

An Overview of Nigeria and Morocco Bilateral Relations under Buhari's Administration

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Abstract

The Bilateral relationship between states has remained a pathway to national development over the years. Nigeria and Morocco has a lot of things in common ranging from religion to economic frontiers. Trade between states is central to fostering of relationships. This paper examine the conceived trade relationship of the Buhari administration (2015-2023) which is in line with it Foreign Policy path between the Kingdom of Morocco and Nigeria in an attempt to make gas scarcity in Africa a thing of the past and create job opportunities to youths across the continent. The authors investigate the relevance of the project and advised government of the states involved to complete it despite all odds for the benefit of their citizens and for the growth off their state's economy. The paper makes use of secondary methods of data collection to sort materials from books, writings, newspapers and journals. Elite theory was adopted to show how elites will carry out any policy they feel will be beneficiary to their states. The conclusion was, since the Buhari administration left office without concluding the pact; the Tinubu led administration should complete the project in earnest for the good of the nation.

Keywords: Nigeria, Morroco, Bilateral Relations, Buhari's Administration.

Introduction

The Buhari administration came to power on May 29th, 2015 after the stint of Goodluck Jonathan who was willing and very agreeable to have a peaceful transition of power. It has three cardinal and prelate mandates of; Security, Economy and total war or fight against Corruption as central tenets of the administration focus. The administration emerged on the core ground of its zero tolerance to corruption and willingness to build the economy and make life worthwhile for all citizens, certainly and visibly, this can't be said to have been success overtime. Many saw the coming of the administration as an era of renaissance, rebirth and new growth for the nation because expectation for a new form of leadership was thick as solid expectation from many Nigerians who felt the need for new hands in leadership was necessary. Many members of the comity of states looked forward to partnership with the leadership of the nation because of the assumed new phase to national growth. The leadership was viewed by the aged generation and advanced population as that which time has come prepared to take Nigeria to a paradise journey and to the Promised Land in all ramifications (Abutu, 2016; Terwase, Talib, & Zengeni, 2015).

Prior to the administration commencement of duty, corruption was said to be the most troubling and worrisome aspect of the Nigerian economy hence, the time for revival and change was sacrosanct in other to salvage the nation from complete collapse. The Foreign Policy of the administration has been central on its thriving to reconcile the nation with it Foreign Partners. One of the countries the government of Mohammadu Buhari has partnered with over the past

seven (7) years is the Kingdom of Morocco, because of the years of friendship the two countries has shared together in diplomatic relations and religious tourism and exchange decades ago.

Ejifoma (2022) outline the successes of the Buahri government despite challenges in the following areas; housing, digital economy, oil and gas, legislative reforms, executive orders, infrastructure, power, solid minerals, agriculture, social investment and poverty alleviation, education, health and basic healthcare provision fund, fiscal, trade, monetary and investment, identity management, asset recovery, security, justice reform, COVID19 response among others. According to the author, the leadership of the President has done extremely well in those sectors and still need the support of the citizens to carry on its mandate to the fullest before leaving office in 2023.

The primary concerned of this chapter is to look at Buhari's administration bilateral affairs with the Kingdom of Morocco to identify the relevance and necessity, benefit and impact plus the '*furisticness*' of the project to this bourgeoning republic. Certainly, the debate of whether the administration has succeeded in providing dividend of democracy as promised is not relevant here because, our focus is to look at it Foreign Policy decisions and bilateral relationship with the North African Country and garner the benefits the link and partnership with the country could bring to Nigeria, west Africa, ECOWAS and other African states respectively.

It will be good to state also that, no country can survive alone because the quest for survival is what world leaders engage in daily to bring goods and service to their citizens through bilateral and multilateral engagement of other states. Nigeria as a country can't exist in a vacuum and oblivion hence, the necessity of the bilateral relations on trade and investment with the Kingdom of Morocco is important and necessary. Globally, no state has it all. No country can exist with symbiotic relationship and interdependence with other states. The idea of this administration relating with it African counterpart is welcomed wholeheartedly by all well.

In the view of Olusegun (2022), the administration of President Buhari has fared well in education funding and health service provision which corroborated with the postulation of an American statesman Gerald Rockefeller "*if you don't have good education and good health, then I feel society has let you down*". According to TETFUND, two (2) trillion naira has been expended on capital intervention in tertiary institutions and health has gained a lot of intervention fund from the administration considerations as well over the past seven (7) years.

