduction

Nigeria is located in West Africa with a total area of 923,786 km² consisting of 910,768 km² of land and 13,000 km² of ocean. The country is bordered by Benin in the west, Chad and Cameroon in the east, Niger in the north, and the Gulf of Guinea part of the Atlantic Ocean in the south (Udo et al., 2024).

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Figure 1. Nigeria's Map (Source: www.britannica.com/place/Nigeria)

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with a total population of 236,747,130 people today with the majority of its citizens practicing Islam 53.5%, Roman Catholic 10.6%, other Christian 35.3%, and other 0.6% (CIA, 2024). In addition to its huge population, the country is also known for its good economy among other African countries with a GDP of USD 500 billion supported by many sectors, such as telecommunications, entertainment, and natural resources. Nigeria is also one of the countries in Africa that has a lot of natural resources that can help the growth of the country. These natural resources range from precious metals, rocks, minerals, and industrial raw materials such as Barite, Marble, and Gypsum (MOFA Abuja, 2024).

Despite its large population, natural resources and good economy, Nigeria still has some problems in the country. One of the major problems is terrorism. Boko haram is a terrorist group founded in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf in Maiduguri, Nigeria. This group aims to make Nigeria a country based on Islamic sharia law. To achieve its goal, the group carried out a massive attack caused by the death of its leader Mohammed Yusuf who was assassinated at the time. It attempted massacres in villages, kidnappings of school students, attacks on government offices and also took over military bases (Counter Extremism Project, 2023).

In fighting these terrorist groups, Nigeria realizes that it cannot do this alone. This is due to several factors, such as the country's limited military power and limited human and financial resources, despite Nigeria being the most populous and economically well-off of all African countries. However, the country has received international support from other countries in overcoming this problem, either neighboring countries such as Chad and Cameroon or large countries that have experience in terrorism issues such as the United States.

The United States as one of the countries that has experienced terrorism attacks on September 11, 2001 at the World Trade Center Building which had huge material losses and casualties triggered the "War on Terror" policy to eliminate terrorism in this world. The existence of this policy certainly makes the US want to help Nigeria in fighting the Boko Haram terrorism group in its country (Pais & Tombesi, 2021). One of the assistance that the US provides is by sending A-29 Super Tucano fighter aircraft that can be useful in surveillance, reconnaissance, and providing aerial attacks to Nigeria (Reuters, 2021).

Based on the above background, this paper will analyze the role of the Nigerian Air Force and the United States in supporting Nigeria's foreign policy in confronting Boko Haram terrorism during the 2014-2021 period. This research is likely to explore how military cooperation between Nigeria and the US, particularly through the use of air power, assisted Nigeria in tackling the threat from Boko Haram.

Research Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with the aim of analyzing the role of the Nigerian Government and the United States Air Force in the implementation of Nigeria's foreign policy against Boko Haram terrorism in the 2014-2021 period. The qualitative method was chosen because it allows researchers to explore in depth the dynamics of military cooperation and its implications for Nigeria's foreign policy. Data collection was carried out using secondary data obtained from various reliable sources, including government reports, academic articles, official documents, and international organization reports. The data collected was then analyzed to identify key themes relating to the role of the Air Force in Nigeria's foreign policy. Through this approach, the researcher was able to explore how military cooperation between Nigeria and the United States contributes to the achievement of Nigeria's national security objectives, as well as understand the influence of such cooperation in the face of complex security challenges.

Result and Discussion

National Interest

According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, National Interest is the interest of a nation as a whole which is considered as an independent and separate entity from regional or subordinate interests and also the interests of other nations (Merriam Webster, 2024). In the Foreign Policy Analysis's class it was also explained that national interest is the national interest of a country which is the basis of foreign policy. Achieving this national interest is a goal that must be achieved by a country in accordance with its foreign policy. National interest is a big concern in military and diplomatic circles because they can formulate national strategies and calculate national strength to support these strategies to achieve their national interests (Perwita, 2024). It can be concluded that national interest is the interests of a country that can be achieved through its foreign policy, this can cover all aspects, including economic, political, security and defence.

National Interest of Nigeria

Based on the National Security Strategy of Federal Republic of Nigeria December 2019, the national interest of Nigeria are:

- a. Preservation of Nigeria's sovereignty
- b. Territorial integrity
- c. Security
- d. The welfare of her people

The Nigerian government will certainly strive to maintain democracy to ensure the security of its citizens, and will also combat all threats to peace in its territory. Nigeria will continue to strive to contribute to the maintenance of world peace, security, and international cooperation and conflict prevention, be it intra-state, inter-state, regional, or international (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019).

In fighting Boko Haram, Nigeria will do various things to achieve its national interests. One of the efforts made is to cooperate with the US in overcoming this. The cooperation between the two will certainly help Nigeria achieve its national interests, especially at the point of preservation of Nigeria's sovereignty, security and welfare of her people.

