

Buhari's Administration and Review of Nigeria's Foreign Policy: A Realist Approach

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Abstract

There is no doubt that Nigeria's foreign policy is indeed outdated. This is evidenced in the fact that we now live in different times. Though Nigeria's role in Africa still remains significant, however, the time "Africa" was made the centre piece of Nigeria's foreign policy, was a time when many countries in the continent were struggling to throw off the yolk of colonialism. And the adoption of such a policy was to stand in solidarity with those nations that were struggling to achieve or gain independence. And today, no single country in the continent is under foreign rule or direct control, and the times now call for a review of Nigeria's foreign policy to reflect the nations current circumstances and realities among the committee of states across the globe. And there is no time than under the present administration of President Muhammadu Buhari. The Buhari administration must look critically and make an assessment of how and which way to direct Nigeria's foreign policy. The responsibility appears to be binding on President Buhari's administration having been neglected or not given the required attention by many previous regimes and administrations. The confidence of Nigerians in President Buhari's vision, promises and commitment to change and general progress/ greatness of Nigeria seems to justify such expectations in the area of foreign relations and policy. There is need for Nigeria to be more involved in world affairs and to seek observer status in certain supranational institutions including the E.U, NATO and the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) in this era of globalisation, and the accompanying system of interdependence. This paper tries to provide a guide with regards to the review of the foreign policy of Nigeria by President Buhari to reflect the realities and challenges of the times in which we are living. The paper argues that Nigeria must be a global player despite being a regional power in consideration of its potentials and position in the scheme of things, drawing lessons based on Realist theories in international affairs and conduct as well as the experiences of certain states like Japan as models for foreign policy development.

Keywords: Realism, Nigeria, Africa, Global, Foreign Policy, Review.

1. Introduction

The debate about Nigeria's foreign policy has been going on for quite sometime now, and many have argued that there is need to review Nigeria's foreign policy. This is despite the fact that many differed in their various reasons for Nigeria to review its foreign policy. While many find it unbelievable that Nigeria could have a cohesive and unified foreign policy as a result of internal issues, others see the possibility of fashioning out a new policy direction as almost impossible. Infact many scholars and observers of international politics and theorists have since dismissed the applicability of international relations theories by African or third world states mainly because of internal problems. However, such an opinion appears to be changing or has changed over time, especially in the case of Nigeria, a country that emerged as a giant in the African continent overtime due to its resources and population. A quick overview of how the foreign policy of Nigeria has faired since independence will reveal the need for the nation to take another look at its policy not only within Africa but across the globe. As the first part of this article

will show, Nigeria has achieved the aims and objectives of its African centred policy of hegemony or leadership of the continent. And if this is correct, then the country must look again and see what remains to be achieved outside the continent or what it stands to benefit or achieve using its position as the leader of the African continent on the global front. This will especially appear very clearly if we are analysing international affairs using various proven IR theories. If for instance neo-realism is adopted to analyse the situation based on the distribution of power and ranking of states, it will appear clearly that Nigeria would count among important states in the world stage. However, despite such position the country remains partly involved in the scheme of things at the global level and has remained pre-occupied with local politics in the continent. Nigeria has not been able to realign its policies and interests along with the changes and opportunities brought about by globalisation. It would appear that the country has not tapped and utilised the opportunity to fully participate in the globalisation process using its position in the African continent. It is for this reason that this paper tried to contribute to the debate on foreign policy, especially given the new opportunities in the international system under the present administration of President Buhari which appears to be redeeming the image and integrity of the country among other respected countries and the confidence they have shown on President Buhari. It appears that President Buhari has the special opportunity of reviewing and utilising the nations potentials and opportunities, using such confidence and Nigeria's position in international affairs as a leader on the African continent. The paper is divided into three parts. The first part takes a look at the development of Nigeria's foreign policy, and the second part tried to look at Nigeria's assumed policy under President Buhari and is titled "Realism Theory and Nigeria's New Global Role Under President Muhammadu Buhari". The second part tries to justify the need for Nigeria to review its foreign policy and diversify its interest using realism theory to support such a position. And the third part takes a look at the Japanese realism model of response and the applicability of IR theories in international affairs by African or third world nations, including Nigeria and is titled "Japan's Realism Model, IR Theory and the Third World Nations". A short conclusion is provided at the end.

