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Bilateral relations and foreign policy under Nigeria's Presidents Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari, 2010-2021

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Abstract

Based on the assumption that the world has become a global society and that no entity can exist in isolation, Nigeria has continued to engage with other nations. Nigeria, being a sovereign entity, has established the goals it wishes to achieve through its dealings with other nations. This goal (s) has centered on the nation's domestic demands, often known as its national interest, which includes national security, economic prosperity, and the welfare of its population, but it appears these laudable goals are yet to be adequately realized due to her domestic challenges. The paper was therefore tasked with a critical appraisal of Nigeria's foreign policy and the evaluation of her bilateral relations under President Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari's administrations (2010–2021) in accordance with the nation's national interest. The work utilized secondary sources of data collection such as diplomatic reports, academic journals, newspapers, magazines, books and internet sources. The study concluded that the relevance of a nation's external ties should be the primary emphasis of its foreign policy. Hence, it recommended that one of the ways to strengthen Nigeria's foreign policy is to develop a robust internal security posture in order to attract more external friends. In other words, Nigeria needs to strengthen its bilateral and multilateral ties. This is necessary for Nigeria to seek assistance in times of needs and to encourage economic growth by attracting FDI.

Keywords: Bilateral Relations; Foreign Policy; National Interest; Insecurity; National policy

1. Introduction

Every nation's objective in its relations with other countries is to meet its internal demands and national interests. When a country interacts with other nations, its primary goal is always to fulfill the requirements of its own government and advance its own interests. Therefore, nations enter into diplomatic ties (which may possibly take the shape of bilateral or multilateral interactions) to obtain the collaboration and support of other states that are located beyond their borders. In other words, the purpose of a nation's foreign policy is derived from its national interest. Nigeria became an independent state in 1960, and ever since then, it has maintained its sovereign status through maintaining connections with other countries across the globe. The goals of Nigeria's foreign policy, which are written down in both the country's old and new constitutions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, serve as a map for how Nigeria interacts with other countries.

Nigeria has a sovereign nation since 1960 has continued to perform diplomatic missions abroad, and as such, these missions are conducted by the outlines of Nigerian foreign policy objectives as outlined in section 19, chapter 2 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). While numerous efforts have been made to define Nigeria's national interest in response to the changing dynamics of the global order, the aims of Nigeria's foreign policy are outlined below. promotion and defense of the national interest, which includes the safety of Nigeria's sovereignty;

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the formation of the political and economic milieu in Nigeria, Africa, and the globe, which will make possible the defense of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the African continent while simultaneously fostering national self-reliance and economic expansion; the promotion and defense of fairness and respect for human dignity, particularly the dignity of the black man; the defense and support of global peace and security; the promotion of African integration and maintenance of African unity; the promotion of intercontinental collaboration for the consolidation of universal peace and common respect among all nation-states; and the elimination of terrorism in all its forms, regard for international law and agreement, and the pursuit of peace in all its manifestations; [1][2][3][4]. Thus, in an attempt to address the issue of Nigeria's foreign policy and the utilization of her bilateral relations to foster the nation's national interest, some questions were put forward, such as; what does Nigeria's national interest actually looks like; how far is the administrations of Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari able to achieve some of the nation's foreign policy objectives through their bilateral relations? It is against this backdrop that this paper sets out to examine Nigeria's foreign policy and the utilization of her bilateral relations to enhance her national interest.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Nigeria, as a sovereign entity since 1960, has continued to carry out diplomatic missions abroad, and as such, these missions are conducted in accordance with the objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy as described in section 19, chapter 2 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). Even though there have been a number of attempts to define Nigeria's national interest in response to the changing nature of the international order, the country's own problems continue to get in the way of its efforts and performance.