National Interest of the United States

Based on the National Security of The White House, The United States has national security that will advance vital interests and create a free, open, prosperous, and secure world. Therefore, the National Interests of the United States are:

- a. To protect the security of the American People
- b. To expand economic prosperity and opportunity
- c. To realize and defend the democratic values at the heart of the American way of life (The White House, 2022).

Table 1. National Interest Policy Matrix

	Bilateral	Regional	Global
Security	√	√	√
Stability	√	√	√
Prosperity	√	√	√

From the table above, it can be concluded that the US really maintains its position in the security, stability and prosperity sectors in bilaterally, regionally and globally. On the first point of US national interests, it can be explained that to protect the security of its people, the US government has built many coalitions with other powerful countries to increase its country's influence in the global strategic environment and also be able to solve existing problems together. The US is increasing cooperation with many other countries, in order to maintain regional and global stability and security.

In the second point of US national interests, it can be explained that the US seeks to expand its prosperity and economic opportunities. The US has entered into many trade agreements with other countries, one of which is with Nigeria. With the amount of aid that the US provides to Nigeria, of course, all of this is not in vain. The US, of course, seeks to achieve its national interests through Nigeria's natural resources.

At the final point of its national interests, the US always tries to maintain its democratic values, where these values have become a way of life for US citizens. The strategy used by the US is to improve crisis management skills that can help its citizens abroad. One example is when these citizens are abroad and experience a crisis, the US is ready to provide international emergency flights. In addition, the US military is also deployed to focus on all modern threats and challenges, to defend the security of the country and all its interests. In the US there is also the promotion of human rights, fighting for human dignity and against those who oppose it, as well as the global rule of law. Thus, its citizens still have a high sense of democracy (United States Government, 2000). The US also encourages Nigeria to become a country that has high democratic values.

Boko Haram

Boko haram is an Islamic militant group in Nigeria founded in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf in northeastern Nigeria. Its official name is *Jamā'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihād* which means "Community of People Committed to the Teachings of the Prophet for Da'wah and Jihad". The group's initial aim was to eradicate corruption and injustice in the country. They felt that Nigeria had received too much influence from Western countries, so they also wanted to make Nigeria one of the countries that enforced Islamic law in it (Britannica, 2024). The large number of Nigerians who join Boko Haram is due to high unemployment and poverty, manipulation by their leaders, and the lack of authentic Islamic teachings in the country. Moreover, the majority of the population are Muslims is also one of

the reasons for Boko Haram because they want to realize the dream of the Muslim community to be able to strengthen their ideology.



Figure 2. Boko Haram most active maps

Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Boko-Haram/images-videos>

Based on Figure 2, Boko Haram is most active in Northeastern Nigeria (Yobe, Borno, Bauchi, Adamawa, Gombe, Kano, Kaduna, Plateau, and Abuja) just like the place where this group was formed, Maiduguri. To find out what activities are carried out by Boko Haram, here is a timeline of their activities:

Table 2. Boko Haram Timeline from 2002-2021

No	Year	Activities
1.	2002	The Establishment of Boko Haram
2.	2009	The assassination of Boko Haram's leader, it led to the group's rise and transformation into a more violent and radical group. Mohammed Yusuf was killed in July 2009 for rebelling against the government (Campbell, 2014)
3.	2010	The first attack after its rise was to attack a prison and free 700 inmates including 105 Boko Haram members (Britannica, 2024)
4.	2011	First suicide bombing by a Boko Haram member and President Goodluck Jonathan declares a state of emergency
5.	2012	Boko Haram successfully enters the Government
6.	2013	President Jonathan extends the state of emergency to Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states
7.	2014	UN Security Council places Boko Haram on financial sanctions list and arms embargo, Boko Haram successfully captures Adamawa city, and 76 female students are kidnapped from Government Girls Secondary School at the town of Chibok in Borno State
8.	2015	Boko Haram seizes Nigerian military base in Baga, they make the Presidential elections, declares their allegiance to ISIS, and change their name to Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP)
9.	2016	US intelligence Reports emerge of a split between Abubakar Shekau and ISIS over the use of children as suicide bombers
10.	2017	Boko Haram continued to launch attacks, including a raid on the town of Rann, which led to further displacement and casualties
11.	2018	Boko Haram abducted 110 schoolgirls from the Government Technical Girls College in Dapchi Yobe State took over Baga and

		seized the Multinational Joint Task Force base
12.	2019	Boko Haram kills 55 people
13.	2020	Boko Haram killed 190 people and abducted over 330 students in Kankara
14.	2021	Boko Haram kills 10 people in Maiduguri, rejoins ISIS and Abu Bakar Shekau as a leader reported dead (Elusoji, 2021)

From the data above, it can be seen that from 2014-2021 Boko Haram made a lot of attacks that affected the state and nation at large. Therefore, this paper only focuses on this period.