2. Nigeria's Foreign Policy Development

Since independence in 1960 the goal and objectives that Nigeria's foreign policy were designed to achieve have not changed. These objectives and goal as outlined and identified to include; The protection of the territorial integrity of the Nigerian state; The promotion of economic and social well being of Nigerians; The enhancement of Nigeria's image and status in the world at large; The promotion of unity as well as the total political, economic, social and cultural liberation of Nigeria and Africa; The promotion of the rights of the black people and others under colonial domination; The promotion of international cooperation, conducive to the consolidation of world peace and security; Mutual respect and friendship among all peoples among states; Redressing the imbalance in the international power structures that has tended to frustrate the legitimate aspirations of developing countries; The promotion of world peace based on the principles of freedom, mutual respect and equality of all persons of the world [Ade-Ibijola, Aderemi Opeyemi, 2013]. These were outlined since independence to define the country's foreign policy and appeared to have guided and provided a parameter within which various administrations conducted or carried out the nation's foreign policy and relations. Although it is known that some administrations laid emphasis and focus on some of these objectives. The focus and emphasis on some of these objectives by different administrations is sometimes explained by the circumstances and the environment within which these administrations have found themselves. Some of the administration had to adjust to what was happening around them, at the domestic, sub-regional, regional and at the global levels too. It was the regime of Murtala since independence that first set up a committee known as the Adedeji Committee to examine Nigeria's foreign. It was based on the report of the committee that in June 1976 Obasanjo identified Nigeria's foreign policy to include; The defense of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity; The creation of necessary political and economic conditions in Africa and the rest of the world which will facilitate the defense of the independence and territorial integrity of all African countries while at the same time fostering national self reliance and rapid economic development; The promotion of equality and self reliance in Africa and the rest of the developing world; The promotion and defense of justice and respect for human dignity, especially the dignity of the black man; and the defense and promotion of world peace [Adefore, 1979, Chubundu, 2002, Gamabari, 1975].

Nigeria's foreign policy it should be noted has faced a lot of criticism by scholars for lacking any specific ideology that is Nigerian. The foreign policy and objectives adopted at independence were explained by scholars as vague and abstract. However, the emergence of such foreign policy objectives at independence were as a result of what was called a contrived federal balance between three ethnically and politically divided federal states. Explaining that the political rivalry and tensions between the three regions in Nigeria at independence prevented the evolution of any specific Nigerian ideology as well as the emergence of any charismatic national leader who could be identified as the voice of Nigeria. The characteristic conservatism of the foreign policy of Nigeria at independence was interpreted as weakness or lack of sovereignty. The evolution of the foreign policy came to be associated with the

uncertainty of Nigeria's political leadership's domestic political hold. To formulate a policy, the leadership was faced with problems of internal disunity and an unstable federal political balance. And to create a foreign policy, it became necessary to bridge the gap between internal disunity and the wider notion of 'Nigerianism'. And in the absence of any characteristic or cohesive nationalism, the political leadership tried to project Nigeria's foreign policy objectives into a wider pan-Africanist framework [Sinclair, 1983]. According to Sinclair "an African consciousness, far stronger than any Nigerian consciousness had been the motivating factor of the pre-independence nationalist movements and had a huge influence on the political leaderships socio-political experience". Michael Sinclair in his article states categorically that "the inability of the political leadership at independence to draw upon any national value hierarchy or objective in the formulation of an international role which would enjoy the united support of the Nigerian nation, led to the adoption of a more abstract, and less domestically sensitive, continental whole inevitable".

