

Diplomacy as a Sine Qua Non for African Developing Economies: A Score Card for Nigeria's Foreign Policy

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Abstract

In international relations, diplomacy counts as a veritable medium for the establishment, maintenance and sustenance of cooperation among nations. This study examined the extent to which Nigeria's diplomacy has succeeded in enhancing the nation's socioeconomic development in the last ten years. Data was obtained from secondary materials which include – books, journals, periodicals, and the internet. etc. The study adopted the Multi-directionality paradigm (Richelieu, 1965) as its theoretical framework while employing the methodology of content analysis. Results showed that Nigeria's diplomatic potentials have not been exhausted as her relations with many other countries have not been as robust as would be expected for a country which is seen in many circles as, “the giant of Africa”. It was therefore suggested that the nation's diplomatic machinery be strengthened within the shortest possible time.

Keywords: *Diplomacy, Foreign relations, African developing economies, Scorecard, Giant of Africa.*

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Background to the Study

All through history and at various stages of societal evolution, diplomacy has as its main purpose, to find solution to identified problems which are common to the parties involved. Modern developments which include powerful global media, have variously transformed the conduct of diplomacy and force diplomatic practitioners to measure up and deliver in the best interest of their respective peoples: the understanding of the complexity of modern diplomacy is imperative for effective diplomatic maneuvers. This implies that modern diplomacy requires practitioners who regularly sharpen and update their capacity for strategize analyses and negotiations. Knowledge is therefore, key to effective diplomatic practices. As a matter of fact, knowledge is imperative in a world in which political and socioeconomic problems bring in their wake, unfortunate developments such as political instability, conflicts of significant magnitudes, harrowing violation of human rights and the resultant displacement of considerable numbers of affected persons and the growing inequalities within and between nations.

In recent times, the influence of politics on international trade has gained acceptance in economies: Against this backdrop, many studies have emphasized the relevance of political or diplomatic relations in facilitating trade. Their argument is that diplomatic relationships between states in the forms of state visits opening trade missions, consulates and embassies are significant determinants of bilateral trade between countries (Rose, 2007; Nitch, 2007, Yakop and van Bergijk, 2011, Moons van Bergeijk, 2016). It the follows that strained political relationships between states can also determine trade flow between then. The Obasanjo administration will always be remembered for bringing back Nigeria's image in the international arena from where the Abacha regime left it. Ever since, the country's image abroad has continued to appreciate and the nation's relationship with other countries have become encouraging. One would expect subsequent administrations to continue to build upon the good relations with rest of the world which raise hope for international economic integration, regional cooperation, and attract favor from global institutions, such as the Bretton Woods institutions, the international monetary fund, etc. The point to underscore is that having enjoyed good relations with these institutions and nations, the country must have been enjoying some favor from them. The extent to which the improved relations since the Obasanjo administration enhanced the socioeconomic development of Nigeria constitutes the concern of this paper.

Objectives of the Study

Thus, this study seeks to assess the extent to which Nigeria's socioeconomic development can be enhanced though international relations (diplomacy).

Specifically, this study seeks to:

- (a) Examine the extent to which diplomacy can enhance Nigeria's political stability, and
- (b) Ascertain how much healthy international relations (diplomacy) can facilitate infrastructural development in Nigeria.

Research Questions

This study will provide answers to some questions which include-

- (a) To what extent has international relations (diplomacy) enhanced the political stability in Nigeria?
- (b) How much has diplomacy facilitated infrastructural development of Nigeria?

Literature Review

Conceptual literature

Diplomacy: According to sharp (2003), diplomacy “is a notoriously tricky term that cannot be settled decisively”. De Magalhaes (1988) sees diplomacy as commonly defined through four prisms: foreign policy, international negotiations, and the activity of diplomats. However, Sharp (2003) goes ahead to define diplomacy as a synonym for state craft, foreign policy, and international relations as well as the making of foreign policy by practitioners. Berridge's (2002) definition of diplomacy embodies Pigman's positivist approach and Murray's traditional school of thought, whereby the main purpose of diplomacy “is to enable states to secure the objectives of the foreign policies”. In the words of Diamond and Macdonald (1996), diplomacy is viewed as, “a mechanism designed to establish and maintain networks and relationships among traditional and new actors in the pursuit of shared interdependent goals” Plischke (1979), presents the most comprehensive definition of the innovative school of thought in the following manner- the political process by which political entities, generally states, conduct official relations with one another within an international environment. With the proliferation of the institutionalization of international affairs by other than classical diplomatic processes, and with the engagement in interrelations by political institutions other than states- such as international and supranational organizations, emergent political entities...diplomacy can no longer be said to be confined solely to the conduct of the international affairs or foreign relations of established national states. Generally, diplomacy may be perceived as the established method of influencing the decisions and behavior of foreign governments and peoples through dialogue, negotiation and other measures short of war or violence. Modern diplomatic practices are products of the post – Renaissance European state system. Historically, diplomacy meant the conduct of official (usually bilateral) relations between sovereign states.

