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FOREIGN POLICY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: AN ASSESSMENT OF NIGERIA'S RELATIONS WITH MAJOR WORLD POWERS

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ABSTRACT

The foreign policy of Nigeria has throughout the history of its post-colonial development been characterized by a strong focus on the achievement of political independence, economic development, and global recognition. Although the country has maintained a sustained and complex diplomatic relationship with the world leaders such as the United States, China, the United Kingdom and the European Union, there are concerns as to whether the alliances have led to any substantive developmental results in the country. The main issue that can be determined in this investigation is the apparent mismatch between the vast diplomatic presence of Nigeria and the developmental stumbling blocks that the nation continues to face, i.e. economic dependence, lack of infrastructure, and limited technological pathway. The main objective of the current research is to critically evaluate the nature, dynamics and developmental implications of the Nigerian relations with the major world powers. Specifically, it questions the impact of these relations on economic development, security cooperation, technological transfer, and political development. The research is based on the Dependency Theory that provides the perspective according to which the asymmetry of power and the national interest can be interpreted in the framework of the external relations of Nigeria. The study uses a qualitative research design and is based on documentary analysis of secondary sources, including academic literature, government policy documents, official communiqués, and reports of international organisations. The expected results indicate that, although Nigeria has enjoyed the fruits of strategic alliances in the areas of trade, security and diplomacy, structural imbalances and poor domestic policy structures have limited the developmental payoffs of such relations. Overall, the research contributes to the academic literature by providing an in-depth evaluation of the nexus between foreign policy and development in Nigeria, as well as by offering policy-relevant information that can be used to re-align foreign relations to achieve sustainable national development.

Keywords: Foreign Policy, National Development, Nigeria's Foreign Policy, Dependency.

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INTRODUCTION

Since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria has always sought foreign-policy goals that purport to advance national interests, protect sovereignty, enhance African unity, and support socio-economic development. Being the most populous country in Africa and one of the largest economies, Nigeria has a strategic position in the world politics, having diplomatic, economic, and security ties with the world giants, including the United States, the United Kingdom, China, Russia, and the European Union. Such interactions include trade, foreign direct investment, military cooperation, development assistance and multilateral diplomacy. However, the physical effect of this foreign-policy agenda on the developmental path of Nigeria is a highly debated and poorly comprehended issue (Akinyemi, 2024).

The challenges that have continually undermined national development in Nigeria include an economic overdependence on crude-oil exports, high unemployment, infrastructural shortage, technological backwardness, insecurity and poverty. The strong diplomatic and economic relationships with the major powers have been justified by the successive administrations as the essential tools of development, namely, the foreign aid, inflows of investments, transfer of technologies, and security alliances, but the expected transformation of industrial growth, human-capital development, and sustainable economic diversification have not been achieved at the projected magnitude. These weaknesses cast serious doubts on the efficacy, consistency, and policy orientation of the foreign-policy interactions of Nigeria.

Furthermore, the asymmetrical power relations, the global economic disparities, and the changing geopolitical interests often influence the relations of Nigeria with the key world powers. Trade patterns, such as those that are mostly characterized by Nigeria exporting primary commodities and importing manufactured goods, tend to support a structure of structural dependency (Ememakolam et al., 2023; Olawale, 2021). Similarly, foreign investments and loans though useful in the short run can lead to debt burdens and constrain domestic capacity building unless managed strategically. Security cooperation especially in counterterrorism operations has produced mixed outcomes in dealing with internal security threats and protecting national sovereignty.

Another complicating issue is the seeming lack of connection between foreign-policy making and domestic development planning. Critics argue that the foreign activities of Nigeria are not always consistent, long-term strategic vision, and institutionalized. Political changes often create a change in the diplomatic priorities, which undermines the continuity of the policies and reduces the bargaining power of the country in the negotiations with the great powers. The developmental gains that may accrue as a result of international partnerships are further limited by domestic governance issues, including corruption, poor institutions, and gaps in policy implementation (Akpan, 2020).