Sinclair's article appears to have taken a look at Nigeria's foreign policy from its very roots and given explanation to how the pan-Africanist ideology adopted was managed by succeeding administrations after that of Balewa, including those of Gowon, Murtala and Shagari. He interpreted the vagueness of the foreign policy statements of Nigeria's political leaders as unspecific, and not different from objectives of the entire African continent. The foreign policy objectives according to him did not try to show Nigeria's aspired role in the international arena which is centred on the "pursuit of national interest", which is often referred repeatedly as the sole parameter of Nigeria's foreign relation, but which painfully remained largely undefined and intangible. The failure or inability of Nigeria's political leadership's perception of the country's predestined leadership in Africa and its perception of the external environment is due mainly to internal or domestic instability as observed by Sinclair. He also looked at the vagueness and abstract nature of the foreign policy objectives of Nigeria as an attempt to transpose the inherent conservative objectives of the Nigerian nationalists like sovereignty, self reliance and equality to the wider African and global level and by so doing formalize the image perceived by Nigeria's political leaders as being rightfully Nigerian, but which lacked the ideological wherewithal to be reinforced.

However, on a much higher level, Sinclair argued that Nigeria's leadership elite perceived their foreign policy options to be limited by a degree of historical determinism, which appeared to have dictated a strong economic and psychological commitment to Britain and by extension the west. And that such commitment did not give any room for any doctrinaire devotion to non alignment in cold war period by Nigeria. Secondly, Sinclair argued that at Independence, Nigeria found itself "curiously isolated in west African regional terms", so long as Ghana under Kwame Nkrumah was politically opposed to Nigerian and was in collusion with opposition political factions within Nigeria. Nigeria as a result of its conservative alliance was seen to have been ideologically opposed to Nkrumah. And within Africa at that time Nkrumah of Ghana, Sekou Toure of Guinea and Modibbo Keita of Mali had due to rhetoric of transience, effectively usurped the political leadership in Africa and by implication constrained Nigeria in its foreign policy options. Again Nigeria is seen to be surrounded by Francophone states and perceived this as a threat to its leadership role in the continent. Especially given the fact that the Francophone states had formed a very strong bloc in their relations with France, and coupled with the ambition of France to create an independent role in Africa free from British or American influence. Such ambition appeared to have triggered a kind antagonism between the different spheres of influence in Africa. Two foreign policy imperatives came to be identified for the post independence Nigerian leadership. One was that there was a need to exert Nigerian independence and maintain some credibility with the leadership of the emergent African states. Two, There was the need to focus the national objective on an issue which would unite the support of all Nigerians and provide a distraction from the domestic rivalry in a singular national purpose and commitment. And that issues of South Africa and Apartheid appeared to have created a focus for many African states to unleash their diplomacy in order to come to terms with their domestic and international problems in the post colonial period. The issues appeared to have helped structure the African continental value hierarchy, as well as continental objective and also internationalise the African condition. The Apartheid issue was perceived as a threat in the entire continent, but at the same time provided an opportunity for Nigeria to fulfil one of its fundamental foreign objectives of international role. It was observed that through the process of diplomacy over several years, Nigeria's foreign policy has evolved from the abstract and vague to the assertive and specific. And since independence Nigeria's foreign policy imperatives remain the same, though gone through little peripheral changes. These changes are only seen in terms of economic and military capabilities, but the basic imperatives remain largely unchanged. Two imperatives came to be identified; First, is the need to manifest and maintain domestic political stability and national unity, and two, the need to exert its "predestined" leadership role in Africa, in accordance with the pan-Africanist sentiment and objectives. Nigeria is seen to have tried to create a perceptual image of national unity that concurrently shields the domestic stability from external demands and maximises the country's importance in African affairs and by implication world affairs according Michael Sinclair.