Developing Countries/Economies: There are many ways to distinguish between developing and developed countries. The most common and widely used measure of development is per-capita income of a country. Per-capita income is an indicator of purchasing power of inhabitants of a country. There are two measures of per-capita income which are commonly used:

One based on gross national income and the other based on gross domestic product (GDP). Both GNI and GDP measure the overall level of economic activity and are closely related. According to the above explanation, developing countries are countries with low per-capita income. Several systems have been employed to group countries according to their level of per-capita income.

The United Nations Statistical book notes that there is no common agreement in the United Nations system concerning the terms 'developed' and 'developing', when referring to the stage of development attained by any given country or area and its corresponding classification in one or the other group. The year book divides the world into two groups. Countries in North America, Europe and the former U.S.S.R. Japan, Australia and New Zealand are said to be developed. All others are "developing".

Infrastructure: The online Etymology Dictionary (2012) puts the original meaning of the word 'infrastructure' as, "the installations that form the basis for any operation or system". In developing countries, infrastructure connotes roads and transport infrastructures. According to Kumar (2005),

There are two types of infrastructure, "hard and soft" infrastructure. Hard refers to the large physical networks necessary for the functioning of a modern industrial nation, whereas "soft" infrastructure refers to all the institutions which are required to maintain the economic, health, and cultural and social standards of a country, such as the financial system, the education system, the health system, the governance system, and judiciary system, as well as security.

Adebayo (1985) rightly observed that, "the achievement of state leaders are measured with the level and type of infrastructural development the leaders or those in position of authority engage in compared to the agitation of the people and the available resources".

Political Stability: The international consulting firm Eurasia Group cited in Sottiolotta (2013), defined political stability as the capacity of a country's political system to withstand internal or external shocks. In the perception of Williams (2014), political stability may be used to mean, "the propensity of a government collapse either because of conflicts or because of rampant competition between various political parties. Additionally, the occurrence of a government change increases the likelihood of subsequent changes. Political instability tends to be persistent. Williams believes that economic growth and political stability are deeply interconnected. Sottiolotta (2013) asserts that political stability is a controversial concept in that; a first broad definition refers to the absence of domestic civil conflicts and widespread violence. In this perspective, a country is considered rid of instability where there are no systemic attacks on persons or property within its frontiers. Secondly, classic interpretation equates stability with government longevity. Thirdly, political stability draws on the lack of structural change, that is, the absence of internally or externally induced change in the basic configuration of a polity. Hussain (2014), sees political stability as very timely competition that can be applied to everything in a country; political systems, education, business, innovation and even arts. Paldam (2016) argues that the definition of political stability can be adequately captured when conceptualized from four dimensions – stable government, stable political system, internal law and external stability.

Empirical Literature

Past and current works on the subject matter are hereby reviewed in a tabular form as follows:
Past and current studies on Diplomacy and African economies.

Table 1.

