

The Place of Culture in Developing Diplomatic Relations: An Analysis of Nigeria-United States of America Ties

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Abstract. This paper analyzes the role of culture in developing and sustaining diplomatic relations in contemporary times. As cultural diplomacy has become an evolving practice of establishing diplomatic relations and formulation of foreign policies, the study examines its application in Nigeria's efforts to expand and improve foreign relations with countries abroad; particularly the United States of America. The Post-Cold War era has continued to witness the growth in the use of culture to foster relations among nations to promote a peaceful and secured ties in the face of growing tensions of "nuclear power". Nigeria been a non-nuclear and a "third world power", the study suggests that harnessing the rich cultural diversities and uniqueness (the most populous black nation) of Nigeria remains an excellent means of improving diplomatic relations especially with the United States of America. The goal of this paper is to present in a scholarly way how the use of culture can inform foreign policies to improve and strengthen diplomatic ties between Nigeria and the United States. The study further aims to highlight various aspects of culture that has impacted on Nigeria's diplomatic relations with the USA and how they can be improved for better use in the future. The historical analytical method was adopted to arrive at the conclusion. Findings from the study shows that culture is a soft point for negotiations and a veritable platform/medium of exchange for proffering solutions. Moreover, culture is identified as the most compelling ways of gaining alliances and establishing relationships between countries.

Keywords: culture, cultural diplomacy, foreign policy, diplomatic ties.

1. Introduction

Culture has remained an integral element of foreign policy formulation and international relations. From ancient times to modern-day, exchange of arts, music and other cultural aspects formed an integral means of establishing diplomatic ties and projecting national interest abroad. The exchange of slaves and tropical products such as ivory, pepper and palm oil between European merchants and the Oba of Benin in the early 16th Century is a clear instance of using soft power to develop a strong mercantile relationship. Although international relations are dominated by *realpolitik*, such as the use of military might, economic power and money, culture and cultural exchange has been regarded as desirable means of asserting powers and building lasting relationship; this is because of the appealing large audience culture could garner among the people (Kristen et al, 2007).

In present times, nations and leaders continue to explore the use of culture and cultural exchanges to promote diplomatic ties and spread ties of friendship to nations. Cultural diplomacy argues that today more than ever before, culture has a vital role to play in international relations given the broader and connective value culture has on human society: culture is the means by which we come to understand others and the innate value that we seek out to enjoy (Kristen et al 2007). Cultural exchange provides an opportunity for points of commonality and, where there are differences understand the motivations and humanity that underlie. With the increasing influence of multiculturalism on national and international politics, these attributes make culture a soft point for negotiations and a medium of exchange for finding solutions.

Historically culture has been one of the most compelling ways of gaining alliances and establishing relationships; from the reciprocal gifts between the Doge of Venice and Khublai Khan, exchange of slaves, arts and other tropical goods between the European sailors and African chiefs to the great exhibition of 1861, culture has been used by leaders to showcase aesthetics, assert power and understand others. Reaffirming the importance and motivations of culture in international relations, Thomas Jefferson, in his letter to James Madison, 1785 recounts “I am an enthusiast on the subject of arts. But it is an enthusiasm of which I am not ashamed, as its object is to improve the taste of my countrymen, to increase their reputation and to reconcile to them the respect of the world and procure them its praise.” Till present, this has continued to define the relations among nations and the overreaching motivation of cultural diplomacy in contemporary politics.

Cultural diplomacy can be seen as one facet of international relations; as one of the “soft” aspects of living together in the planet rather than the “hard” elements of laws, treatise, multilateral organisations and military capability. In a larger scale, cultural diplomacy encompasses a huge chunk of the society, providing avenues for people to cooperate and live in harmony without intrinsic fear of suspicion. In this study, we take a broad view of what culture includes, the place of culture in establishing diplomatic ties, how the Nigerian culture has provided or impacted in its diplomatic ties with other nations of the world with a specific interest in the diplomatic relationship between Nigeria and the United States of America. Cultural exchange has been one of the principal ways Nigeria relates to nations abroad; the richness and diversity of the Nigerian culture has remained a critical area around the development and implementation of her foreign policy.