Although there is an increasing literature on the foreign policy and national development of Nigeria individually, there is still a lack of empirical evaluation of the concrete impact of the relations of Nigeria with the key world powers on the developmental outcomes of the country. The current literature tends to concentrate on the past diplomatic relations or general theoretical discussions without critically connecting particular foreign-policy activities to quantifiable development indicators. This gap restricts an overall comprehension of whether the foreign policy of Nigeria is a useful tool of national development or a tool of diplomatic exposure and legitimacy of the regime.

Considering these issues, the main question that this research aims to answer is the seemingly contradictory nature of the active involvement of Nigeria in the world powers and the underdevelopment that has been evident in the country. The paper thus questions how far the relations of Nigeria with major players in the world have progressed or slowed down the national development goals of the country and whether the current foreign-policy structures are well aligned with the long-term socio-economic goals of the country. Through critical evaluation of these relations, the study will seek to explain the developmental implications of the foreign policy of Nigeria and also add to the policy discourse on how external relations can be better exploited to achieve sustainable national development.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The Concept of Foreign Policy

The construct of foreign policy is exposed to numerous interpretations and definitions advanced by different scholars in the academic world of the social sciences. According to Gilbert (2013), one should view foreign policy as a process requiring development, which is brought about by the interaction between the internal milieu of a state and the international environment where it functions. It is first developed in the domestic arena where it is designed and explained but it is meant to be applied to the outside world and is implemented in the international system. Foreign policy needs to achieve substantive meaning, which is best achieved by being openly expressed and actively enforced across international borders; a policy that is limited within the boundaries of one country is not likely to achieve its aims and objectives. Essentially, foreign policy serves as the principal tool through which states strive to shape other players in the international system and achieve interests that are in line with their outlined national interests (Rosati & Scott, 2016). Therefore, foreign policy is state-centred in nature, and it is conceived and executed by state organs on behalf of the state.

Equally, Burchill (2018) defined foreign policy as the conduct of states when relating with other political actors in the international system. In this sense, it is an outward looking behavior as well as policies that governments take to control external relationships. The current foreign policy goals are often pursued by using the multilateral cooperation, which implies an active involvement in the international institutions and regional organisations, including the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the European Union, or ASEAN. Participation in such forums allows the states to align their efforts, negotiate common interests, and jointly address transnational issues.

In addition to the official diplomacy, the concept of foreign policy also involves the use of soft power, which is the ability to influence the taste and opinion through cultural exchange, education, media impact, and diplomacy. Using soft power, the states will be able to improve their international reputation and build positive relationships. Besides, foreign policy is reaction to global crises, such as humanitarian disasters, military conflicts, and natural disasters. Timely diplomatic efforts and joint international aid to reduce the negative effects and stability are usually required to manage the crisis effectively.

Foreign policy is an elaborate system that defines the approaches, priorities, and courses of actions of a country in its relations with other countries and other international participants. It has a wide range of activities diplomatic, political, economic, military, and cultural, all of which are directed at the promotion of national interests and the protection of sovereignty in the international environment. The foreign policy is anchored in the statement of the goals of a country in the international arena. These goals can be related to the realization of economic growth, the country's national security, the territorial integrity, the spread of national values and ideals, as well as the safety of citizens who live or travel to other countries. It is important that these goals be clearly defined since they guide all further decisions and actions.

Strategic planning is done by policymakers once objectives have been drawn. It involves the examination of the international geopolitical landscape, determining key players, assessing the possibilities of allies or competitors, and estimating the new trends and challenges. The strategic planning makes it easier to build a roadmap to achieve foreign policy objectives (Mingst & Arreguin-Toft, 2017).