Name of researcher(s), year and Title of study	Geographical and content scope covered	Data sources and analytical tools	Findings / conclusion / recommendations
Afesorgbor (2019). Regional integration, Bilateral Diplomacy and African Trade: Evidence from the gravity model.	African states: Regional integration, bilateral diplomacy and African Trade (1980-2005)	Secondary sources. Used of gravity model for analysis.	Results indicate that bilateral diplomatic exchange is a more significant determinant of bilateral exports among African states compared to regional integration. The paper also found that the trade stimulating effect of diplomatic exchange is less pronounced among African countries that shared membership o the same regional bloc.
Lateef and Hassan (2015). Developmental diplomacy in a globalized world: The imperatives of soft power in Nigeria's external relations under the transformation agenda of President Goodluck Jonathan.	Nigeria: Developmental Diplomacy, soft power in Nigeria and transformation agenda of President Goodluck Jonathan.	Secondary sources, descriptive analysis and eclectic framework.	The study revealed that, if the growing rate of foreign investment is sustained, the foreign policy strategy of the government will effectively transform the country for good.
Sotubo and Chidozie (2014). Cultural diplomacy and national development: A study of the Nigerian entertainment industry.	Nigerian: cultural diplomacy, National development; the entertainment industry.	Both primary and secondary data were used, detailed historical, analytical and descriptive method to test the impact of the Nigerian entertainment industry on Nigeria's national development.	Findings show that while cultural diplomacy promoted Nigeria's image and international cooperation, it also enhances national development with income gotten from foreign investors and tourists. The study concludes that cultural diplomacy is a valuable indeed vital tool for Nigeria to win more friends, get international support, boost its economy and arrive at international development it recommends that cultural values should be taken seriously and regarded as equally important as political and economic structures, as it constitutes a major selling point for many advanced economies.

Theoretical Framework

The Multi-directionality Paradigm (Richelieu, 1965)

In the 17th century Europe, Cardinal Richelieu was a key thinker of continuous negotiation even during wars and in the face of lack of possible agreement in sight. This idea of continuous negotiation underscored the need to always maintain open channels of communication, to enable compromise and settlement evolve when conditions allow for them in the future time. The idea further highlighted the value of indirection or multi-directionality in diplomacy as well as the idea of negotiating for 'side effects'. These sideway pursuits could occur not merely strategically or as a devious objective of negotiation, but as a pragmatic response when settlements have been reached, informing and reformulating unsustainable policy objectives and as a means of exploring modi Vivendi in the midst of protracted disagreement (Constantine, 2012). Finally, philosophers – practitioners have reflected on strategy, often depicted as a crucial ingredient of diplomacy which underscores the means –ends methods of getting one's way with others. This theory underscores the need for continuous negotiation which is a virtue in modern diplomacy.

Methodology

This study is a descriptive analysis of the significance of diplomacy for the Nigerian development initiative. Specifically, the study sought to assess the extent to which diplomatic moves by Nigeria have enhanced the nation's developmental process. Using content analysis, data from secondary materials were analyzed in a sequence as follows on the basis of the role of international diplomacy in socioeconomic development. Since Nigeria is the focus of the study, the following questions were addressed.

Research Question One (1): To what extent has diplomacy enhanced the political stability of the Nigerian nation?

Nigeria's diplomatic measures across the globe, Africa and indeed the sub-region of West Africa, clearly shows the role of the nation's diplomacy in the achievement and sustenance of peace and political stability in the country. Its leaders have always recognized that an unstable Africa or West Africa, also manifests in the country as a nation. Thus, her foreign policy has always believed in the peace and stability of the region and sub-region. This stance is buttressed in the study by Babatunde and Uzodike (2015), titled, "Nigeria, Afro-Centrism and conflict resolution: Five decades after-How far and how well". The study argues that, having been a major force for/of peace and stability in Africa, Nigeria should strive for a balance between its commitment to Afrocentrism, and the country's homegrown challenges, particularly in the light of its declining socioeconomic realities and seemingly unending Boko Haram insurgency. Perhaps, a better testimony to Nigeria's commitment to the success of its peace-keeping endeavors is her ranking among the top five troop contributors to United National Peacekeeping missions in the world. Nigeria's commitment to the peace and stability of the African continent and the west African sub-region may be illustrated in the table 1 below:

Table 2: Nigeria's Participation in Global Peace Mission, 1960-2011

Country	Code Name	Operation	Start date	End date
Congo	ONUC	United National Operation in the Congo	July 1960	June 1964
Guinea	UNSF	United National Security Force in West New Guinea	October 1962	April 1963
Chad		OAU Peacekeeping Force, Chad	1979	1982
Angola	UNAVEM I	United Nations Angola Verification Mission I	January, 1989	June 1991
Liberia	UNONIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia	September, 1991	September, 1997
Mozambique	UNUMOZ	United National Operation in Mozambique	December 1992	December 1994
Rwanda	UNAMIR	United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda	October 1993	March 1996
Ouzo strip	UNASOG	United Nations AOZOU strip observer Group	May 1994	June 1994
Angola	UNAVEM III	United Nations Angola Verification Mission III	February 1995	June 1997
Sierra Leone		ECOMOG TASK FORCE IN SIERRA LEONE	1997	1999
Sierra Leone	UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone	October 1999	December 2005
Congo	MONUC	United Nations Organization Mission in the D.R.C	November 1999	June 2010
Liberia	UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia	September, 2003	-
Sudan	AMIS	African Mission in the Darfur	2004	2008
Sudan	UNAMID	African Union – United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur	July 2007	-
Sudan	UNMIS	United Nations Mission in the Sudan	March 2005	July 2011
Chad	MINURCAT	United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad	September 2007	December 2010
South Sudan	UNMISS	United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan	July 2011	-