Certainly, in a country that imports almost everything and export less, bilateral relations with emerging global power like the Kingdom of Morocco is very fundamental because, a positive cooperation will strengthened the root of the nation's economy and enable the country to compete favorably and comprehensively with other states and its counterparts alike without hitches. It is a commendable feat for the Nigerian government to enter into solid and sound agreement with states in Africa and across the globe for the purpose of economic, growth, progress and national image and identity development. Nigeria economy since 1960 has been in a state of total wobbling and spinning towards retrogression. Good thinking and progressive ideas as this pact signing will enable it to grow with more strength and be rooted in a good strength.

Theoretical Framework

Elite Theory:

The Elite theory can be traced back to the writings of a number of European thinkers in the years preceding the growth of fascism, particularly to Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca, both Italians, Roberto Michels, a Swiss German and Jose Ortega Y. Gasset. The origins of the theory of political elites came under discussion through these scientists. Pareto believed that every society is ruled by a minority that possesses the qualities necessary for its accession to full social and political power. Those who get to the top are the best. They are the elite and they consist of those successful persons who rise to the top in every stratum of the society and every occupation. Society consists according to Pareto of two classes:

(1) A higher stratum; the elite which are divided into governing elite, and non- governing elite.

(2) A lower stratum; the non-elite. Pareto's focus of enquiry was the governing elite, he believed, unless by a mixture of force and cunning. SP. Varma (1975) collaborate this view, he stated that the elite theory was based on the idea that every society consists of two broad categories:

(1) The selected few, who are capable and therefore, they have the right to supreme leadership

(2) The vast masses of people who are destined to be ruled. Pareto further emphasized the psychological and intellectual superiority that the elites obtained and he also extended the idea that a whole elite can be replaced by a new one and how one can circulate from being elite to non- elite.

Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941) opined that "in all societies, from societies that are very meagerly developed and have barely attained the dawning of civilization, down to the most advanced and powerful societies, two classes of people appear; a class that rules and a class that is ruled. The first class, always the less numerous, performs all political functions, monopolizes power and enjoys the advantages that power brings, whereas the second, the more numerous class, is directed and controlled by the first, in a manner that is now more or less legal, more or less arbitrary and violent and supplies the first, in appearance at least, with the instrumentalities that are essential to the vitality of the political organism" (Meisel, 1948).

The basic assumption of the elite theory is that every society is dichotomous, based on unequal distribution of power. Society therefore, is viewed by the elite theorists as being made up of those who have significant power, and make laws or define the rules which govern the rest of the society. The elite are in the minority, compared to the rest members of their society who are governed and have no significant power. Eneanya, (2009) also stressed that the essential argument of the elite theory is that it is not the people or the "masses" who determine public policy or foreign policies through their demands and action, rather, policy is decided by a ruling elite and affected by public officials and agencies.

Thomas Dye and Human Zeigler (1981) provided a summary of the elite theory:

(a) Society is divided into the few who have power and the many that do not. Only these small members of privileged persons allocate values for society. The masses do not decide policy (Anyebe, 2018).

(b) The few who govern are typical of the masses that are governed. The elite are drawn disproportionately from the upper socio-economic strata of society.

(c) Movement of the non-elite to elite positions must be slow and continuous to maintain stability and avoid revolution. Only the non-elite who have accepted the basic elite consensus can be admitted to governing circles.

(d) The elite share a consensus on the basic values of the social system and the preservation of the system.

(e) Public policy does not reflect demands of the masses but rather the prevailing values of the elite. Changes in public policy will be incremental rather than revolutionary. Incremental changes permit responses to events that threaten a social system with a minimum of alteration or dislocation of the system.

(I) Active member of the elites are subject to relatively little direct influence from apathetic masses. The elite influence the masses more than masses influence the Elite.

Policy is the product of the elite, reflecting their values and sewing their ends, one of which may be a desire to provide for the welfare of the mass. The membership of the elite class is not constant but fluid. It keeps on changing as an elite group seizes to be as soon as it loses the aptitude to command and exercise political control this process is referred to as the circulation of elites; Pareto and Mosca agree to this. This is brought about by the fit that every elite class must get to a point of decadence. And this has been in government all over the world. In Nigeria for example, the leadership dictating the foreign policy has been changing overtime with different ways of carrying out those objectives. Each government looking at the country's national interest in its own way and this brings about circulation of elites.