Nigeria-US Security Cooperation

Nigeria and the United States have had a relationship for over 50 years. Their relationship is one of the most important in sub-Saharan Africa because Nigeria is the most populous country, the largest economy in Africa, and has strong democratic values. Nigeria and the US have cooperated extensively, both bilaterally and multilaterally in various forums. Both countries continue to strive to increase cooperation in the security sector, be it from maritime security, counterterrorism efforts against Boko Haram and ISIS in the West African Region, defense trade, and also strengthening defense sector governance (US Department of State, 2024).

On April 6, 2010, Nigeria and the US established a bilateral cooperation called the Binational Commission (BNC) that focuses on several areas. The commission was established to enhance cooperation between the two countries on issues such as governance, corruption, regional cooperation, food security, and counterterrorism. The BNC has a working group that deals with security and counterterrorism issues in Nigeria. Through this commission, the two countries also discuss cybersecurity, food security, and countering Boko Haram (US Department of State, 2010).

From 2011 to 2015, Nigeria regularly received \$15 million in defense equipment that included 24 Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles and two US Coast Guard Hamilton-class high-endurance cutters - USCGC Chase and USCGC Gallatin. In 2014, the U.S. government also sent a multidisciplinary team that provided outreach on how to secure citizens kidnapped by Boko Haram and how to respond to Boko Haram so that the population and human rights there are protected.

The U.S. government has also provided the Nigerian government with Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) to aid Nigeria's efforts to locate the Boko Haram (Obama, 2014). In addition, the US has provided \$1.8 million per year from 2016-2020 to finance foreign militaries and support maritime security and counterterrorism efforts. This year the two countries also signed an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement to exchange common types of support, including food, fuel, transportation, ammunition, and equipment.

The US also sells military equipment to Nigeria to support Nigeria's technology and weaponry to become more advanced, one of which is the sale of 12 A-29 Super Tucano aircraft in 2017 for \$497 million to support the fight against Boko Haram and ISIS in West Africa. Not only did the US sell the aircraft, but it also provided training on international humanitarian law and air-to-ground integration programs to the Armed Forces of Nigeria to minimize the risk of harm. From 2018 to 2022, the US authorized the export of defense equipment to Nigeria totaling \$53 million in fire control equipment, lasers, firearms, and other weapons. The Department of State provides Nigeria with one of the highest International Military Education and Training (IMET) allocations totaling \$5 million per year from 2019-2023 (US Department of State, 2024).

Nigeria-US Air Forces Cooperation Against Boko Haram

Nigeria and the US have cooperation between their respective air forces. This is evidenced by US support to Nigeria by sending intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) teams using drones and other ISR assets to help monitor Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria. In addition, personnel from the US Air Force are also involved in helping train Nigerian Air Force forces in logistics, air, and maintenance operations that can help the Nigerian forces become more developed. The sale of A-29 Super Tucano aircraft is also one of the US Air Force's involvement in helping Nigeria overcome Boko Haram (Duncan, 2018).

The aircraft is equipped with precision weapons that have lasers and canons. It can also help reduce civilian casualties and damage to infrastructure from Boko Haram attacks. Most importantly, it has an ISR capability that can conduct aerial surveillance of Boko Haram's movements, which can aid Nigerian military operations in tracking and identifying targets before an attack is carried out. The A-29 Super Tucano is also designed to operate from airfields that lack infrastructure, such as conflict areas in Nigeria. This makes it ideal for use in remote areas where Boko Haram operates (Breaking Defense, 2022).

Nigerian-US air force cooperation against Boko Haram is multifaceted, involving the provision of advanced military equipment, air base improvements, counterterrorism training, and broader regional security initiatives

Concept 2+2 Analysis of Nigeria's Foreign Policy with the United States

The concept of 2+2 foreign policy dialogue involves high-level meetings between the foreign and defense ministers of two countries, serving as a platform to discuss and coordinate policies that span both diplomatic and military dimensions (Beitel, 2019). This framework is designed to foster strategic alignment between nations, ensuring that their foreign and defense policies are mutually reinforcing and that they can jointly address global and regional security challenges. In the context of Nigeria-US relations, the recent meeting between Nigeria's Minister of Defence, Major General Bashir Salihi Magashi (rtd), and the US Secretary of the Air Force, Barbara Barrett, highlights the operationalization of this 2+2 framework in practice, even if not formally labeled as such (Ulus, 2017).

The discussions between the Nigerian and US officials focused on strengthening military cooperation, particularly through technological enhancements in space defense, which is seen as a critical multiplier in Nigeria's military operations against insurgency and other forms of insecurity (Eke & Olayinka, 2019). This interaction underscores the 2+2 concept where defense and security concerns are at the forefront of bilateral relations, supported by corresponding diplomatic efforts. The US Air Force and Space Force's involvement indicates a recognition of the increasing importance of space capabilities in modern military strategy, and Nigeria's partnership with the US in this area reflects a broader trend in international relations where space is becoming a key domain for defense cooperation (Adeyemi, 2016).