Rosati and Scott (2016) noted that national security is one of the major issues of foreign policy. Security might be ensured by having competent defence forces, building strategic alliances, as well as being part of international security systems like NATO. Arms control accords, non-proliferation programs and counter-terrorism programmes are also in this category. Also, foreign policy is often aimed at furthering humanitarian and human-rights agendas internationally, interacting with international institutions such as the United Nations, offering humanitarian aid, and protesting human-rights abuses.

As Isa et al. (2025) noticed, the foreign-policy decision-making process guides all states in the international system. This procedure involves three steps namely initiation, formulation and implementation. The initiation phase occurs when leaders of the country, in most cases, the Head of State, and foreign-policy institutions based on the ministries of Foreign Affairs or Department of State generate foreign-policy ideas. The concepts are based on national interest, perceptions, preferences, choices, options, and capabilities. Finally, foreign policy displays the national interests of a country, which could include economic prosperity, defense, territorial integrity, safety of citizens in foreign countries, propagation of cultural and political principles, availability of essential resources, and environmental stability.

The Concept of National Development

The term national development refers to a comprehensive, long-term improvement of the political, economic, social, technological, and cultural well-being of a state, and the ultimate goal of improving the welfare of the citizens and their quality of life (Akpan, 2020). It is a complex construct that goes beyond the economic growth and includes structural change, opportunity equity, good institutions, and human empowerment. In the widest sense, national development involves planned state-based actions, supplemented by stakeholder involvement, to mobilize resources, formulate policies and execute programmes that promote growth and stability in a sovereign polity. It is both a process and a product, and it is represented in high living standards, poverty alleviation, and increased national capacity.

Economically, the national development is defined in terms of sustained growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), economic diversification, industrialisation, technological advancement, and improvement in productivity. However, development does not only entail increasing the national income, but also the distributive dynamics of wealth among the population. A truly developed country is a country whereby the macro-economic benefits are converted into decreased inequality, increased employment opportunities and increased access to basic amenities like education, healthcare, housing and infrastructure. The national-development policy, in turn, is generally concerned with the macro-economic stability, human-capital investment, stimulation of entrepreneurship and expansion of infrastructural development, which are the keys to long-term prosperity.

In the social aspect, national development highlights improvement in human welfare and justice. It involves increasing literacy levels, expanding access to quality education, reducing maternal and infant death rates, promoting gender equality, and protecting the vulnerable groups (Akinyemi, 2024). The idea is very similar to the paradigms of human development that have been developed by various institutions, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which states that development ought to expand the options and abilities of the peoples. Thus, national development takes a people-centred perspective; it emphasizes human dignity, freedom, and chances. In addition, it involves establishing social cohesion, national integration and a sense of unity among various ethnic, religious and cultural groups in the state.

National development requires stable, accountable, and participatory governance politically. Sustainable development cannot be achieved without democratic institutions, rule of law, transparency, and respect of human rights. Developmental endeavors often fail when governance structures are weak, corrupt or exclusionary. Good politics can guide the national development by carrying out strategies, policy frameworks, and long-term visions, as well as making sure that institutions of the people are running smoothly and that citizens have a way of participating in the decision making process. The first is political stability and security, which allows the reversal of gains in development and discourages investment because of conflict and insecurity.

Another major aspect of national development is technological and infrastructural development. Modern economies are strongly relying on scientific studies, innovation, digital connectivity, energy provision, transport infrastructure, and communication channels. Research and development increases the competitiveness and productivity in a nation. Economic activity and better living standards are supported by infrastructure, such as roads, railways, electricity, water supply, and telecommunications. In the current globalised ecosystem, the countries which are more receptive to technological innovation could be placed in a better position to compete on the international scale as well as to be assimilated into the global economy.