Source: Compiled with references from the list of the United Nations Peace keeping Operations from 1942-2012: <http://www.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/operatoinalist.pdf>

The table above table shows that Nigeria has participated actively in a number of peace-keeping missions in Africa and West African sub region both under the ECOWAS, AU and the U.N. No doubt, these interventions are in conformity with its age-long adherence to Afro-centrism which is at a cardinal objective of the nation's foreign policy.

The issue of peace, stability and democratization of the continent an sub-region, the study by Bakare (2019), titled, “the Nigerian-Commonwealth and UN relations: Nigeria, from pariah state to exporter of democracy since 1999”, the conclusion and submission was made that, following Nigeria's return to civilian rule in 1999’, the nation has consistently used its regional

and military power to advance democracy, peace, and security in Africa. Nigeria has also been consistent and vigorous in pursuit of her African policy objectives within the commonwealth through the Harare Declaration, particularly in promoting democracy in Africa. For instance, Nigeria used its regional status and, as the chair of the commonwealth (2003-2005), resisted the military coup carried out in Sao Tome and Principe in 2003 and subsequently restored President Frederique de Menezes to power (BCC, 2003). Thus, through diplomacy, Nigeria saw the wisdom in ensuring and sustaining peace and stability of the region and sub-region as the best way to ensure here internal peace and stability.

Research Question Two (2): How much has diplomacy facilitated the infrastructural development in Nigeria?

In a study titled “the option of economic diplomacy in Nigeria's foreign policy”, Ajaebili (2011), views foreign policies as the strategies that guide the actions of governments in the international system as they spell out the objectives state leaders pursue in a given situation or relation or relationship. The study concluded that effective use of the tool of economic diplomacy will contribute immensely in making a turnaround in our otherwise prostrate economy. It was in 1987 that the Babangida administration used economic diplomacy as a major policy thrust of that regime. Also, an empirical investigation by Fasunwon (2014), on “Domestic outcomes of Nigeria's Economic Diplomacy' (1999-2007), found that, “Nigeria's economic diplomacy contributed positively to increased Gross Domestic Product and influx of Foreign Direct Investments. However, it led to job losses and did not improve citizen's ability to meet basic family needs and democratic participation.

Generally speaking, the diplomatic moves by Nigeria would be best illustrated in the activities of the leaders as the nation returned to democratic (civil rule) in 1999. This paper intends to illustrate Nigeria's diplomacy using the four nations – Brazil, Russia, India and China as examples. Together, these four countries are referred to as the BRICs. In clear diplomatic moves, leaders of Nigeria undertook several visits as follows:

Table 3: Diplomatic visits by Nigerian leaders to Brazil May, 1999 – May, 2011

Date	Leader	Focus of discussion
September 2005	President Obasanjo	Participation in the commemoration of Brazilian National Day
August 2009	President Yar'Adua	Bilateral discussions
January 2011	Vice President Nomadi Sambo	Bilateral discussion

Source: Author's compilation

Table 4: Diplomatic visits by Brazilian Leaders to Nigeria 1999-2011

Date	Leader	Focus of discussion
April 2005	President Da Silva	Bilateral discussions
November 2006	President Da Silva	To attend the 1 st Africa South American Summit.

Source: Author's own

Diplomatic exchange between Nigeria and Brazil focused primarily on trade and cultural relations.

Table 5: Diplomatic visits by Nigerian leaders to Russia May 1999 – May 2011

Date	Leader	Focus of discussion
March 2001	President Olusegun Obasanjo	Bilateral discussion

Source: Authors Compilation

Table 6: Diplomatic visits by Russian leaders to Nigeria May 1999 – May 2011

Date	Leader	Focus of discussion
June 2009	President Medvedev	Bilateral discussions

Source: Author's compilation

The relations continued to progress and in 2008, the two countries signed a series of MOU's. one of these was to regulate the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Table 7: Diplomatic visits by Nigerian Leaders to China May 1999 – May 2011

Date	Leader	Focus of discussion
April 1999	President – elect Obasanjo	Bilateral discussions
August 2001	President Obasanjo	Bilateral discussions
April 2005	President Obasanjo	Bilateral discussions, with President visiting as African Union Chair person
February 2008	President Yar'Adua	Bilateral discussions
September 2010	President Obasanjo	Private visit

Source: Author's compilation.