From a 2+2 perspective, this meeting serves as a convergence point where military collaboration is aligned with diplomatic goals (Oro, 2017). The appeal by General Magashi for the expedited release of the Super Tucano Aircraft, for instance, illustrates how military needs are directly communicated within a diplomatic framework, ensuring that defense cooperation aligns with Nigeria's broader security and foreign policy objectives. The Nigerian government's focus on strengthening ties with the US in areas of shared interest, such as training, exchange programs, and weapons procurement, reflects the strategic dialogue that the 2+2 format is meant to facilitate.

The involvement of high-ranking officials from both the defense and foreign policy

spheres, such as Nigeria's Chief of Defence Staff and the Chief of Air Staff, alongside the US Secretary of the Air Force, further emphasizes the integration of military and diplomatic efforts (Blanton, 2019). This ensures a holistic approach to bilateral relations where defense policies are not pursued in isolation but are part of a broader foreign policy strategy aimed at enhancing national security, regional stability, and international cooperation.

Moreover, the dialogue between the two nations is indicative of the strategic importance that the US places on Nigeria within the African continent, viewing it as a pivotal partner in regional security. The US's commitment to deepening this partnership through technological and military support is a clear demonstration of how 2+2 dialogues can be leveraged to address specific security challenges, such as Nigeria's fight against Boko Haram and other insurgent groups.

Nigeria's Government Response

Military Operations and Security Enforcement

The Nigerian government's most major endeavor was to start multiple military operations against Boko Haram. In 2009, following severe violence in Nigeria's northeast, the government began Operation Flush to combat instability in Borno caused by Boko Haram (Onuoha, 2010). As the gang became more radicalized and carried out more savage acts, the government increased its military reaction by undertaking more extensive missions. In 2013, the government announced a state of emergency in three of the most afflicted states—Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa—and started Operation Lafiya Dole, a massive military operation aimed at restoring regional stability (D. Agbibo, 2014). The operation featured thousands of military men from the Army, Air Force, and Navy, as well as counter-terrorism police groups.

In this operation, the Nigerian military deployed aggressive tactics including air strikes and a siege of the alleged Boko Haram headquarters (Walker, 2016). The administration also reinforced its armed forces by ramping up recruiting and raising the defense budget. To combat Boko Haram's danger, the government understands the necessity for a stronger and better-equipped military force. Furthermore, increased cooperation with security services in neighboring countries such as Chad, Niger, and Cameroon has allowed Nigeria to undertake more successful cross-border operations, limiting Boko Haram's wiggle space in border areas (Zenn, 2013).

Policy Reform and Counter-Terrorism Strategy

Alongside military actions, the Nigerian government is working to enhance its legal and regulatory framework in response to terrorism. In 2011, the government approved the Terrorism (Prevention) Act, which grants security services more authority to combat terrorist operations (Campbell, 2014). The Act also establishes a legal foundation for prosecuting people involved in the financing and support of terrorist operations. The administration also formed the National Counter-Terrorism Committee, which is in charge of developing a national plan to address the danger of terrorism (Iroegbu, 2012). The committee works with other security, intelligence, and law enforcement authorities to prevent terrorist attacks and respond to crises.

In the long run, this group helps to develop policies that minimize vulnerability to radicalization by addressing the core causes of extremist violence. The government's counter-terrorism policy also includes the bolstering of intelligence. The Nigerian government realizes the value of information in hunting down and defeating Boko Haram (Forest, 2012). With the help of international allies, most notably the United States and the United Kingdom, the government is expanding its information collection and analytic capabilities, including the

use of modern technologies such as satellites and drones to monitor Boko Haram-controlled regions.

International Cooperation and military assistance

The Nigerian government is also aggressively seeking foreign support in its attempts to combat Boko Haram. The United States is a key partner in this effort, providing major aid in the form of military training, intelligence support, and military equipment purchases (Cook, 2014). The continuous delivery of the Super Tucano aircraft, as mentioned by Nigeria's Defense Minister, is a clear illustration of how US assistance has helped boost Nigeria's military capabilities in combating Boko Haram.

Furthermore, Nigeria has participated in several regional cooperation initiatives through the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which includes neighboring nations such as Chad, Niger and Cameroon. The MNJTF has played an important role in cross-border operations aiming at disrupting supply lines and destroying Boko Haram facilities along the border. The success of this operation is heavily reliant on strong collaboration among security personnel in the nations concerned (Asfura-Heim & McQuaid, 2015). Cooperation with Western countries includes measures to prevent Boko Haram from receiving financing. The Nigerian government is working with international financial institutions and partner nations to locate and freeze assets reportedly tied to this terrorist organization. The endeavor is part of a larger campaign to reduce Boko Haram's operational capabilities through economic isolation.