National development is culturally and environmentally oriented that entails conservation of cultural heritage and embracement of modernity. Values, traditions, creative industries of a nation play a significant role in the formation of identity and social unity. At the same time, sustainable development practices cannot be avoided in protecting the natural resources to the future. Nwankwo (2021) noted that the significance of environmental protection, climate change reduction and responsible management of resources is becoming a part of national development. The exploitation of resources that cannot be maintained might provide short-term benefits but trigger economic and ecological shortages in the long term.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Dependency Theory

Dependency theory provides a strict analytical paradigm to explain the complex nexus between foreign policy and national development, and the developing economies like Nigeria are especially relevant. Raul Prebisch, one of the most notable German intellectuals of the 1950s, who served in the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC/CEPAL) wrote the foundational document of what is currently referred to as the centerperiphery thesis. Prebisch (1950) furthered the argument in 1950 as he argued that the world trade is structurally unequal when it comes to disadvantaging the centres of manufacturing and importing, i.e., the peripheral, developing states, which are the exporters of the primary commodities and the importers of manufactured goods. This view was further elaborated and radicalised in the 1960s by such writers as Andre Gunder Frank, whose influential book, The Development of Underdevelopment (1966), argued that underdevelopment is not simply a pre-stage of development but a condition actively constructed by the capitalist world system.

In this perspective, underdevelopment in peripheral states is a self-generated and perpetuated phenomenon, which is triggered by their integration into the world capitalist mechanism. Using this lens in the context of the foreign policy of Nigeria and its relations with such global powers as the USA and China will help to see how the external economic and political connections influence and limit the development of the country. Considered through dependency lens, the foreign policy of Nigeria is historically shaped in terms of structural position of the state as a resource dependent state. Nigeria has evolved into a part of the international system since the discovery and commercialisation of the crude oil as an exporter of raw materials and an importer of manufactured goods and technology. The examples of this pattern include its relationship with the United States, the United Kingdom, China and France. According to dependency theorists, this kind of arrangement promotes unequal exchange such that Nigeria sells low-value primary commodities and imports high-value finished goods, which maintains trade imbalances and technological dependence.

The applicability of dependency theory to the Nigerian interactions with the world powers preempts the constraints of structure that are inherent in the global political economy. The foreign policy of Nigeria exists in an unequal exchange, foreign influence, and economic vulnerability system. Although cooperation and expansion with countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, China and France provide the possibilities to cooperate and develop, it also endangers the strengthening of the tendencies towards dependency that weakens the development of the country on the global scale. Therefore, the key problem of Nigeria is to develop a foreign policy which can use the collaboration of other countries to transform the country and at the same time reduce the level of structural reliance and enhance national independence.

Dependency theory attracts focus on structural economic disparities in world relations (Cardoso & Faletto, 1979). The intense dependence on oil exports and the imports of capital goods by the developed countries add to the peripheral dependence of Nigeria and restrict the transformative development. Although foreign investment and infrastructure projects can also increase capacity, structural dependence on external players creates limitations on independent economic growth (Akinola, 2021; Ogunleye, 2022). Nigeria foreign policy has proven to have a pragmatic approach of involving the various sources of power in order to appeal to investment, secure trade market and make geopolitically relevant. However, the effectiveness of foreign policy as an instrument of national development is moderated by domestic factors, including governance quality, policy stability, institutional capacity and macroeconomic stability (Obi & Eze, 2020). International alliances are not enough to achieve sustainable development when national systems are feeble or uneven in how they execute policies.

Additionally, the reliance of Nigeria on crude oil exports has long defined the foreign policy of the country, supporting the mono-product economy and subjecting the nation to the instability of the global energy market (World Bank, 2022). To align foreign policy to sustainable development, intentional policies of economic diversification, value addition in trade, transfer of technology, and empowerment of the domestic institutions to handle foreign investment should be taken.

METHODOLOGY

The current study utilized the qualitative research design that will seek to provide a comprehensive, interpretive analysis of the foreign policy-national development nexus. The research is based primarily on the documentary examination of the secondary sources. Documentary analysis is a methodical process of reviewing and evaluating printed and electronic texts, thus evoking meaning, promoting understanding and developing empirical knowledge. The records were gotten from journal articles, books, conference papers and theses, which addressed the foreign policy of Nigeria, its development policies and relations with such great powers as the United States, China, the United Kingdom and Russia.