The Chinese Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, Fang Yi visited Nigeria in 1972 and signed the first agreement on economic, scientific, technical cooperation and trade. Since then, trade links have grown significantly. The development of Nigerian Railway was a major area of the Sino-Nigerian relationship. The rail project abandoned some years earlier was reactivated later with a team of Chinese engineers from the China Civil Engineering Construction Cooperation (CCECC), visiting Nigeria to assess the project. China was also involved in the Nigerian power sector, the Ajaokuta Steel Mill, water resources, in Borno, Irrigation of rice plantations in Itoiken, the steel project in Alajo, etc. to mention a few. These are economic infrastructures which were involved through sheer diplomatic manouris.

Findings

This investigation exposed the following facts:

1. On her return to civil rule in 1999, and using its diplomatic channels, Nigeria has consistently deployed its military and regional power to the course of democracy, peace and security in Africa.

2. Nigeria's economic diplomacy contributed positively to increased Gross Domestic Product and the influx of Foreign Direct Investment.
3. There is need for Nigeria to strike a balance between her commitment to Afrocentrism, and the country's homegrown challenges, particularly in the light of her socioeconomic realities and the seemingly unending Boko Haram insurgency.
4. Nigeria ranks among the top five (5) troop contributors to United Nations Peacekeeping Missions around the world.
5. Nigeria believes that an unstable Africa or West Africa translates to an unstable Nigeria.
6. In 1987, Nigeria adopted economic diplomacy as a major policy thrust of the Babangida's administration for the first time.
7. An effective use of the tool of economic diplomacy can contribute immensely to a favourable turn around in a prostrate economy.
8. Nigeria's economic diplomacy contributed greatly to increased gross domestic product (GDP) and an influx of foreign Direct Investments.
9. Exchange of diplomatic shuttles between Nigerian leaders and leaders of the BRICS resulted in the signing and upgrade of some infrastructures in Nigeria, e.g. the Railway infrastructures by the Chinese.

Conclusion

This study conducted an assessment of the role of diplomacy in the socioeconomic development of Nigeria. Its data was obtained from secondary materials – books, journals, periodicals, newspapers, and the internet. The study defined diplomacy as all the actions of leaders of a given country which are geared towards achieving good relations with other countries. Thus, Nigeria's diplomacy with the return of the country to civil rule in 1999, saw the country playing her way back to the status of the grant-of-Africa-a status that earned her recognition and influence in the community of nations. This status enabled her play vital roles in the attainment of peace and stability of the global community in general, and the continent as well as the sub-region. Nigeria believed that an unstable global or African community will always translate to an unstable Nigeria, hence, she first adopted Afro centrism and later citizen diplomacy as the cardinal objective of her foreign policy.

This study was able to show that, with her return to democracy in 1999, Nigeria's commitment to the democratization, peace and stability of the African continent, and her economic diplomacy, enhanced the commitment of the BRICS to the contribution towards the improvement of her economy in general and the improvement in her infrastructure (e.g. Rail and energy) by the Chinese, Brazil, India.

Finally, this paper scores Nigeria's diplomacy since 1999 high as it pulled Nigeria from its ranking as a 'PARIAH' state in isolation to reckoning by the international community. President Obasanjo was soon elected to the chair of the common wealth shortly after the nation's return to democracy in 1999.

Suggestions

On the basis of its findings, this paper suggests as follows –

1. Nigeria should do all it takes to sustain its current adoption of economic diplomacy which is a legacy of the Bagangida military presidency.
2. Many Nigerian souls have been lost to peacekeeping missions. The nation should review its commitment to global peace with a view to reducing her contribution of troops.
3. The nation must learn to adopt the use of diplomacy as a veritable tool of socioeconomic development of the country.
4. Nigeria should learn to strike a balance between Afrocentrism and citizen diplomacy to enable it tackle her homegrown challenges headlong.
5. This country should do what it takes to keep her diplomatic channels with the BRICS warm and alive.

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