This theory has also been criticized. At the fore-front of the criticism are the group theorists whose major point of contention is that the elite theory tends to defend the status quo. Some scholars such as Barbook (1975) "see elite theory as a tautological view of the world". Robert Dali! (1961) dismissed elite theory as "merely an attempt to divide society into classes." The elite theory consists of a homogenous group that is conscious of its power and coherence. This disagreement is based on the argument that there are different elite groups in the society, that is:

1. Educational elite: Elites are educated to govern. While common public education is often designed to educate the general population to produce knowledgeable and skilled citizens, the elite approach to education is often presented of a more intellectual and demanding level and is geared towards producing leaders of a sort. It can be idealized as an education geared towards producing an individual capable of thinking at an intellectual level more advanced than the general population.

2. Military elite: Is a unit of soldiers picked for their competence and put in special elite units. Elite units enjoy some benefits as compared to other units, at least in the form of higher status, but often higher pay and better equipment.

3. Economic elite: Is a group of people in which the economy of the country rest on their backs. They are further established by incentives from the government and they eventually affect the economic decisions or policies of the government.

4. Political elite: Are a group of people that are politically relevant. They affect policies, are in the ruling cabal, groom younger elites to take up responsibilities within the political fold.

The elite theorists are often criticized on the sectional use to which power is put, a situation that does not benefit all in the society. The assertion by the elite theorists that society is made up of people with unequal powers and that democratic rule or equality of all cannot be attained has also been criticized.

Application of Elite Theory to Foreign Policy of Buhari in Relations to Nigeria-Morocco

Policy making process in every society has always been the responsibility of the elites and Foreign Policy making remain constantly constant within the purview of the elites. States have interests which can be refers to be their national interests and for the purposes to promote these national interests that forms the instruments of their respective Foreign Policy and the making of the nation's Foreign Policy primarily rest with the elites in the society. The elites can be political elites, educational elites, military elites, civilian government or democratic elites respectively. Decision making is centrally within their purview as the masses have no power to decide for the ruling elites. Public opinion only shapes the thought of the elites but Foreign Policy making is purely their business.

Flynn (2014) opined that, Han Morgenthau postulated that Foreign Policy is all about 'National Power' and this is by extension national interest. No nation can achieve this internal or native interest in a state void of interdependence and symbiotic relations with others like. And all those involved in this struggle are the elites. So to a large extent, foreign policy making and decisions is the main business of the elites not the masses of the states.

If the elite play an exceptionally influential part in political and social affairs as stated by Parry, national interest which lead to foreign policy of a state or country is a political issue and not all groups in the society can determine what and how a country's national interest should be represented. According to Mosca, in every society, there is and must always be a minority, which rules over the rest of the society. This selected few represent and determine what could be seen as a country's strategic national interest or foreign policy.

In Nigeria for example, many people could view her national interest and foreign policy in the choice of bilateral relationship the leaders choose to enter into for the benefit of the nation and for the purpose of building the economy like the Nigeria first foreign policy posture of this administration which is purely the thinking and position of the government to what they view as the nation's projected interests. The Elite theory is adopted as the most suitable theoretical framework for analysis in understanding and analyzing 'Buhari's Foreign Policy and it could be used in getting external support to strengthen the economy through bilateral partnership'. This is because in every society, the elites play a major role in postulating and formulation of the Foreign Policy for the citizens, though they are often few in numbers, but are known as the most relevant individuals at the helm of decision and policy making for the nation (Akinrinde, 2023).

This implies that the decision with regards to Foreign Policy taken by the oligarchy, would be binding on the masses, which have little or no input in policy making process of the country. By implication, the outcome of Foreign Policy, if negative, would have negative impact on the

nation economy as the case is in Nigeria today, national prestige and national image of the nation and by implication again in the international arena. However, elites sometime take decisions that have positive impacts for the citizens.