The thematic content analysis approach is followed in the analytical procedure. All the documents are carefully read and they are coded based on common themes like economic diplomacy, foreign direct investment, support and development assistance, trade relations, security cooperation and policy coherence. These themes were then collated into more general analytical categories which aligned with the theoretical framework. In this way the study explained how the foreign policy engagements either promote or limit the development outcomes of the country in Nigeria. The theoretical lens adopted guided interpretation so that the results are analytically rather than descriptively based.

Foreign Policy and National Development: Assessing Nigeria's Relations with Major World Powers

The nexus between foreign policy and national development in the modern international relations is highly intertwined. In the case of a developing country like Nigeria, the foreign policy is not only the diplomatic representation or international prestige acquisition but also a strategic tool to promote economic development, technological progress and stable security, as well as a wholesome national change (Okeke, 2019).

Nigeria has also sought to apply Afro-centric foreign policy since the country attained independence in 1960, but at the same time, it is seeking to enlist the participation of the major world powers to gain access to the resources, markets, investments, and political support that are considered crucial to national development (Ademola, 2021).

A review of the diplomatic activities of Nigeria with the major world powers, that is, the United States, China, the United Kingdom, and Russia display the opportunities and structural issues in terms of harnessing the external relations in the form of sustainable development.

The bilateral relations between Nigeria and the United States have always been focused on trade, energy relations, promotion of democracy, and security relations. Being one of the key trading partners of Nigeria, particularly in terms of oil, the United States has been instrumental in determining the export earnings and foreign-exchange incomes of Nigeria (World Bank, 2022). Outside of the trade, counter-terrorism collaboration, especially on dealing with insurgency in the North-East, has been central to bilateral interaction. Military training, intelligence sharing, and security assistance have enhanced the ability of Nigeria to deal with internal insecurities, which is a precondition to development since insecurity discourages investment and compromises socio-economic stability (Obi & Eze, 2020). However, issues of governance, human rights, and corruption have also tainted this partnership, and in some cases, they place conditionalities, which affect domestic policy decisions made by Nigeria (Ojo, 2018).

The example of foreign relations between Nigeria and China may serve as a bright example of foreign relations, which are mainly aimed at infrastructure development, expanding trade, and financial cooperation. China has become one of the biggest sources of foreign-direct investment (FDI) and infrastructure financing in Nigeria over the last 20 years (Akinola, 2021). Chinese assistance has been done on major projects in rail transport, road construction, telecommunications, and power generation. This structure is in line with the developmental agenda of Nigeria since it will reduce the infrastructural shortfalls that limit industrialisation and economic diversification. However, critics highlight the issues of debt sustainability, trade imbalances and limited technological and local capacity building transfer (Ogunleye, 2022). As the Chinese investments are seen to drive the infrastructure development, there is a concern on long term structural change and the competitiveness of the local industries.

The United Kingdom, which was the former colonial state of Nigeria, maintains long-term economic, cultural and political relationships. Bilateral relations include trade, investment, education, government reform, and development aid (Adebayo, 2020). United Kingdom is still one of the most important locations to export and a large source of remittances and foreign investment by Nigeria. Development cooperation programmes are focused on strengthening institutions, improving financial management in the public, and democratic governance. Human-capital development is also a result of educational exchanges and diaspora networks. Nevertheless, the asymmetries of the past related to economic relations and the persistent reliance on the export of primary commodities mitigate the transformative effect of this partnership on the overall developmental agenda of Nigeria (Ibrahim, 2019).