Humanitarian initiatives and reconciliation programs

The Nigerian government has also initiated several humanitarian measures and reconciliation projects to address the societal consequences of the battle with Boko Haram. This battle has resulted in a major humanitarian disaster, with millions displaced and many living in substandard conditions. The government, with assistance from the international community, has established refugee camps and supplied food, housing, and healthcare (Tumushabe, 2015). Reconciliation and de-radicalization initiatives are also essential components of the government's efforts. For example, the Safe Corridor Program was established to help surrendered Boko Haram members return to society through rehabilitation and reintegration programs. The Program offers skills training, education, and psychological counseling to help former Boko Haram members abandon radical ideologies and build new lives (Babatunde, 2018). Reconciliation efforts also involve dialogue with affected communities, especially in the northeast region hardest hit by the violence. The government works closely with community leaders and religious leaders to promote peace and prevent further radicalization (Okpara, 2016). This approach aims to address mistrust between the government and marginalized communities, which are often fertile ground for Boko Haram recruitment.

Domestic Factors Influencing Nigeria's Foreign Policy on Boko Haram

Nigeria's foreign policy towards Boko Haram is shaped by various domestic factors. Historically, Nigeria's colonial past and the socio-political neglect of the northern region, where Boko Haram emerged, have created deep-seated divisions and vulnerabilities (Adesoji, 2020). The legacy of military coups and civil wars has also led to a fragile democracy, where security concerns often dominate foreign policy decisions (Campbell & Harwood, 2018). These historical factors make the Nigerian government particularly sensitive to the insurgency in the North, driving a foreign policy that seeks international cooperation to combat this threat (Onapajo, 2021).

Social and cultural factors, such as Nigeria's ethnic and religious diversity, also play a significant role. The country's complex socio-cultural landscape, with over 250 ethnic groups, has often led to tensions, particularly between the Muslim-majority North and the Christian-majority South (Falola & Heaton, 2017). Boko Haram exploits these divisions, particularly in the North, where poverty and unemployment are rampant (D. E. Agbiboa, 2017). Recognizing these dynamics, Nigeria's foreign policy not only addresses the military threat posed by Boko Haram but also seeks international support to tackle the underlying social and economic issues that contribute to extremism.

Politically, Nigeria's federal system and democratic governance influence its foreign policy decisions (Naidu, 2016). The central government, which holds significant power over national security and foreign policy, must balance the need for effective counter-terrorism measures with the protection of human rights (Adesina, 2017). This balance is reflected in Nigeria's cautious approach to military operations against Boko Haram, where the government seeks to avoid actions that could lead to human rights abuses and international condemnation (Onuoha & Hassan, 2018). However, corruption within the military and government institutions has undermined the effectiveness of counter-terrorism efforts, making Nigeria more reliant on international assistance (Akinola, 2020).

Nigeria's power resources, particularly its oil wealth, are central to its foreign policy (Oluwatoki & Oluruntoba, 2019). As Africa's largest economy, Nigeria leverages its natural resources to secure military and economic assistance from powerful nations, including the United States. However, this reliance on oil has also made Nigeria vulnerable to economic fluctuations and has led to the underdevelopment of other sectors, including the military (Mbah & Salisu, 2021). This economic dependency has influenced Nigeria's foreign policy, pushing the government to seek external support to enhance its military capabilities.

Military capability is another critical factor. Despite having one of the largest militaries in Africa, Nigeria has struggled to combat Boko Haram due to issues related to training, equipment, and morale (Nkwi & Ayangafac, 2015). These challenges have led Nigeria to pursue foreign military aid and training programs, particularly from Western allies (Daley, 2016). This reliance on external support is a key aspect of Nigeria's foreign policy, as it seeks to strengthen its military to effectively counter the insurgency.

Geographically, Nigeria's location in West Africa, with porous borders and vast terrain, has made it a key player in regional security. The movement of Boko Haram militants across borders has necessitated regional cooperation in counter-terrorism efforts, leading to the formation of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) with neighboring countries (D. Agbiboa, 2020). This regional approach is a cornerstone of Nigeria's foreign policy, recognizing the transnational nature of the Boko Haram threat and the need for collective action (Olojo, 2019). Additionally, Nigeria's strategic location along the Gulf of Guinea, rich in oil and natural gas, influences its foreign policy, particularly in maritime security (Okafor & Oluwadare, 2017).

External Factors Influencing Nigeria's Foreign Policy on Boko Haram

International System

Nigeria's foreign policy regarding Boko Haram is shaped by the wider dynamics of global power relations, the international community's counter-terrorism agenda, and Nigeria's place in global governance systems (D. E. Agbiboa, 2015). These considerations influence how Nigeria interacts with global powers, primarily the United States, and how its internal counter-terrorism operations adhere to international standards and expectations.