Nigeria, since its independence in 1960, has used culture as one of its foundation for developing foreign policy. Foreign policy has been defined as a strategy used by government to guide its actions in the international arena (Goldstein, 2018). Mbachu sees foreign policy as the projection of the state’s national interest abroad (Mbachu, 2015). It is the foreign policy of a nation that guides its relationship and interaction with other nations at the international community. Since the international community is anarchical, nations work around policies that would promote its interest and its existence; and as such, develop most adequate measures to pursue these policies and see to its realisation. “Hard power” and “soft power” has been the major means of pursuing foreign policy in the international community. To this

effect, Nigeria has identified the importance of culture in pursuit of its foreign policy and continued to reaffirm its commitment to cultural diplomacy. This was rightly captured by the first Prime Minister, Alhaji Tafewa Balewa, in his maiden address to the United Nations General Assembly on October 7, 1960, where he articulated Nigeria’s foreign policy as thus:

It is the desire of Nigeria to remain on friendly terms with all nations and to participate in the work of the United Nations, Nigeria a large and populous nation has absolutely no territorial or expansionist ambitions. We are committed to uphold the principles upon which the United Nations is founded. Nigeria hopes to work with other African states for the progress of Africa and assist in bringing all African countries to a state of independence (Adeniyi 2001: 9).

For over fifty years, Africa remained the centrepiece of Nigeria’s foreign policy, having at its core, the principles of non-alignment, legal equality of states, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, multilateralism (Anaemene, 2015). It has been argued that the Nigerian foreign policy apart from its reaffirmation to sustain peace and not seek for boundary expansion at the detriment of its African neighbours have also rested on the pursuance of global peace, security, neutrality, respect for territorial boundaries and friendship among the world’s people. According to Iyorwuese Hagher, these principles have set Nigeria on the road path less travelled by many. The end of the cold war heightened the rise of cultural diplomacy in pursuit of foreign policy as it plays a larger role in the way nations construct and project their national identity. Cultural and religious identity now plays a larger role in defining our sense of self and community.

Nigeria’s choice of “soft power” in determining its foreign ties confirms her desire to use culture and cultural exchange in asserting its sense of self at the international community. As a non-nuclear power, culture is an expansive way Nigeria’s national interest can be pursued and projected abroad. We are moving from a world where the term was primarily concerned with relations between elites – where static and traditional cultural settings provided the opportunity and backdrop for relaxed ambassadorial and political contact, for example – to one where culture is also a medium between people on a mass scale (Kristen et al, 2015). Accordingly, since 1960 when Nigeria became an independent state, culture has been part of its diplomatic tool. Cultural exchanges, festivals, movies, music, sports and tourism have become platforms for Nigeria to project

her image. Nigeria has also learned to use culture to ease off concerns and gain appeals, specifically in its diplomatic ties with the United States of America. Standing on an unequal term of relationship, Nigeria has continued to project its national interest through its arts, music, education and other forms of cultural exchanges. It is on this note that the study examines the role of culture in the extant diplomatic relationship between Nigeria and the United States of America with the aim of strengthening and extending to other nations. The study goes further to portray the need for Nigeria to invest more in strengthening cultural institutions and delving more into cultural diplomacy as against the use of hard power in international relationships.

2. Conceptual Clarification

Under this section, three key concepts central to this study will be examined; (a) culture (b) cultural diplomacy and (c) foreign policy/diplomatic relations.

2.1 Culture

In the context of this study, culture would mean every aspect of behaviours and interactions nations' project abroad to improve diplomatic relationships. The concept of culture has been defined differently by various scholars and authors. According to De Rossi, "culture" derives from a French term, which in turn derives from the Latin "colere," which means to tend to the earth and grow, or cultivation and nurture. "It shares its etymology with a number of other words related to actively fostering growth". The Center for Advanced Research and Language Acquisition defines culture as shared patterns of behaviours and interactions, cognitive construct and understanding that are learned by socialisation. By this definition, culture is seen as an evolving concept that undergoes transformation over time due to internal and external influences.