The previously existing relations between Russia and Nigeria have come to be more concentrated on the military cooperation, development of energy sources and nuclear technologies. Russia has emerged as a strategic ally in terms of military purchasing and support in technical issues which are critical in dealing with security challenges which hinder development. In addition, the energy cooperation talks, such as gas exploration and nuclear power development, have also pointed at the Nigerian attempt to diversify outside-western relations. Although these activities introduce the prospects of technological cooperation and geopolitical equalization, the overall tendencies of their development depend on the transparency, strategic orientation in accordance with the domestic priorities, and the ability of local institutions to control such alliances (Nwankwo, 2021).

The high dependence of Nigeria on exports of oil and the dependency on the importation of capital items by the developed countries support peripheral dependence and inhibit transformative development. Though the capacity is boosted by foreign investment and infrastructure projects, the structural dependence on external actors limits self-sufficient economic growth (Akinola, 2021; Ogunleye, 2022).

The foreign policy of Nigeria indicates a practical approach to involving various forces to attract investment, obtain trade markets and increase the geopolitical relevance. However, the internal factors that mediate the effectiveness of foreign policy as a developmental instrument are the quality of governance, consistency in policies, institutional capacity, and macroeconomic stability (Obi & Eze, 2020). Sustainable development cannot be ensured by external partnerships only in case domestic structures are weak or the policy implementation is not regular.

The Influence of Nigeria's Relations with Major World Powers on Economic Growth, Security, Technological Transfer and Political Development

The relations between Nigeria and the leading world powers, including the United States, China, the United Kingdom, Russia and the European Union have a significant influence on the growth of the economy, structure of security, technological dispersion, and political development. These complex interactions go beyond the traditional diplomatic practice and impact the restructuring of the structure, governance patterns, and the strategic position of the country in the international system (Okeke, 2019).

The nexus of Nigerian interactions with large powers determines the path of Nigeria economic development through the trade relations, FDI inflows, development aid, and infrastructural funding. It is worth noting that China has become a key trading and investment partner, funding key infrastructure, including rail, airports, and power plants. These investments lead to the development of physical capital, improve connectivity, and have the ability to trigger productivity (Akinola, 2021). However, in trade relations, the distribution of power is usually asymmetrical in that, Nigeria will mainly export crude oil and raw materials and import manufactured goods. Such a trend poses the risk of developing a mono-commodity economy and limiting the diversification of industry (Ogunleye, 2022). The ties with the United States and the European Union also affect the process of economic growth by encouraging the preferences to the trade, investments inflows, and the development of the private sector. Western companies have a vibrant presence in the oil and gas, telecom and financial industries in Nigeria. Programs which are supported by EU are used to promote regulatory reforms, development of SMEs, and macroeconomic stability. In spite of such contributions, external economic involvement has never significantly altered the production structure of Nigeria, and high dependence on oil earnings make the economy vulnerable to global prices and external shocks (World Bank, 2022; Obi & Eze, 2020). Therefore, as much as alliances with key powers provide access to capital inflows and market access, sustainability of economic growth depends on policies that are enforced domestically to take advantage of the partnerships to spur diversification, industrialization, and value addition.

Security cooperation is one of the very important aspects of external relations of Nigeria. The threats that face the country are complex as they include terrorism, insurgency, piracy, banditry, and transnational crime. Alliances with the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union have enhanced the counter-terrorism capability in terms of military training, intelligence, logistical and humanitarian support (Obi & Eze, 2020). Such partnerships particularly in the northeastern area have increased levels of surveillance and professional military readiness. Russia also plays its role by selling arms and signing defence contracts, which supply military equipment and technical assistance. These alliances would widen access to modern weapons and knowledge of strategy in Nigeria. Nonetheless, the use of external security support creates the issue of sustainability and strategic independence. Excess reliance can limit the production of indigenous defense and capacity building at home (Nwankwo, 2021). Furthermore, security collaboration often involves normative overtones of human rights and governance, especially by western allies which may bring about institutional change, but also create diplomatic tensions.