The Elite theory is therefore is very useful in identifying those responsible for Foreign Policy decisions and the implications such decisions have had over the years, from 1960 to 2023. In some countries, this tiny group of people who decide the policy of the nation is known as the “power elite this is where the Buhari administration belong”, especially in the United States and Nigeria. They can be called Foreign Policy or national policy elites. In the Nigerian context, the word ‘elite’ tends to assume an undifferentiated group of privileged policy makers, and anyone who has spent time inside the Beltway knows that partisanship matters a well bit. The Elite theory is adopted to explain how the Foreign Policy of Nigeria has been made and the impact it has had on the nation economy. No poor or ordinary citizen makes foreign policy for a state, it’s purely and solely the responsibilities of the elected and appointed to make laws either internally or externally for the country (Akinrinde, 2023).

Buhari’s Foreign Policy Decisions 2015-2023

According to Punch (2020), the Federal Government has reviewed the nation Foreign Policy initiative as departure from the traditional pattern adopted by the nation in the 1960’s that was Africa centric and relied on concentric circle relationship that was void of reciprocity to be ‘*Nigeria First*’. The Nigeria first policy borrowed from the US Foreign Policy objective of the Trump administration ‘*America First*’ is centered on nine (9) cardinal areas as outlined by Minister of Foreign Affairs Geoffrey Onyema to include;

1. **Building a virile and strong economy**; it is against this backdrop that entering into a pact with other states became necessary and relevance in other to enable the administration to achieve the core aim of building the economy to a stand of strong influence among the comity of states. Nigeria leadership can’t achieve this set goal of its Foreign Policy in isolation.
2. **Enlarging agricultural output**; this is clear that administration focus is on agriculture hence, the drive to enter into pact with state that could help it in fertilizer production.
3. **Enlarging power or energy sufficiency**; the administration see take this very seriously.
4. **Expansion of transport infrastructures**; the leadership pick interest in this critically
5. **Expanding business growth**; entering into pact with other states to build the nation is fundamental here.
6. **Expanding entrepreneurship and industrialization**; this is very fundamental here because without this as a foreign policy, there won’t be growth.
7. **Access to quality education and affordable healthcare**; this is said to be one of the key area the administration has taken seriously.
8. **Reduce poverty and enhance social inclusion**; the administration is has worked tirelessly
9. **Build system to fight corruption, improve governance and finally, create social cohesion and improve security for all**. This has remained the vocal focus of the administration in other to fight corruption even though many have accused the government of not doing much in this area. On improving governance and security, the government is still lagging behind but many claimed that, they have excelled exceedingly on this right.

The four cardinal facet of Nigeria Foreign Policy of the President Muhammadu Buhari regime are espoused as follows;

- a. The pursuits of external relations based on constructive engagement with nations in furtherance of our national interests and objectives. This is very key and sacrosanct.
- b. Commitment to internal peace and progress of our neighbours and other nations. This statement has been consisted since 1960's origin of Nigeria's Foreign Policy.
- c. Optimization of our comparative national advantage to promote our national image and competitiveness abroad.
- d. The continuation of a policy of non-aggression with our neighbours while ensuring preparedness to defend our national interest by legitimate means.

Nigeria-Morocco Pact: Benefits and Relevance

It was on the third 3rd of December 2016 barely a year after the emergence of the Buhari administration that Nigeria signed a bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) with it Morocco counterpart in Rabat the capital city of Morocco to build 6000km gas pipeline across 13 countries along the Atlantic coast which will also supply West Africa and Europe gas. The landlocked states of Niger, Burkinafaso and Mali shall be beneficiaries too. This was sign in a bit to strengthened bilateral relations between the two states and due to the rivalry between Algeria Africa's larger exporter of natural gas, actually the 7th in the world and the kingdom of Morocco. Olugboye (2017) posit that, the agreement was with the aim to improve bilateral trade relations and strengthen their business relationship.

Some of the significant provisions of the Bilateral Investment Agreement are:

Standards of treatment: This provision ensures substantive protection of investors by the host state usually contained in traditional treaties. It further states that investors are not only entitled to the minimum standard of treatment, but also to fair and equitable treatment, which includes full protection and security (Yackee, 2010).

Sustainability: Sustainable development is a key theme of the treaty. The promotion of sustainable development is featured in the preamble as well as in other provisions. Sustainability can be found in the definition of "investment" under Article 1(3), which requires investors to contribute to sustainable development coupled with Article 24(1), which states that investors "should strive to make the maximum feasible contributions to the sustainable development of the host state and local community".