Cristina De Ross, an anthropologist, sees culture as a multi-dimensional concept that "encompasses music, arts, patterns of dressing, marriage, what we believe is right or wrong, how we sit at the table, how we greet visitors, how we behave with loved ones, and a million other things." To her, culture includes all attributive aspects of a group of persons that distinguish them from others. This explains why people behave and act differently from others and also create a unique platform for informed and interactive relationship. The principle of acculturation explains the evolution, mixture and similarities in culture over time as a result of long-

term relationships between two distinct groups. Therefore, cultural relationship could shape or determine how people relate and perceive each other. In the international parlance, culture presents an excellent opportunity for global contact and exchange in a changing and complex world system for better understanding and appraisal of relationships among nations. This invariably explains the importance and role of culture in establishing and sustaining diplomatic relationships. In a similar vein, Nigeria has continued to use cultural exchange to promote diplomatic ties with the United States. Governments are therefore presented with a dual role of maintaining established cultural relationships and developing cultural skills of the masses. However, for the purpose of this study, we shall adopt the definition of culture, precisely that given in the Nigerian Cultural Policy of 1988, which defined culture as:

the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempt to meet the challenges in their environment which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organization, thus distinguishing a people from their neighbor.

From the above definition, it can be adduced that culture includes all aspects of societal existence. It informs the pattern of behaviour and explains the fundamental reasons for such behaviours. It promotes mutuality, understanding, uniqueness and changes between and among nations or groups. One important aspect of culture which is worthy of note is its dynamism. Culture continues to change and evolve to accommodate changes in other internal or external spheres of life such as technologies, arts, music, religion etc., and these changes could occur as a result of interactions among groups over a period of time or as a subject of conflicting innovations and ideologies. Culture promotes harmony and understanding in developing and sustaining diplomatic relations. Traditionally culture has been a major means of forming diplomatic relations; cultural diplomacy includes the exchange of arts, music, sport, educational scholarships, and literature for the preservation of diplomatic ties. However, in contemporary time, the scope of cultural diplomacy has been widened to include "public diplomacy" involving cultural activities that promotes and projects national identity to gain a wider audience.

2.2 Cultural Diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy is a type of public diplomacy and soft power that includes the "exchange of ideas, information, art, language and other aspects of

culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding.” The term cultural diplomacy is not easy to define, given the lack of scholarly attention attributed to it over the years. In trying to find parlance for cultural diplomacy, the study derives from the United Nation’s 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 27 (1) which states that ‘Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts, and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.’ This definition gives clear indications of needs and purpose for the inclusion of culture in world affairs. Cultural diplomacy is the deployment of a state’s culture in support of its foreign policy goals or diplomacy (Mark, 2009). In other words, it is the art of winning the hearts and minds of others by attracting them through cultural activities and exchanges that include art, beliefs, way of life and customs (Hagher, 2011). It provides a meeting point between culture and policy. It seeks to propagate a positive image towards a better mutual understanding. In this study, we take a deep insight into the various cultural exchanges such as sports, technology, music, arts, literature, education that promotes and sustains diplomatic ties between Nigeria and the United States. Cultural diplomacy deemphasises more on relations between elites – where static and traditional cultural settings promoted by political and ambassadorial contact to a more relaxed environment where culture provides a medium of peoples’ interaction on a large scale.