Technological transfer has been a crucial but skewed result of the foreign interactions of Nigeria. Collaborations with technologically superior nations provide the prospects of sharing knowledge and diffusion of innovations as well as developing skills. Chinese infrastructure projects bring new technologies of construction and telecommunications, and Western companies bring their experiences in the field of energy exploration, digital services, and financial technology (Akinola, 2021; Ogunleye, 2022). The United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union give out educational exchanges, scholarships and professional training programmes that further help in human-capital development. Nigerian scholars and practitioners that have been exposed to high-level research conditions usually come back with better skills that can be applied in various industries (Ibrahim, 2019). However, structural factors limit technological transfer, which are enclave investments, bad local content policy, poor R&D systems, and weak industrial connections. Thus, the transformative effect of technology partnerships will be determined by the absorptive capacity of Nigeria, i.e. the quality of the education system, regulatory climate, and infrastructure of innovation (Okeke, 2019).

The interaction of Nigeria with the world powers shapes the political development in the country. The western actors, especially United States, United Kingdom and the European Union, are engaged in promoting democratic rule, electoral reforms, involvement of civil society, and anti-corruption. Institutional consolidation and political accountability are achieved by election observation missions, technical assistance to electoral institutions, and financing governance reforms (Adebayo, 2020). Partnerships with China and Russia, on the contrary, offer other models of diplomacy that focus on sovereignty and non-interference. These interactions provide Nigeria with strategic leeway and less reliance on western political conditionalities. Although this kind of diversification increases the independence of the diplomats, it can also make it difficult to exert external pressure on the reforms of domestic governance (Morgenthau, 2006). In general, the global relationships may empower and challenge the political process in Nigeria at the same time, providing the incentives to reform and allowing the local elites to play the game of politics between opposing forces.

Nigeria's Persistent Development Challenges Amidst Extensive Foreign Relations

The historical picture of foreign relations is broad, dynamic, and strategically ambitious, which is characteristic of Nigeria due to the size of the country, its population, endowment of resources, and geopolitical value in Africa (Okeke, 2019). Nigeria has since its independence in 1960, followed an Afrocentric foreign policy, making Africa, the core of their engagement with the outside world, at the same time developing a relationship with the great powers of the world. Although Nigeria boasts of vast system of diplomatic ties, it still faces chronic development issues. These challenges include:

Economic dependency is one of the greatest of them. Despite the fact that Nigeria is highly endowed with natural resources especially crude oil, its economy is over reliant on petroleum exports. Government earnings and foreign exchange inflows are made up of a large percentage of oil revenues. This single-product reliance makes the economy extremely sensitive to changes in the world oil price, and when it starts to fall, it leads to fiscal crisis, currency devaluation, inflation, and less of the government investing in social services and infrastructure (World Bank, 2022). Besides, the dependence on oil exports has restricted diversification to manufacturing, agriculture, and high-value services, which reduced sustainable growth and employment opportunities (Obi & Eze, 2020).

Nigeria is also economically dependent because it has been depending on imported manufactured products, refined petroleum products, machinery, and technology. Owing to the low refining capacity within the country, Nigeria is a leading producer of crude oil, but imports a large portion of refined petroleum (Ojo, 2018). Such irony is indicative of structural inefficiencies in industrialization and technological capability. Also, the country relies on the foreign loan and development aid of international financial institutions, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Although these financial inflows offer short-term fiscal relief and reform programmes, they can also contribute to dependency by accumulating debts and imposing policy conditionalities limiting the domestic policy autonomy (Adebayo, 2020).

Another significant hiccup to the development of Nigeria is infrastructural deficits. Despite the visible improvements in the transport infrastructure due to foreign partnerships, especially with China and Western countries, the gap in the infrastructure is still huge. The persistent electricity outages, where the production of electricity is significantly lower than the national demand, drive up the cost of production, detract industrialisation, and force companies to use costly private generators (Akinola, 2021). Most areas have poor roads, inadequate rail facilities in comparison with the size of the population, and the ports are usually congested and inefficient. Such infrastructural bottlenecks inhibit Nigeria to compete globally in the trade sector and diminish the developmental effects of foreign economic interactions (Ogunleye, 2022).