3. Realism Theory and Nigeria's New Global Role Under President Muhammadu Buhari

The desire to protect national integrity is what directs a nation's foreign policy which is also explained as "the face a nation wears to the world" [Keneth Pyle, 2008]. It was also observed that states acquire different styles of being and behaving that persist through time, producing traits or what Montesque called "the spirit of a nation" that crucially influences a nation's international behavior [Raymond Aron, 1966]. Foreign policy has since time immemorial remained an important aspect of statecraft and has often taken the lead in directing the conduct and affairs of states. Even before the treaty of Westphalia that saw the emergence of modern nation states under the principle of "sovereignty", many principalities in Europe, America as well as certain kingdoms and empires in Africa and other parts of the world have pursued foreign policy in their relations with other principalities, kingdoms or empires. Foreign policy or diplomacy it appears is inherent in the basic idea of the existence of distinct communities and in human nature as observed by "Classical Realism" scholars. And even in those days power has always been a decisive factor in how certain kingdoms, principalities or empires conducted diplomacy or foreign relations between themselves. Security has often been an important consideration when it comes to foreign policy or relations between different communities, nations or empires. This leads to the arguments in recent times on offensive and defensive realism and the question of whether states are security maximisers or power maximisers [J.Mearsheimer, 2001, 2006]. Most at times security is jeopardised as a result of conflicts related to economic activities or just the pursuit of power by the different entities existing at any particular time. As observed by scholars, the international system even in the ancient period is characterised by anarchy, and there were no rules and no restrictions with regards to how states or empires should conduct their relations with each other, and powerful states sometimes are seen to usurp or invade other states for simple or no reasons at all. And today the issue of foreign policy cannot be relegated to the background if in days past it constituted an important aspect of statecraft. Nation states have had to conduct their relations with other states with caution, careful and calculated policies. It is for this reason that many scholars at different times emerged to offer advice as to how states should carry out their affairs without risking the security and prosperity of their respective states. And in this regard students of international politics and observers of the realist school or realism theory which is also known as "timeless wisdom" will immediately bring to mind the names Thucydides [C.460-406 BC] and Niccolo Machiaveli [1532], as well as Morgenthau [1948] in recent times.

If African states had during the time of colonial rule pursued a policy that was centred on the independence of the entire continent, it must be understood that they have now achieved sovereignty and have become state actors in the international system pursuing independent interests. And these African states are still playing different roles at the regional and sub-regional levels through the AU, ECOWAS etc. And again if all states in Africa have achieved statehood, and statism is considered as the unit of analysis in the international system and states are considered the main actors; it then goes to show that despite the solidarity existing among African states, the various states may have differed in their pursuits of interests in different places, and at the same time these states differ in their history, sizes, strength and resources, and as a result may have different goals and objectives as states and may for this reason differ in their approaches with regards to foreign policy or relations. It may have been justified at the time Nigeria adopted Africa as the center piece of its foreign policy even based on what is known as the theory of harmony of interests, and even now. Harmony of interest tends to suggest for instance that by promoting the interest of other African states, Nigeria is also promoting its interest and prosperity at the same time [www.importanceofphilosophy.com/ethics_harmonyofinterest]. And even now Nigeria must continue to play a considerable role in the regional and sub-regional integration processes that are taking place. But that Nigeria as a state, must have a foreign policy that is independent of the interest of other African states even if such a policy will likely promote the interest of fellow African states indirectly. It is worthy to note that integration is taking place on two different levels, at the global level and the regional level. Cooperation is therefore taking place at the two levels simultaneously, and that the interests of nations may differ at the global level. Also it must be understood that the interests and aspirations of states differ from one another and is determined by a number of factors including history, economy and culture which are not the same. Integration itself appears to have led to the creation of many supranational institutions across the globe which it is argued appeared to have usurped the powers of nation states. Though other scholars argue that certain decisions taken by these institutions were the outcome of the decisions and negotiations of nation states and therefore see such institutions as controlled by nation states. However, there is no denying the fact that supranational institutions exercise great influence in international affairs and some have to an extent limited or hindered the process of globalisation, especially when we are looking at regional supranational institutions. This limitation can be a plus or a minus depending on nation states and their various interests and aspirations.

It is for this reason that it is deemed necessary for Nigeria as a country to review its foreign policy by diversifying its interest within this globalising world. Africa is the continent of the future according to researches conducted and considering Nigeria's position in Africa, its size, population and resources, it appears to have been positioned