Cultural diplomacy is becoming a fast-moving adventure with profound effect. Aside from being a means of establishing a long-lasting relationship, it is also a multi-dollar enterprise as nations are developing their cultural institutions to attract foreign tourists and investors; which has the capability of changing the paradigms of public diplomacy. With the usurpation of bi-polarity with multi-polarity owing to the end of the Cold War, nations are beginning to find more benefits in projecting its national ideals, belief systems and influencing public opinions through cultural diplomacy. The emerging Asian powers understand the importance of cultural diplomacy and are significantly exploring it as a means not just to foreign governments; but also to global public opinion and potential partners and allies (Kristein et al 2007). By this, they are building their strong economic and social base to compete with the West. This noble ideal should also be undertaken by African nations to promote not just the vast and exciting cultures of Africa abroad but also to for socio-economic benefits.

In terms of purpose, cultural diplomacy is undertaken to achieve various objectives. Cultural diplomacy is undertaken for both economic and political purposes. While it is becoming an avenue to promote culture with better understanding it gains a wider audience; it is also an economic venture as cultural exchange is becoming a multi-dollar venture especially in the field of sports, literature, cultural tourism, movies and entertainment. Other functional objectives of cultural diplomacy include advancing trade, political, diplomatic and economic interests, developing bilateral relationships across the board, connecting with groups abroad that are important to the cultural diplomacy practitioners such as those in diaspora and helping to maintain bilateral relationships in times of tension. Cultural diplomacy can also advance the interest of other countries, not just the interest of the country carrying out the diplomacy.

Just like other forms of public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy can be achieved through direct, indirect, formal and informal means. The direct means include bilateral agreements; the establishment of corps of attaches who are part of the embassy or operatives in cultural centres, which are operated via notes verbales or privately organised expositions involving friendship associations of private entrepreneurs. It can also be achieved through arrangements or agreements between countries or through active participation in international conferences, intergovernmental institutions such as UNESCO, the African Cultural Institute, the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), or in nongovernmental organisations. Its main media are exhibitions in the visual, literary and performing arts; interpersonal communication achieved through exchanges of artists, journalists, writings, filmmakers, cultural workers, teachers and instructors or through lectures, symposia, seminars conferences, competitions and accession to treaties designed to promote mutual interests and improve understanding.

2.3 Foreign Policy/Diplomatic Ties

For the purpose of this study, foreign policy and diplomatic ties shall be used interchangeably to understudy the role of cultural diplomacy in foreign policy strategies with a specific interest in diplomatic relations between Nigeria and the United States.

Just like most concept, it is difficult to define foreign policy in a generally acceptable form. Many scholars have defined foreign differently in line with their perspectives of what consists of foreign relations and diplomacy. Mbachu defines foreign policy as a set of goals and course of actions a nation wishes to pursue

or pursues in respect to the demands or interactions of the internal and external setting perceived by the decision-makers (Mbachu, 1998). By this definition, foreign policy means the goal a nation set to achieve by its interaction with other states at the international community. According to F.S Northedge and D. Vital, foreign policy is a product of the interaction between internal and external forces. This means the formulation of desired outcomes which are intended or expected to be consequent upon decisions taken by those in authority. On the other hand, Francis Pyn defines foreign policy as the projection abroad of a country's values and aspirations. This definition clearly captures the central theme of this study- as it seeks to analyse the importance of projecting culture and cultural exchanges in the formulation and implementation of Nigeria's foreign policy. The propelling force of a foreign policy of a state is the state's national interest (Ade-ibijola and Opeyemi 2013).

In a similar vein, diplomatic tie has also been defined differently by different scholars. Diplomatic ties, according to Wikipedia, is defined as the art or practise of conducting international relations or a form of foreign policy strategies such as the establishing alliances, treaties and trade agreement. By this definition, diplomatic ties imply the actionable mechanisms of implementing or realising foreign policy goals. Nations enter into diplomatic ties with other nations for the purpose of projecting its value goals, and aspirations for the realisation of its national interest. In establishing diplomatic ties, several strategies are employed- "hard power" and "soft power" strategies such as military might, technological prowess, cultural enticement, trade etc., all these projected through states formal establishment such as embassies, international organisations, cultural centres, multinational organisations bilateral or multilateral agreements for the purpose of realising national interest and boosting national prestige at the international community.