The global war on terror, led by the United States and its allies following the terrorist

attacks of September 11, 2001, has had a major effect on Nigeria's foreign policy (Harris, 2016). The international community, headed by the United Nations, has developed several counter-terrorism frameworks and programs to combat terrorism globally. Nigeria, as a member of the UN and other international organizations, is required to match its counterterrorism policy with global efforts (Aliyu & Haruna K. Mukhtar., 2018). This expectation has prompted Nigeria to pursue a foreign policy that attempts to work with international allies to combat Boko Haram while simultaneously assuring compliance with international human rights norms.

The United States, as a global superpower and essential partner in worldwide counter-terrorism efforts, has had a considerable impact on Nigeria's foreign policy toward Boko Haram (Helly & Romero, 2017). The United States has supplied military aid, training, and intelligence support to Nigeria, which has greatly improved the Nigerian military's ability to battle Boko Haram. Nigeria's foreign policy with the United States has therefore been defined by an emphasis on ensuring continuous military and counter-terrorism aid, as well as improving bilateral cooperation in mutually beneficial sectors like as security, trade, and development.

Nigeria's foreign policy is impacted not just by bilateral ties with the United States, but also by its membership in international organizations such as the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Commonwealth of Nations (Balogun, 2018). These organizations enable Nigeria to connect with other nations on security matters, such as the Boko Haram insurgency. Nigeria's engagement in international forums and commitment to multilateralism is consistent with its foreign policy goal of using international cooperation to overcome internal security concerns.

Furthermore, Nigeria's foreign policy is determined by the desire to project a favorable image in the international community. International human rights organizations and the worldwide media are keeping a close eye on Nigeria's attempts to battle Boko Haram. Allegations of human rights violations by the Nigerian military in the campaign against Boko Haram have sparked condemnation from foreign parties, including the United States and the European Union. In response, Nigeria has had to strike a careful balance between conducting efficient military operations and upholding international human rights standards. This balancing act is exemplified by Nigeria's foreign policy, which strives to limit international criticism while obtaining the necessary backing to confront terrorism.

Nigeria's foreign policy is also impacted by the larger geopolitical backdrop of its interactions with major states (Enweremadu, 2017). Nigeria, as Africa's leading country, aspires to establish its influence on the continent and beyond. The Boko Haram crisis has given Nigeria a chance to demonstrate its leadership in solving West Africa's security concerns. However, the country's foreign policy is limited by the necessity to manage ties with other significant countries, such as the United States, which also has vital interests in Africa. Nigeria's interaction with major powers is driven by a desire to diversify its foreign ties and lessen reliance on a single external entity.

Regional Sub-System

Within the West African regional subsystem, Nigeria's foreign policy toward Boko Haram is impacted by complex security dynamics, the involvement of regional institutions, and its connections with neighboring nations (Hirsh, 2020). The transnational nature of the Boko Haram insurgency, which affects not just Nigeria but also its neighbors, demanded a regional counter-terrorism strategy (Botha, 2017). Nigeria's foreign policy in this setting is centered on building regional collaboration, spearheading collective security measures, and mitigating the insurgency's spillover consequences (Onapajo, 2018).

West Africa's regional subsystem faces common security issues such as terrorism, armed warfare, and organized crime (Omotayo, 2019). Boko Haram, which began in Nigeria's northeastern area, has spread its operations to neighboring Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. This growth has triggered a regional security crisis, necessitating a coordinated response from impacted countries (Campbell & Harwood, 2018). Nigeria, the region's biggest and most populous country, has taken the lead in responding to the Boko Haram menace through regional diplomacy and military cooperation (Ero, 2017).

Nigeria's participation in the MNJTF is an important component of its regional foreign policy. Nigeria's leadership in the MNJTF demonstrates its commitment to regional security and knowledge that defeating the Boko Haram insurgency requires the collaboration of its neighbors (Bappah, 2016). The MNJTF has permitted collaborative military operations, intelligence sharing, and coordinated border patrols, which have helped to reduce Boko Haram's operational capabilities.

Nigeria's foreign policy regarding Boko Haram is also impacted by its interactions with particular bordering nations. The porous borders between Nigeria and its neighbors have allowed Boko Haram extremists to flee Nigerian military operations by finding sanctuary in border areas or crossing into other nations (Mercier, 2018). This has needed diplomatic discussions with Cameroon, Chad, and Niger to gain their assistance in border control and counter-terrorism operations. Nigeria's foreign policy in this area includes discussions on cross-border military operations, cooperative patrols, and the extradition of Boko Haram militants. These bilateral interactions are critical to the success of Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy because they prevent Boko Haram from exploiting deficiencies in regional border security (Adegbulu, 2019).