properly for a greater role far beyond the African continent though relying on its strength in Africa. Since the end of the cold war, the international system appeared to have undergone a serious transformation and has seen the emergence of new threats to peace and stability in different parts of the world. The rise of trans-national groups has led to new responses to problems such as terrorism and other forms of violence that need the cooperation and assistance of states beyond the shores of Africa. And in consideration of these changes, Nigeria as a big player in the African continent must get more involved in world affairs and widen its interest and projects in world politics to be able to ensure its security and progress among other nations. To restrict Nigeria's role in supranational institutions only to a regional level is deny the nation the opportunity to achieve security, growth and progress and to deny the nation a place in global affairs, commensurate to its standing and position on the African continent as a power. Nigeria must seek observer status in certain supranational security and economic cooperation organisations such as the E.U, NATO, SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) among other important and influential supranational institutions in the world today if only the nation is to realise and take its place and position in world affairs. The pursuit of such aims is justified by the rules and objectives of international conduct which are identified in terms of security, economic development and general progress of the Nigerian State. For instance Nigeria's relations with the EEC predates the Gowon era and even during the Gowon era, Nigeria had led a meeting of African, Caribbean and Pacific Island states (ACP) in 1973 with a view to forge a common front in their relations with the EEC. The meetings led to the signing of the "Lome Convention". The objective of the convention at that time was to promote trade between the contracting parties, cognizance of their respective level of development and the need to gain more benefits and improve the condition of access of their products to the EEC market. The EEC was reported to have guaranteed access for a wide range of products, about 96% of ACP products in return for most favoured treatment in EEC trade with ACP states [Martins Nijhoff, 1976]. This shows Nigeria's position *visa viz* Europe and Africa and showing established connections already exist and can be built upon. It is also worthy to note that the relations of certain nations and even Turkey's EU bid though aided by geography initially started with the EEC after the signing of some protocols in 1950's.

There is no better time to review the nations foreign policy than now, under the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari. The new administration has come into power with a lot of goodwill within and outside Nigeria, with a reputation for integrity which appears to have gradually started redeeming the image and dignity of Nigeria as evidenced in the recent trips and interactions of President Buhari and other world powers. 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. This was followed by an invitation by the U.S. President Barack Obama in July shortly after President Buhari was sworn into office [The Guardian, 2015]. There seems to be an opportunity hanging somewhere to be utilised in the conduct of Nigeria's foreign relations at this time, such opportunity is waiting to be discovered. Writing in his famous and celebrated book "The Prince", Niccollo Machiavelli observes that "the ultimate skill of a state leader is to accept and adapt to the changing power-political configurations in world politics". And again 'Raison d'etat' or reason of state as agreed by Classical Realists is the most fundamental principle of international conduct [Machiavelli, 1961]. The renowned historian Friedrich Meinecke described it as a state's first law of motion. According to the realists, 'raison d'etat' tells the statesman what he must do to preserve the health and strength of the state. Meinecke the historian and realist insists that since the state has been identified as the main actor in international politics, it must pursue power, and that it is the duty of the statesman to calculate rationally and take adequate steps to perpetuate the life of the state. The realist theorists agree that the life of any state can never be guaranteed due to the simple fact that the use of force in the form of warfare is a legitimate instrument of statecraft. The international environment is identified as a lawless arena and that power remains the decisive factor with regards to international politics. It is for this reason that realists disagree that morals and ethics plays a role in international politics. Among many realist thinkers, Machiavelli is known for notoriously warning state leaders against adhering to traditional morality in international politics, adding that political "necessity and prudence" should guide the conduct of states in international affairs. Proponents of *raison d'etat* are seen to advocate two moral standards for states; one for citizens within the state and another standard different in its external relations with other states [Meinecke, 1957].

As a matter of fact, it is not only classical realists that view power as decisive factor in international politics, but that a careful examination of "Structural Realism" will show the importance of power in international politics and will further justify the fact that Nigeria must seek more relevance and power among other states. Structural realists conclude that international politics is essentially a struggle for power, which they often attribute to security competition and inter-state conflict due to lack of authority above states and the distribution of power in the international system. Structural realism came to be commonly associated with "Waltz theory of international politics". In his theory, Waltz defined the structure of the International system in terms of three main elements-

organising principle, differentiation of units, and distribution of capabilities. According to Waltz's theory, unit level variation does not have any relevance when explaining international outcomes. Waltz points out clearly that of the three elements, the distribution of capabilities across units is of fundamental importance. Structural realists maintain that the distribution of power in the international system is the key independent variable to understanding important international outcomes, including alliance politics and balance of power. Structural realists generally try to provide a ranking or ordering of states so that they can be able to differentiate and count the number of Great Powers that exist at any particular point in time. According to the structural realists, it is the number of Great Powers that in turn determines the structure of the international system. Waltz it is worthy to mention was quoted in a passage saying "because power is a possibly useful means, sensible statesmen try to have an appropriate amount of it" [Waltz, 1979]. This is the time for Nigeria to take a step into the world.