3. Variants of Culture in Nigeria's Foreign Policy and Diplomatic relationship

Culture remains one of the undermined element of developing diplomatic ties and the formulation of foreign policy in Nigeria. The pattern of Nigeria's foreign policy in the first republic revolved around strengthening the political and military might of country; and improving economic relationships with the West, especially Britain. The British government, because of its colonial ties enjoyed prominent position in Nigeria's foreign policy, so most of the diplomatic relationships established within this

period tallied with the interest of Britain. This lopsided form of policy formulation and establishing diplomatic relations underscored the need and innovations in the use of culture to extend relationships far and wide.

The use of diplomacy has increased high level of peaceful activity between nations in the international community. Diplomatic relationships could occur in the midst of war, violent conflict or orchestration of economic interests. In developing diplomatic relationships, nations have committed themselves to the use of the most sellable factors and elements within reach of such a nation. This explains the important development that characterises modern diplomacy. This is well reflected in diplomatic terms such as "dollar diplomacy", "oil diplomacy", "resource diplomacy", "cultural diplomacy" and "atomic diplomacy". With the exception of the last form, all other forms are regarded as "soft power"; and these are targeted towards the mass audience. These new issues which constitute diplomacy goes beyond the sometimes narrow politico-strategic conception which characterised old diplomacy (Mbachu, 1998). Notwithstanding the overreaching importance of these "soft powers" highlighted above, not many countries are gearing their diplomatic relations towards them. Unfortunately, Nigeria has failed to take initiatives into expanding the potentials of its rich cultural heritage to attract foreign tourists or in its developing its diplomatic relationships. The over-dependence on oil diplomacy remains an impediment working against the utilisation of culture to expand diplomatic ties to other nations and also grow the national economy.

A critical overview of the Nigerian foreign diplomatic ties shows that cultural improvement remains an aspect under-explored despite its relevant posture in the Nigerian society explaining the need for its projection abroad. The objectives of any country in terms of foreign policy must be related to the resources of the country so as to actualise the stated goals and plans (Mbachu, 1998). By extension nations extensively utilise the available means to ensure the actualisation of such goals, however in the case of Nigeria the pre and post 1976 foreign policy objectives shows high unrealistic and non-attainment tendencies given the lack of economic independence of Nigeria. Given this scenario, the use of culture and cultural exchanges could be a leap forward in projecting the national interest of Nigeria abroad and also scaling its economic prowess. The cultural diversity of Nigeria is an exciting and potential means of exploring the economic value of culture for

national development and in strengthening diplomatic ties between nations in the international community.

The mono economic structure of Nigeria's politico-economic system makes culture very imperative in establishing diplomatic relations, especially with super economic powers such as the United States of America. For this reason, there is a need for Nigeria's foreign policy objectives to revolve around culture and other related resources of the country. It would be counter-productive for Nigeria to formulate and implement its objectives that will not improve its comparative advantages in the international community. A critical overview of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives both in the first and second republic clearly explains the unpreparedness of Nigeria to key into the cultural innovation to boost its diplomatic relations with other nations. So much emphasis has been placed on attaining political goals for Nigeria and extension of big brother hands to other African nations, especially those still under colonial dominance; without realisable means of attaining these goals. Nigeria from independence has remained a mono-cultural economy with over 90% dependency on oil revenues; this lopsided position places the country on a vulnerable situation in asserting or realising its goals in international relations. While it is in the interest of nations to ensure that their foreign policy goals are best realised based on the domestic capabilities, it is imperative that Nigeria begins to complement its weak military, political and economic capabilities with the numerous unexplored cultural opportunities provided by its ethnic diversities. These diversifications will create an avenue for more robust diplomatic relations between Nigeria and other nations in the international community.