Non-state actors' violent actions against the Nigerian government have altered the nature of Nigeria's foreign policy performance beginning in 2010 and continuing through 2021. In other words, the shifting geostrategic environment for Nigeria, as a result of the high direct levels of insecurity that Nigeria has been suffering over the past decade, has altered the essence of Nigeria's foreign policy. Of all the groups we are referring to, of course, is the Boko Haram sects that have launched a very serious campaign against the Nigerian State and its people, endangering the way the state conducts its internal affairs, politics, and economy. In addition to the Boko Haram activities, the country has been contending with Fulani Herdsmen, bandits, agitations from other parts of the country, and within that broad range, those clamouring for increased access to the resources of the Nigerian State, arguing that they have been marginalized and that certain sections are getting more than their fair share of the national cake, so there has been a call for more equitable distribution of national resources. Together, they paint a complete picture of a threatened state. Thus, in order to mitigate the security crisis, Nigeria formed a variety of bilateral alliances. In recent years, Nigeria has engaged in active arms procurement discussions with a number of foreign nations, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel, South Africa, Russia, France, China, etc., and this includes all the politics, terms, and conditions associated with arms procurement. In light of this context, the purpose of this study is to examine Nigeria's foreign policy and the usage of her bilateral relations.

Objectives of the Study

The aims of this study were to:

- Examine the issues connected with the formulation of Nigeria's foreign policy between 2010-2021
- Ascertain the effect of Nigeria's bilateral relations on her domestic situation.
- Suggest ways to enhancing Nigeria's bilateral relations.

Research Questions

The following questions were raised to guide the study

- What were the issues associated with the formulation of Nigeria's foreign policy between 2010-2021?
- What is the effect of Nigeria's bilateral relations on her domestic situation?
- In what ways can Nigeria's bilateral relations be enhanced?

1.2. Conceptual Framework

1.2.1. Foreign Policy

There is no universally accepted meaning of the term "foreign policy". This is due to the plethora of definitions provided by international relations specialists. Therefore, foreign policy refers to an action, plan, or guiding principle that governs

the interactions between governments. Foreign policy is conceptualized as an instrument for conducting or managing interactions between entities. It is an action plan or set of principles created by a state to define and direct its interactions with other nations, groups of nations, or international institutions. [5], views foreign policy as the state's behaviour in regard to the external environment. [6], however, maintains that foreign policy is the framework of activities developed by countries to influence the behaviour of other governments and to adapt their own actions to the international milieu. [7] considers foreign policy to be the use of political clout to persuade other governments to exercise their legislative authority as desired by the interested states. It is a relationship between forces originating from outside the territory and those operating within it. "Foreign policy" is the interaction between the interior and exterior of a state. In line with the above definition is that of [8], who describes foreign policy as both an interactive process between the domestic and global environments. It is therefore a continuity of domestic politics that translates into the pursuit of a state's national interest in the global community. Foreign policy has a significant impact on the achievement of national interests or domestic objectives that are primarily focused on the survival or stability of the region and the economic well-being of its citizens. Foreign policy encompasses the aims that a nation's leaders attempt to achieve elsewhere, the principles that give rise to those goals, and the means or instruments utilized to promote those objectives. Relations between sovereign players in the international system are the focus of foreign policy.

In light of the foregoing, foreign policy directs the goals or aspirations of a nation in its interactions with other international players. According to [9], foreign policy consists of three [3] fundamental elements: a nation's general orientations and strategy intentions toward another; the goal that a nation-state intends to achieve in its relations with other nations around the world; and the means of achieving those listed objectives. [10] links the goals of a state's foreign policy to what he refers to as the national interest, which serves as a guide for the formation of foreign policy. In conclusion, and based on the multiple definitions of foreign policy provided above, one may say that foreign policy is a state's approach toward the global environment. In other words, the state considers not just its own goals, interests, aspirations, and difficulties but also those of other entities. This implies that no sovereign country can have a meaningful guide for what it should and must not do in foreign policy unless it accepts the national interest as a guide. Countries establish and implement foreign policies to steer their external interactions and promote, preserve, and defend their essential national interests, according to a global consensus [11].

1.2.2. National Interest

Every entity in the international community, regardless of location, economic standing, political orientation, or history, has some type of national interest or objectives. In accordance with their respective subject-matter expertise, scholars and political analysts perceive the concept of national interest differently. Various scholars and foreign policy analysts have provided varying definitions of the notion of national interest. The idea is contentious and has no commonly accepted definition. As a term, "national interest" denotes the aggregate wants or interests of a state, which encompass the urgent demands of persons and groups within its jurisdiction. Based on these interests or needs, the country decides what its foreign policy goals are when it interacts with other countries in the international system.