The regional sub-system also poses obstacles to Nigeria's foreign policy, notably in terms of managing its leadership position and dealing with its neighbors' different interests. While Nigeria's size and economic strength give it substantial regional influence, this dominance may also cause problems with smaller surrounding nations, who may regard Nigeria's activities as domineering. Nigeria's foreign policy so aims to achieve a balance between expressing leadership and preserving positive ties with its neighbors (Okoro, 2021). This is especially crucial in the context of regional security when collaboration is required but might be hampered by political or economic conflicts.

Nigeria's participation in regional organizations, notably ECOWAS, is another facet of its regional sub-system foreign policy. West Africa relies heavily on ECOWAS for regional security, conflict resolution, and economic integration. Nigeria's strong engagement in ECOWAS's security structures, such as the ECOWAS Standby Force and the ECOWAS Peace and Security Council, is an important feature of its foreign policy (Bolarinwa, 2020). Nigeria has been able to garner regional support for its counter-terrorism activities and argue for a collaborative strategy to deal with the Boko Haram situation thanks to ECOWAS. The importance of ECOWAS in coordinating regional responses to terrorism and other security concerns has strengthened Nigeria's West African foreign policy objectives.

Furthermore, Nigeria's foreign policy is impacted by the larger security and economic dynamics in West Africa. The region is marked by high levels of poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment, all of which contribute to the conditions that enable extremist organizations such as Boko Haram to grow. Nigeria's foreign policy thus includes efforts to solve these underlying concerns through regional development initiatives and economic cooperation. Nigeria hopes to make West Africa more secure and affluent by fostering economic integration and growth, which will lessen the attractiveness of extremist beliefs and weaken Boko Haram's impact (Ogunro, 2021).

Nigeria's foreign policy in the regional sub-system is also influenced by the necessity to deal with the humanitarian implications of the Boko Haram conflict. The violence has caused

widespread displacement, with millions of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Nigeria and neighboring countries. Nigeria's foreign policy involves collaborating with regional and international partners to handle the humanitarian issue, supporting internally displaced persons, and enabling refugee returns (Adetunji, 2019). This component of Nigeria's foreign policy is inextricably tied to its security strategy since tackling the humanitarian crisis is viewed as critical to stabilizing afflicted areas and avoiding further radicalization.

Decision-Making Process of Nigeria on Foreign Policy

Nigeria's foreign policy is a complex system shaped by various structures and decision-making processes that involve multiple key actors and institutions. The formulation and implementation of Nigeria's foreign policy are influenced by the interplay between the President, the National Assembly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Defence. Each of these entities plays a critical role in shaping Nigeria's international engagements, ensuring that the country's external actions align with its national interests.

The Role of the President

The President of Nigeria is the central figure in the country's foreign policy-making process. As the head of state, the President holds the constitutional authority to determine Nigeria's foreign relations and represents the country on the global stage (Suberu, 2017). This role is supported by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which grants the President executive powers over foreign affairs. These powers include negotiating and signing international treaties and agreements, appointing ambassadors and high commissioners, and directing the nation's diplomatic initiatives.

Given the broad authority vested in the presidency, the President's personal views, experiences, and priorities significantly influence Nigeria's foreign policy direction (Maduekwe, 2018). For instance, under President Muhammadu Buhari, Nigeria's foreign policy emphasized regional security, anti-corruption initiatives, and economic diversification. Buhari's military background also brought a focus on strengthening ties with global military powers like the United States and enhancing Nigeria's role in regional security frameworks, particularly in addressing the Boko Haram insurgency.

However, while the President has significant control over foreign policy, this power is not absolute. The President's decisions are often shaped by consultations with other key stakeholders, including the National Assembly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Defense (Osondu-Oti & Tolu, 2016). This collaborative approach ensures that foreign policy decisions are reflective of Nigeria's broader national interests and security concerns.

The National Assembly

The National Assembly, composed of the Senate and the House of Representatives, plays a crucial role in the formulation and oversight of Nigeria's foreign policy (Taylor, 2019). The Constitution mandates that all international treaties and agreements signed by the President must be ratified by the National Assembly before they can take effect. This requirement ensures a system of checks and balances, where the legislative branch has the power to review and approve the executive's foreign policy initiatives (Osondu-Oti & Tolu, 2016).

The National Assembly also influences foreign policy through its oversight functions. Parliamentary committees, particularly those on foreign affairs, defense, and national security, regularly scrutinize the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy. These committees hold

hearings, summon ministers and other officials, and investigate issues related to foreign relations and defense. Through these activities, the National Assembly can shape foreign policy by ensuring that it aligns with the country's national interests and by holding the executive accountable for its diplomatic and military actions (Osondu-Oti & Tolu, 2016).