However, several challenges appear to have hindered or may hinder Nigeria's path to a successful and proactive foreign policy. These challenges are mostly related to domestic issues, nationalism and issues of identity continue to remain an issue in the politics of Nigeria. Foreign policy appears more effective when nationalism at the domestic level is active. National unity and economic development are necessary ingredients for a successful foreign policy as seen in Japanese history since the ancient period. The domestic challenges facing Nigeria have not been absent in the lives of certain nations that now stand as powers in the international system. National character sometimes develops over a long period of time, and is most at times determined by a nation's history, experience and geography. So the fact that these challenges exist does not in any way mean that Nigeria's foreign policy should not be reviewed and that Nigeria's role in the international system should not be re-examined. Sometimes the awakening of national consciousness is determined by the policies and actions of the leaders of nation states and Nigeria is no exception to this pattern of growth and awareness. The growth and development of many nation states is often seen as the result of the actions and inaction of their leaders from generation to generation.

4. Japan's Realism Model, IR Theory and the Third World Nations

A careful look at Japan's history and foreign policy that is likely to guide Nigeria in its foreign relation is that Japan's international behavior has been marked by pragmatic and often opportunistic pursuit of power. Japan has never been motivated by utopian visions of the future or universal ideals as shown in Kenneth Pyle's book titled "Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose" in the chapter captioned "Japan's national style". Akira Ariye was quoted in this book saying "Japan's foreign policy has been pragmatic and opportunistic and described it as a foreign policy without ideological principles" [Kenneth Pyle, 2008]. The only ideology of the Japanese state as shown in the book was "devotion to the power of the state". It will appear important to draw a parallel with Nigeria's foreign policy here. Michael Sinclair had in his article titled "An Analysis of Nigerian Foreign Policy: The Evolution of Political Paranoia" argued that at independence Nigeria's foreign policy was vague and unspecific, but was created not based on a Nigerian ideology but on wider notion of African consciousness. The foreign policy was marked by the inability of the political elites to draw upon any national objective or hierarchy value in the formulation of an international role which could enjoy the support of the Nigerian nation. Although in the same article Sinclair did confess that the African centred policy did pay off and that Nigeria's foreign policy due to the Apartheid struggles became specific and clear. And "Domestic stability and Leadership of Africa" came to be identified as its main national objective after several years of vague foreign policy. Nigeria appears to have achieved its foreign policy objective of leadership in the African continent but has not been able to move beyond that to a higher objective. Japan did not limit its foreign policy objective to regional hegemony alone, but rather devoted all its effort to amass more and more power, and always tried to measure its standing alongside other powers. Japan's international behavior is seen to have been shaped by six principles and will be presented so that it may provide some lesson on foreign policy and national development for Nigeria as a country. these six principles or patterns are agreed to be products of history that appeared to have forced the Japanese to adopt a realist approach in its foreign relations.

The first pattern of Japanese response to structural changes in the international system is "Attentiveness to Power". Despite the fact that it well known that the pursuit of power is universal in international politics, Japan's pursuit of power in the past 150 has been seriously determined and consistent, Japan was described as striking in its fundamental realism, its respect for power distribution and for the sources of power in the international system. Japan was ready to adapt its policies and institutions in order to accommodate itself to the conditions of the external world. Another pattern is "Pragmatism and Weakness of Transcendent and Universal Ideal". This pattern is explaining Japan's pragmatic and opportunistic pursuit of power. Another is "Adaptation and Accommodation". Japan's sensitivity to balance of power explains its behavior in terms of accommodation and adaptation, in order to offset vulnerability and insecurity. The adaptive policy makes it possible to revise domestic policies to suit the external environment. The Japanese in their realism sought to be guided by the direction of flow of events or what they called "the trend of the times" and act in accordance-seeking not to change it, but rather to move with it in ways that would