Thus, national interest is seen by [7] as promoting the image, status, and appearance of a state domestically and internationally. Political sovereignty, the integrity of the country, pursuing the economic interests of the state, and world peace are all parts of what makes up the national interest. Inherent in the aforementioned views is the strong and ardent determination of nations to secure and retain national and territorial integrity, self-respect, and economic interests that will improve the standard of living of the state's population [12]. [13] considers national interests to be the desirable goals upon which a state's internal and foreign policy should be based. In confirmation of this, [9], noting that national interests are frequently viewed as the goals of foreign policy, asserts that foreign policy is frequently guided by national interests. It is the primary determinant of what nations do, particularly through their rulers. However, it is essential to distinguish the personal interests of a leader from national interests, as noted in [14]. Due to the fact that the state is perpetual and the people or party in government is temporary, their interests should never be conflated with that of the state when the latter's interests are in opposition to the former. For example, when individuals in authority attempt to commercialize and personalize the state, they so employ its infrastructure for their own purposes. As Ude-Umenta correctly noted, there have been instances in which leaders have indeed been criticized for jeopardizing the state's interests in order to safeguard their own or those of the government they led or served. Foreign policy is never conducted in a vacuum. The advocacy and defense of national interests is generally the principal instrument of foreign policy. Thus, national interests can also be defined as the aggregate or sum of the desires of individuals and groups inside a nation. [15] [16]. Similarly, Imoukhuede in [14], "national interest" is the summation of the objectives of a sovereign state; it is the basic motive for formulating and implementing foreign policy as a direction for actors and policymakers. Thus, national interests are viewed as a point of convergence between internal demands and global politics, as realists generally view state acts as motivated by their own self-interest. The realists are also concerned with force calculations and the state as a rational, self-interested agent pursuing security. He added that nations aim to

increase their national might in order to achieve and protect their national interests. There have been scholarly disagreements on who decides the national interests of nations. Who determines a state's national interest: the leadership or the populace? The state's leadership has the obligation to manage the state's affairs for positive transformation and a high standard of life while the citizens are immediately influenced, either positively or negatively, by the national interest of the country [17]. Consequently, the national interest of a nation-state seeks to promote national growth and, by extension, its image, reputation, and respect both domestically and internationally. Inherent in the aforementioned notion is the strong desire of states to gain and keep their political independence; protect their territory; and promote their economic interests in order to raise the standard of living for their people and maintain national security.

1.3. Theoretical Framework

This study is situated on the System theory. [18] asserts that the system theory evolved in the 1950s. The central concept is that our international relations system is organised. It conceives of nations as engaging in regular communication within a complex network of relationships derived from interaction. According to this concept, every nation participates in the global environment to some degree. So, a country's behaviour is a process of getting things from the global context and giving them back to it.

According to the system theory, the international system is the result of numerous actions, and thus, international contacts are understood as the result of a wide range of specific objectives, intentions, and anticipations. The theory posits that the international system is the result of interactions. It is strongly tied to the concept of transformation in one form or another. This is because the relationship between state behaviour and new factors is always subject to change. According to the systems theory, nations are continuously trading products and services. Hence, nations must participate in the international environment to some degree for this to occur. From the foregoing discussion, one can deduce that the entire world is a system and that the distortion of one part can have positive or negative repercussions on other parts. It also underlines the well-known fact that no nation can survive as an island and, as a result, must interact with other nations in order to attain its domestic objectives through foreign policy.

2. Methodology

This paper employs secondary sources of data collection, such as diplomatic reports, academic journals, newspapers, magazines, periodicals, books, internet sources, government announcement and proclamations.