Investors' Obligations to the Host State: Another term of the treaty is the reciprocity of the relationship between the Investor and the Host State. Unlike, the traditional treaties, the Nigeria/Morocco BIT impose a number of obligations on the investors. According to Article 14, investors must satisfy environmental and social impact assessment requirements based on standards agreed by the Joint Committee. Investors must also comply with international labour standards, uphold human rights and operate through high levels of socially responsible practices. Article 20 encourages investment, but not at the expense of environmental and social well-being of the host state; an investor in breach of this provision will be subject to civil liability in their

home state, in the event that acts or decisions lead to significant damage or loss of life in the host state.

Dispute prevention: In most traditional treaty agreements, there is provision for the amicable settlement of disputes between an Investor and the Host State. Article 26(1) of the Nigeria and Morocco BIT takes things a step further by requiring that prior to the commencement of treaty based arbitration, the dispute must be assessed through consultations and negotiations by the Joint Committee, after which the Committee has 90 days to submit relevant information about the presented case. This requirement applies to both Investor-State and State parties disputes.

The Benefits of the Pact to Nigeria

Nigeria will import phosphate from the Kingdom of Morocco and use it to produce blended fertilizer for the local market and export.

Nigeria will also produce Ammonia and export to Morocco. The Nigerian Government plans to establish an Ammonia plant at Akwa Ibom State is due to the bilateral agreement entered into with the Kingdom of Morocco. The project will broaden economic opportunities for the two nations and improve the wellbeing of the people. Other agreements are Term sheet for gas sales and aggregation agreement and MOU for land acquisition and administrative facilitation to the establishment of the multipurpose industrial platform for gas sales and aggregation agreement.

The bilateral agreement as significant to the Nigerian economy as it would accelerate Nigeria's gas monetization programme through establishment of the Ammonia plant in Nigeria and improve our balance of trade which is currently skewed in favour of Morocco, through the export of Ammonia. The agreement would also improve Nigeria's per capita fertilizer application through importation of phosphate derivatives from Morocco. There is also need "to determine manpower needs for construction and operations phase of the project and develop training programmes that will create the workforce pool from Nigeria and Morocco and design collaboration framework between Research centres in Nigeria and Morocco to develop technology solutions for maintaining the ISBL and OSBL units of the Ammonia complex.

Leverage on Research & Development to develop innovative fertilizer blends that meet nutritional requirements of Nigeria's native soil and develop project sustainability plan, to ensure seamless integration of host communities unto the project. The Presidential Fertilizer Initiative and will focus its support on taking equity investment and maximizing in-country.

Conclusion

The Buhari administration bilateral relations with the Kingdom of Morocco to be completed in 2023 before the end of his tenure are developmental and progressive in nature. If this project fails to meet the deadline, there is need for the Tinubu led administration to complete it.

The project is a step away from the cultural and religious diplomatic partnership of the both countries that has existed for years. The gas pipeline project will help to improve the export of Nigeria and increase its GDP. It will create employment to the citizens of Nigeria, the Kingdom of Morocco, Niger republic, Burkina Faso and other African countries respectively. In line with the Foreign Policy of the administration that is *Nigeria First* in nature which is a departure from

the traditional Africa centric policy that was geared toward building a strong economy via bilateral relations with states like Morocco, this has shown the commitment of the administration to foster friendship and development in the country. Nigeria has gas and need worthy partners like Morocco to partner with in other to make money and generate revenue for the country and so create job for the citizens and others across Africa.

Every decision of the Buhari administration is a result of its foreign policy with focus on building a solid and strong economy through partnership with willing states. This bilateral relation will in turn breed peaceful coexistence and create friendly environment for both countries. Buhari administration may not have succeeded in carrying out this diplomatic relations with Morocco to a successful ending, but the good thing here is that, the administration is able to chart a course that worth emulating by willing progressive states toward foreign partnership that will bring succor to the country when it project and pact finally been concluded in due season. No one can do it all and no state or leader is an island as well, if the project is not completed in 2023; the incoming government should carry it on to the hilt. Since Morocco is a Kingdom, it will always be ready to get the attention of Nigeria to conclude the pact entered into.

Foreign policy decision taken is the fundamental thing done so far in 2016 December by this administration. Morocco is a willing country that wishes to invest in Nigeria, that's what matters. Nigeria must take advantage of the pact and grow it agricultural sector by getting fertilizer supplement from the Kingdom of Morocco to boost its food production base and help the teeming farmers well.

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