Moreover, the National Assembly is responsible for approving the budget for foreign affairs and defense. This power of the purse gives the legislature significant influence over the resources allocated to Nigeria's diplomatic missions abroad, international aid programs, and military operations. In situations where the National Assembly disagrees with the President's foreign policy direction, it can exert pressure by withholding or altering budgetary allocations, thereby indirectly steering the country's foreign policy.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the primary institution responsible for implementing Nigeria's foreign policy (Odusote, 2017). Led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the ministry oversees the country's diplomatic missions, engages in international negotiations, and coordinates Nigeria's participation in international organizations such as the United Nations, the African Union, and ECOWAS.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs acts as the executive arm of the President in diplomatic matters, translating the President's foreign policy vision into actionable strategies. This involves conducting diplomacy, managing international relations, and providing foreign policy advice to the President (Osondu-Oti & Tolu, 2016). The ministry also plays a critical role in crisis management, where it coordinates with other ministries and international partners to address issues such as regional conflicts, terrorism, and humanitarian emergencies.

Additionally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is tasked with promoting Nigeria's interests abroad. This includes economic diplomacy, where the ministry seeks to attract foreign investment, enhance trade relations, and protect the rights of Nigerian citizens living abroad. The ministry's role in economic diplomacy has become increasingly important as Nigeria seeks to diversify its economy and reduce its dependence on oil exports.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs works closely with other government departments, particularly the Ministry of Defence, to ensure a coherent approach to national security and foreign relations (Osondu-Oti & Tolu, 2016). This inter-ministerial collaboration is crucial in addressing complex issues that require both diplomatic and military responses, such as the fight against Boko Haram and maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea.

The Ministry of Defense

The Ministry of Defence plays a pivotal role in shaping Nigeria's foreign policy, particularly in matters related to national security and military cooperation (Eze, 2018). As the agency responsible for the country's armed forces, the Ministry of Defense is central to Nigeria's military engagements with foreign powers and its participation in international peacekeeping operations.

Under the leadership of the Minister of Defense, the ministry advises the President on defense-related aspects of foreign policy and oversees the implementation of military components of Nigeria's international commitments (Osondu-Oti & Tolu, 2016). This includes negotiating defense agreements, coordinating joint military exercises with foreign partners, and managing Nigeria's involvement in multinational military coalitions like the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against Boko Haram.

The Ministry of Defense also plays a crucial role in military diplomacy, which involves the use of military resources and capabilities to achieve foreign policy objectives. This includes deploying Nigerian troops for peacekeeping missions, providing military training

and assistance to other countries, and engaging in defense cooperation with global and regional powers. Through these activities, the Ministry of Defense enhances Nigeria's strategic influence and contributes to regional stability.

Moreover, the Ministry of Defense's role in foreign policy is closely linked to Nigeria's security challenges. The Boko Haram insurgency, for example, has necessitated increased collaboration between the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to secure international support for Nigeria's counter-terrorism efforts (Maina, 2020). The ministry's involvement in these efforts underscores the importance of integrating military capabilities into the broader framework of Nigeria's foreign policy.

Conclusion

The Nigeria-U.S. military cooperation is a critical component of Nigeria's foreign policy, offering significant support in the fight against Boko Haram and contributing to the broader goals of peace and security in the region. This partnership illustrates how international collaboration can be effectively harnessed to address complex security challenges, providing a model for other nations facing similar threats. As Nigeria continues to navigate the evolving landscape of international relations, its strategic alliances, particularly with the U.S., will remain vital in achieving its national security objectives.

The cooperation between Nigeria and the United States, particularly in the area of military and technological support, is a pivotal element in Nigeria's ongoing efforts to combat Boko Haram. This partnership, which includes the provision of advanced military equipment like the A-29 Super Tucano aircraft and the development of space defense capabilities, reflects a strategic alignment of interests between the two nations. Nigeria's engagement with the U.S. underlines its recognition that defeating Boko Haram requires not only robust military actions but also sophisticated technological support and international collaboration.

The interactions between Nigeria's Ministry of Defence and the U.S. Air Force/Space Force delegation exemplify the operationalization of the 2+2 foreign policy dialogue framework, where defense and diplomatic efforts are closely coordinated. This approach ensures that Nigeria's military needs are effectively addressed within the broader context of its foreign policy objectives, particularly those related to national security and regional stability. The emphasis on space defense as a force multiplier in military operations highlights the growing importance of advanced technologies in modern warfare and reflects Nigeria's proactive stance in leveraging international partnerships to enhance its defense capabilities.

Furthermore, this cooperation underscores Nigeria's strategic importance within Africa, as viewed by the United States. The U.S.'s commitment to deepening military and technological ties with Nigeria demonstrates a mutual recognition of the challenges posed by terrorism and the need for a collaborative approach to address these threats. Through these efforts, Nigeria not only strengthens its defense posture but also reinforces its role as a key player in regional security and stability.

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