2.1. Strategies and Achievements of President Goodluck Jonathan

As soon as President Jonathan was sworn in, he was charged with supervising the country's domestic and foreign affairs through its foreign policy. While attempting to address local challenges, he also sought the participation and help of international nations. He proceeded on a diplomatic tour overseas in an effort to rebuild Nigeria's relationships with other nations. His first significant move was a trip to the United States, where he attempted to have Nigeria removed from the U.S. terrorism watch list as a result of the 2009 failed Christmas Day bombing by a Nigerian teenager. Goodluck Jonathan adopted the economic strategy vision of 20:20 in consideration of the welfare of the Nigerian populace. The initiative was an attempt at a comprehensive transformation of the Nigerian government [19]. In other words, it was an all-encompassing plan for Nigeria's economic well-being. Its primary objective was to make Nigeria one of the twenty largest economies on the planet by 20:20. However, Nigeria reported a 7% growth rate and a \$510 billion GDP in 2014, making it Africa's largest economy.

Thus, President Jonathan's administration changed from Afrocentrism to economic diplomacy, making foreign direct investment one of his top priorities. This enabled him to attract a huge number of investors to the country, as its immediate result was the establishment and revitalization of enterprises in Nigeria, particularly in the automobile industry - Nissan, Peugeot, Hyundai, etc [20] [21].

2.1.1. Bilateral Relations

The improvement of a nation's economic sector through foreign direct investment is a crucial component of a nation's foreign policies. Consequently, national governments engage with other countries for the purpose of achieving their security and economic goals (to be strong and conform to world economic standards) in conjunction with other foreign policy goals. To get the best out of bilateral relationships, President Jonathan put more focus on getting valuable investments from other countries (external relations).

In the course of achieving its foreign policy goals, he signed a number of bilateral and multilateral trade agreements in areas such as energy, transportation, ICT, health, education, manufacturing, construction, technology, finance, agriculture, and real estate, among others, with China, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the United States, South Africa, India, Greece, Norway, Poland, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, and France.

In addition, as a result of the instability in North East Nigeria, which threatened the existence of the Nigerian state, Jonathan's administration has taken significant measures to eradicate insurgency from the country. In this regard, he met with foreign leaders on many occasions, and as a result, nations such as China, Russia, South Africa, Israel, etc., assisted Nigeria in ensuring that terrorism was limited in the country. For instance, his bilateral connection with China enabled his government to buy weapons from China. This includes satellite information and military hardware. China has also provided the Nigerian government with 120 Poly Technology Cs/VP3 armored personnel carriers, thirty AR-1 anti-tank missiles, and five CASC CH-3 unmanned aerial vehicles to aid in the fight against terrorism [22]. On February 2, 2016, the Nigerian Air Force employed an armed CH-3 UAV obtained from China for the first time to destroy a Boko Haram logistical center in the Sambisa forest. This is the first time that the Nigerian military has used a drone in its fight against terrorism [23, 24].

As seen, the government of Jonathan wrote several letters to the United States of America and other Western governments, attempting to acquire arms to deal aggressively with the terrorists. Unfortunately, while some countries replied, the US refused the requests at a period when Nigeria needed weaponry more than any other period to confront the scourge. What was more surprising was the notion that Nigeria was not begging to be handed those weapons as a gift. His leadership was willing to pay for them, but they were the flipside of his government. The same people who had made several promises to assist in bringing an end to the Boko Haram atrocities and bringing back the captured Chibok girls did everything possible to obstruct the efforts of Jonathan [25].

The gloomy response from the United States to selling weaponry to Nigeria was justified by human rights considerations and the approach in which the Nigerian military battles terrorists; so, the "Leahy Act" was passed. Invoking the Leahy Act signifies that "the United States must not supply weapons to any nation that is actively involved in human rights violations," as if the terrorists that the Nigerian army plans to confront with these weapons have the liberty to do so, but the citizens who are being protected by the military do not. In a situation when the lives of terrorists are prioritized over the lives of the population being terrorized, there is undeniably something wrong [26]. So this is one example of a clear instance where Nigeria's bilateral relations with the U.S. had failed.