be of advantage to the Japanese state. The Japanese are said to gauge their leaders based on their capability to gauge the trend of the times and to react to opportunities that present themselves. Again “Autonomy and Regional Hegemony” is among patterns of behavior observed in the Japanese response. This was in response to the infringement of Japan’s sovereignty at a point in its history. To escape dependence on foreigners, the Meiji leaders stressed that self reliance was essential because Japan was surrounded by predatory imperial powers. However, this did not prevent alliances, which the Japanese viewed as marriages of convenience that would eventually pave the way for autonomy. Among other patterns observed also is “Emulation and Innovation”. Japan is well known for its tradition of cultural borrowing. The Japanese are described to have an extra ordinary degree of openness for borrowing in their culture. The first great period of borrowing from China cited by the Meiji leaders has been called the most systematic effort in world history before modern times of a less developed society to learn from a more developed one. The Meiji leaders were also quick to turn to the west in selecting from a variety of national models, institutions best suited to bring Japanese power into the modern era. Japan’s leaders were seen to have gone to an extra ordinary length to emulate the successful institutions of the western world. Japan is said to have remained isolated for several years until the seventh century after the rise of China. It was the glory of China that led the Japanese to try to create in Japan a replica of China. And the last of these behavior pattern of Japan is “Rank and Honor”. Japan’s leaders recognised the importance of status and prestige in their understanding of the international system. Japan brought to its participation in the international society a highly developed and elaborate culture of honor. Throughout its modern history, Japan has measured its standing against other powers in accordance with modern structural realism. The goals of Japan was always to be recognised as a first rank country [Keneth Pyle, 2008].

The times have changed and it is not impossible for an African country or third world state to apply international relations theories in her relations with the world as many scholars seem to believe. There is evidence atleast that shows that there are exceptions to the categorization of less developed nation’s ability to adopt such theories in the foreign relations. Many scholar appeared to have relied on one of the leading Neorealist thinkers Kenneth Waltz, whose thought on structural realism was examined previously. Waltz had been of the opinion that a general theory of international politics is necessarily based on great powers. Such an assertion was made by Waltz in 1979 after his book “Theory of International Politics”, and the assertion was not challenged more than thirty years after the book was published. There has always been a kind of consensus among scholars that International Relations theories cannot be directly applied to African states. And many reasons were advanced to explain this impossibility, and is usually related to weak institutions, fragility or failed states. Sometimes scholars described the continent’s borders as irrationally created by the colonial powers and this has resulted in the creation or emergence of decentralised states that lacked or failed to develop national identities and have remained internally divided [Vallings, Moreno-Torres, 2005, Herbst J, 2000]. Neorealists contend that structural imbalances in third world or developing states has made it impossible to use IR theories to explain the behavior of these states. This they argued is due to the fact that the foundational principle of domestic hierachy and anarchy in the international system is opposed by third world states. And that what obtains is international hierachy and domestic anarchy.

For this reason, different scholars tried to explain the behavior of third world or developing states with some modifications. Scholars like Robert Jackson see these states as an alternative political actors that function in a dissimilar manner with conventional IR theories due lack of domestic authority and national capabilities as against other developed states whose behavior pattern is seen to tally with most IR theories [R.H. Jackson, 1990]. Mohammed Ayooob is seen to suggest or proposed what came to be known as “Subaltern realism” for the developing world which is expected to make clear the distinction between domestic and interstate conflict. Ayooob tries to see internal conflict as state making thereby advocating the extension of IR theory to the developing world [M.Ayooob, 2002]. Yet another scholar Stephen David was seen to have come up with a theory that focussed on the realist concept of balancing and argues that instead of balancing against foreign threats, the leaders of developing states should balance against internal challengers [A. Vinci, 2008]. In an article titled “IR Theory as Politics, International Politics as Theory: a Nigerian Case Study” by Emily Meierding at the University of Chicago, the assertion of these scholars was dismissed for lack of merit. Emily argued in her article that a generalised analysis of the situation of all developing states bahavior pattern cannot stand, and that the states differ in their behavior and capabilities, hence argued that there are exceptions to such generalised explanations. Emily provides the case of Nigeria as an example, describing Nigeria’s behavior as convergent with that of the traditional great powers despite internal disunity and division. Emily notes that since independence Nigeria has possessed a competent foreign affairs apparatus which has remained under the exclusive control of the ruling central authority. This according to Emily is inspite of many irregular government and regime transitions. Nigeria according to Emily possesses a rationalist view of the international system and that the capability of Nigeria’s foreign policy and those of the most developed and consolidated nations differs only quantitatively but not qualitatively. Emily was of the opinion that if main stream IR