Another factor that has continued to be a challenge is limited technological advancement. Even though Nigeria has advanced with the telecommunications and digital services, the overall technological innovation and industrial research are still underdeveloped. Research and development spending is quite low in the country than in more industrialised economies and most of the sectors are dependent on imported technology and technical know-how. Innovation ecosystems are also limited by weak connections between universities and research centers and industry (Ibrahim, 2019). Foreign partnerships in turn tend to lead to the establishment of turnkey projects by foreign companies where little transfer of technology to the local professionals occurs thus strengthening technological dependence and discouraging the development of globally competitive local industries.

The foreign relations of Nigeria have political disadvantages in terms of governance, inconsistency in policies, and corruption, which further jeopardize the developmental gains of the country. Although diplomatic activities can lead to foreign investments and assistance, in some cases, poor institutional structures lead to mismanagement of resources and poor implementation of the project. Infrastructure projects financed by external loans are usually delayed, cost overrun, or unsustainable, and decrease the multiplier impacts of foreign cooperation on national development (Nwankwo, 2021).

CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed the complex interaction between foreign policy and national development by evaluating the interaction of Nigeria with key world powers with special reference to the United States, China, the United Kingdom, Russia and the European Union. According to the findings, the relationship of Nigeria with the major world powers has had developmental gains that can be measured. On the economic front, external relationships have enabled trade growth, foreign direct investment, financing of infrastructures and entry into the global markets. Security cooperation has also improved the operational capability of Nigeria in the counter-terrorism, maritime security and defence modernization. The act of technological involvement provided avenues of knowledge exchange, skills acquisition and exposure to state-of-the-art systems in the telecommunications, energy and digital innovation.

However, these gains have not been translated into overall structural change. Endemic economic reliance on crude oil exports, exposure to fluctuations in the global economy, and structural trade imbalances, indicate that the Nigerian integration into the global economy is still very peripheral. The lack of infrastructure, which has been partially addressed by the foreign-funded work, still limits productivity and competitiveness of industries. The factors that have frequently inhibited technological transfer include poor domestic absorptive capacity, poor investment in research and development and poor enforcement of local content. Furthermore, the dependence on the foreign security aid and external funding creates the concern of the sustainability and the long-term strategic independence.

A major paradox of the assessment is that Nigeria has vast and well-differentiated foreign relations, but the results of national development are uneven and structurally limited. This implies that foreign policy though an important tool of development is not necessarily transformative. The quality of domestic governance, policy consistency, institutional capacity and the articulateness of national development priorities are the key elements of its effectiveness. The external partnerships may supply resources, markets, and technical know-how, however they cannot replace the internal changes that are intended to diversify the economy, industrialise, innovate technology and be accountable in governance.

Recommendations

Following the conclusion of the paper, it is possible to provide the following recommendations:

- The foreign policy of Nigeria must be effectively incorporated in national development priorities which are clearly outlined like industrialisation, technological development, modernisation of infrastructures and development of human capital. The involvement of diplomatic relations with the major powers should be directed by the quantitative developmental standards instead of immediate political or economic profits.
- Nigeria ought to redesign its trade connections with the key powers, especially the United States, China, the United Kingdom, Russia, and the European Union, to alleviate on excessive reliance on crude oil exports. Value addition, agro-processing, export manufacturing and involvement in global value chains should be encouraged by strategic negotiation of trade agreements.
- Enforceable technology transfer provisions, skills acquisition programmes and research collaboration frameworks should be integrated in foreign partnerships. Contracts related to infrastructure and energy with major powers should have the local involvement, diffusion of knowledge, and capacity building in the country.
- Nigeria must use foreign military alliances to build domestic defence sectors, advance technology co-production and enhance civil-military surveillance systems. This would lessen the reliance on the international acquisition of arms and increase strategic autonomy.

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