On November 30, 2014, the foreign minister of Cameroon announced the formation of a coalition group to combat terrorism, including Boko Haram. This force would consist of 3,500 troops from Benin, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and Nigeria [18]. In addition, a provisional agreement to supply 7,500 African Union troops from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger was agreed at the beginning of February 2015. By the 6th of February, Chadian and Nigerian warplanes and ground forces had compelled Boko Haram militants to flee approximately a dozen towns and villages. The Nigerian military recaptured Monguno on February 17 in a concerted air and ground attack. The African Union approved the deployment of a regional force of over 8,000 troops on March 6. Also, in March 2015, it was claimed that Nigeria had hired hundreds of mercenaries from South Africa and the former Soviet Union to aid it in its fight against Boko Haram prior to the March 28th election [27].

Jonathan's government also purchased weapons from Russia, which Muhammadu Buhari eventually used against the militants. The victories gained during Jonathan's last month in office and the onslaught against terrorists were largely attributable to the delivery of various equipment from bilateral connections with countries other than Nigeria's so-called traditional Western friends. With the help of neighboring countries like Chad, Niger, and Cameroon, thousands of Boko Haram fighters were killed, and the Nigerian military took back most of the land that Boko Haram had taken over in Yobe, Adamawa, and Borno states.

2.2. Strategies and Achievements of Muhammadu Buhari

The Nigerian presidential campaign of Muhammadu Buhari, who defeated Goodluck Jonathan in the April 2015 elections, hinged on promises to improve the country's security situation. His first act as president was to replace the commanders of the army, navy, and air force.

President Buhari spent 25% of his first 100 days in office on trips, which were billed as a blitz to repair ties with countries with which the previous administration had strained relations. A closer examination reveals the weakness in this reasoning. Seven of the nine nations that Buhari visited in his first 100 days were African, and all of them could have been handled with a proper Foreign Ministry presence if Buhari had waited six months before choosing a Foreign

Minister. In short, his delay set the stage for a foreign policy strategy driven by the president. Unquestionably, one of the places where Nigeria flexes her muscles is the African Union, among other reasons, because we are one of the largest contributors to the organization [28].

2.2.1. Bilateral Relations

According to reports, Nigeria's bilateral ties under Buhari's administration were to some extent successful, particularly in terms of trade and solutions to the country's insurgency crisis. The formal visit by President Buhari to China in April 2016 released billions of dollars in infrastructure assistance, particularly for road and rail projects as well as the implementation of a 15 billion Chinese Yuan (CNY) currency swap between the People's Bank of China and the Central Bank of Nigeria. As part of an agreement between the Nigerian government and German officials, Germany has also presented assistance for the Presidential Power Initiative (PPI), a six-year program to overhaul Nigeria's electrical grid. Siemens AG will manage and execute the initiative. In addition, the Nigeria IncentiveBased Risk Sharing System for Agricultural Lending (NIRSAL) and PetkusTechnologie of Germany signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the intention to plummet the epidemic of post-harvest losses in Nigeria's Agriculture Value Chain [29].

Nigeria and the United Kingdom again pushed for the introduction of the Automatic Exchange of Tax Information (AETI) protocol once more. This Protocol would supply the Nigerian government with details regarding bank accounts, real estate, and trusts held by Nigerian nationals in the United Kingdom. It would also support the Voluntary Assets and Income Declaration Scheme (VAIDS) by allowing Nigerian tax officials to check the veracity of disclosures concerning offshore assets and income. In addition, the British government launched a \$13 million education program that will assist 100,000 students living in Boko Haram-controlled regions of the Northeast. The program will train instructors, provide them with school supplies, and ensure the safety of their schools [29].

Also, in 2019, the South Africa-Nigeria Bi-National Commission was elevated from vice-presidential to presidential level, demonstrating a renewed commitment to cooperation between Africa's two largest economies.

The Presidential Fertilizer Initiative, PFI (which entails a relationship with the Government of Morocco for the supply of phosphate and technical support), has led to the rehabilitation of fourteen [14] blending plants around Nigeria. In 2018, as part of the PFI, Nigeria and Morocco concluded an agreement (between OCP of Morocco and the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority) about the building of a Basic Chemicals Platform, specifically for the development of a large Ammonia Production Plant in the Niger Delta [30].