theories are useful approximations of reality “we should expect them to have explanatory value in the case of Nigeria” [Emily, 2010].

Emily was of the opinion that even Neorealism, which is the most critical of third world as regards IR theories will be relevant to Nigeria’s international relation, especially given Nigeria’s sub-regional power status. Emily noted in her article that local hegemony has attracted little attention or recognition within IR theory and that their international positions and foreign policy preferences make them analytically different from traditional middle powers like Canada or Sweden. Nigeria it was noted in Emily’s article categorized by Eduard Jordan as emerging middle powers, along with South Africa and Brazil. These states irrespective of whatever categorization or label, are seen to have become prominent international actors, initially involved in economic matters, increasingly in political negotiations on issues of climate and change. And more recently Nigeria and states like Turkey came to be identified and labelled as the “Mint States” as a result of the rapid economic/political development of the two states [BBC, 2014]. It is clear that IR theories do really apply to Nigeria’s international behavior, its foreign policy and interactions in the international system. Despite Nigeria’s domestic challenges, its foreign policy principles of seeking continental dominance and hegemony has given the nation a position in world politics, and has given the nation a role similar to those of the “Great Powers” but within Africa. And the assertions above appear to converge with the need for Nigeria to become more involved in world affairs and aspire to higher status by seeking participation in supranational institutions like EU, NATO and SCO as an observer. This seems true especially if Nigeria’s trade and economic relations with the EU states on the one hand, the countries of China, India and the Asian tigers of Malaysia and Indonesia is taken into consideration. Nigeria has traded with the EU and the U.S. states since independence, in different commodities including oil. In recent times China, India and other Asian states have become some of the biggest trade partners that Nigeria has ever had as country, and Nigeria remains the biggest across the African continent. Therefore, if trade alone is taken into consideration, Nigeria deserves a place in the Asian Shanghai Cooperation Organisation as well the European Union as an observer or otherwise. Such position will provide the nation the needed opportunity to get involved, negotiate and debate trade policies between the African states and Nigeria as nation and the EU states and Asian states as well and this will ease trade and bilateral relations between the three continents of Europe, Asia and Africa. Nigeria has not been deeply involved in the Middle East politics, has not shown interest as either a mediator in Iraq or Syria, and has not joined the coalition against ISIS in both Iraq and Syria, and is as a result not a force to reckon with in the middle East region despite the importance it occupies in world politics.

5. Conclusion

This paper has indeed shown the necessity for the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari to review Nigeria’s foreign policy from an African hegemon to a global player. Not only did the paper show the necessity to do so but also showed the possibility for such a shift by making clear Nigeria’s eligibility to apply IR theories to its foreign relations based on studies conducted by other scholars that showed the importance of local hegemony especially from structural or neo-realism perspective. Many scholars and analysts have tended to look at the applicability of IR theories by third world nations as an impossibility, but recent researches conducted have proved particularly the case of Nigeria to be different. Again the paper has provided a model and outlined the patterns of Japan’s realist response since the ancient period so as to provide a guide to Nigeria’s leadership with regards to the nation’s international behavior or conduct. Nigeria as the paper has shown stands to prove its mettle and take a chance in the international community in the conduct of its foreign relations considering its potential as a hegemon and the biggest market in the African continent. The present administration of President Buhari as observed in this paper is properly positioned to change the fortunes of Nigeria and its relations with the outside world, particularly at the global level, if only it will diversify its interest, act and come up with policies that would utilise the opportunities that exist for the country in the scheme of things in this ever changing globalising world.

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