Additionally, Nigeria will receive 12 attack helicopters as part of the arms deal between the governments of Russia and Nigeria. Presidents Buhari and Putin reached an agreement to revive the Ajaokuta Steel Rolling Mill during the 2019 Russia-Africa Summit. The Russian government has committed to assisting with the development and operation of the plant. Additionally, Nigeria has negotiated and ratified a bilateral accord treaty with the United Arab Emirates that allows the extradition of Nigerians who commit crimes in Nigeria and then flee to the UAE. The Nigerian Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA) has been given about \$2 billion by the Buhari administration [31].

Again, the United States (USA) pledges to reaffirm its commitment to security and anti-corruption cooperation. The United States government has announced the sale of twelve Super Tucano aircraft to Nigeria, as well as the repatriation of recovered looted funds and properties that were hidden in the United States. In April 2018, the Nigerian and American militaries worked together to host the 2018 African Land Forces Summit in Abuja. This was the largest gathering of African army leaders to discuss ways to work together to make the continent safer [27].

In October 2015, Colombia dispatched a team of security experts to Nigeria in order to assist the administration and facilitate an exchange of security and counterterrorism expertise. In January 2016, a party led by Lieutenant General Tukur Yusuf Buratai visited Colombia to share information about the war against Boko Haram.

The White House announced a military aid package for African allies fighting Boko Haram on September 24, 2015. The plan contained up to \$45 million for Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria's training and other support. The White House issued a statement on October 14, 2015, in accordance with the War Powers Resolution, declaring the deployment of 300 troops to Cameroon to perform airborne ISR: "These troops are armed to provide force security and protection, and they will continue to stay in Cameroon until their assistance is no longer required" [32].

In conjunction with the United States, France and the United Kingdom have dispatched trainers and material aid to Nigeria to aid in the fight against Boko Haram. France intends to deploy 3,000 soldiers in the region for anti-terrorist operations. Canada and Israel also offered support.

In 2017, the United Kingdom implemented an emergency assistance package of \$259 million. In addition, the United Kingdom has offered Nigeria military assistance and anti-terrorism training. The British government has granted 28,000 Nigerian military soldiers Boko Haram combat training. In addition, some 40 British soldiers have been dispatched to Nigeria on a long-term mission [31].

The British government issued a press statement on August 28, 2018, detailing the newly formed partnership between the United Kingdom and Nigeria to address the threat posed by Boko Haram to the people of Nigeria. The news release provides an overview of the numerous options (including community involvement and direct engagement by the Nigerian government) for preventing and reducing the effects of Boko Haram attacks in Niger. These are clear instances of Nigeria's use of bilateral connections.

3. Conclusion

The undisputed claim is that almost every nation's foreign policy is driven by its national interests. As has been demonstrated thus far in this discussion, Goodluck Jonathan and Buhari's foreign policies were closely tied to Nigeria's national interest. In pursuit of her foreign policy goals, she has utilized her bilateral relationships to achieve some of her foreign policy objectives, including trade and security, among others.

The paper argued that both President Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari's governments took concrete actions not only in the trade aspect but also in the security aspect of the country, especially against the Boko Haram group that emerged during Jonathan's administration, from 2009 to the present; therefore, negotiations with other countries for assistance, including the purchase of weapons and financial support, were necessary in fighting the menace. Some of the steps that both governments took to encourage FDI and reduce the threat of terrorism in the country were made possible by their bilateral relationships with other countries.

Thus, the primary concern of a nation's foreign policy is the relevance of its external ties. Consequently, one of the means to strengthen Nigeria's foreign policy is to adopt a robust domestic security posture in order to attract more external allies.

Nigeria needs to build stronger bilateral and multilateral ties so that it can get help when the needs arises and attract foreign direct investment to help its economy grow.

In order to bridge the gap between foreign policies and expectations, it has become essential in current global politics for Nigeria to redefine its foreign policy objectives. Her foreign policy's goals should be changed so that they include how Nigerians as a whole hope to benefit from her interactions with other countries.

It is strongly advised that in the development and execution of Nigeria's foreign policy, career diplomats and professionals in the field of international relations and diplomacy be incorporated. Due to their greater expertise, they will be more proactive and strategic in their interactions.

Compliance with ethical standards

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There are no conflicts of interest for this manuscript.

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