From the foregoing, it will be erroneous to conclude that the Nigeria government has not made some strides in developing and utilising the importance of culture in projecting its image abroad. From independence, the country has continued to work in partnership with local and international cultural agencies in promoting the cultural image of Nigeria abroad and by extension, promoting its foreign policy goals. The establishment of domestic institutions that underpin culture and express Nigeria's cultural policy and diplomacy are the Ministries of Culture and Tourism, Information and Communications, Foreign Affairs. Other bodies include the country's diplomatic mission, National Council for Arts and Culture, Nigerian Television Authority, National Troupe, the Film Institutes, various national universities, the national theatre, the national museum and Center for Blacks and African Arts and Civilizations, the Nigerian Nollywood. It is important

to note that despite the tremendous roles of these public institutions in promoting the cultural heritage of Nigeria to the outside world, the history and management of these institutions from 1960-2010 remains a chequered one owing to the erroneous impression that there is no need for a special institution to be constituted for managing the image of Nigeria abroad (Anaemene, 2015). Notwithstanding, these public institutions have recorded tremendous achievement in organising festivals and carnivals both at home and abroad. These festivals have, in many ways, helped to promote the image of Nigeria and also formed the basis for establishing critical diplomatic ties with nations. A clear example is the collaboration between the Nigeria Embassy in Washington and the Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC). The major aim was to promote and preserve African cultures so as to advance the objectives of Nigerian foreign policy in the United States and the Americas. The collaboration set out to achieve the protection and promotion in particular of Nigeria's national interest; and advancing Nigeria's artistic and cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. Specific areas of cooperation that were identified include colloquia on the role of culture and Nollywood in the new Nigerian diplomacy, exhibitions in the United States to be jointly sponsored by CBAAC and the Nigerian Embassy in Washington, concerts where Nigerian musicians would be invited to perform in the United States and an annual roundtable conversation on Nigerian culture in the Americas (Anaemene,2015).

Nigeria has also shown resilience in the use of culture to project its big brother role in Africa. Nigeria's leadership role and the manifestation of its foreign relations can be seen in the establishment of the Economic Community of West Africa in 1975. Its continuous supportive role to ECOWAS displays its defence for Africa's sovereignty and struggle of every African country to break away from colonialism. Nigeria was very instrumental in the Angolan independence struggle, South African struggle to end Apartheid, the Rhodesian struggle to break away from minority rule, the Liberian Crisis, Congo Crisis, Namibia and Mozambique decolonisation process etc. These critical roles earned Nigeria the "champion of Africa's interest" for standing its ground; it was a great accolade (Idahosa and Adebajo, 2017). To foster the African unity and heritage of blacks abroad, Nigeria in 1975 hosted FESTAC as a means of uniting the whole black race abroad and giving meaning to not just Africa but the entire black race. As Joy Ogwu rightly stated "Nigeria shares a destiny with blacks all over the

world and any quest for the preservation of its own values and aspirations was bound to encompass the values and aspirations of other members of the black world” (Ogwu, 1991:6).

Other key variants of culture in the implementation of Nigeria’s diplomatic ties is the establishment of Technical Aid Corps (TAC) in 1985 which principally aimed at deploying skilful Nigerians to emerging independent nations in Africa to aid in development and reconstruction. Nigeria continued playing a prominent role in the affairs of Africa is also exemplified in its leading role in the establishment of a New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) in 2001. A partnership that aims at marshalling out and implementing sustainable development in Africa; a key element will be for the unification of Africa’s economic and socio-political strength as a bloc in international negotiation. The formation of Nigerians in Diaspora Organisation (NIDO) with the further establishment of Nigeria Diaspora Commission in all countries where Nigerians reside can be seen as an effort in the right direction to enhance national development and take charge of affairs of Nigerians in Diaspora and ensure their effective instrumentalisation (Boma et al, 2015).

4. Manifestations of Culture in Nigeria’s Diplomatic Relations with the United States of America

Nigeria established diplomatic relations with the United States of America in 1960 after its independence from the United Kingdom. Following the recognition of the statehood of Nigeria by the international community, Nigeria entered into diplomatic ties with several nations of the world mostly on political and economic grounds; seeking for the need to boost its economic and political relevance in the global affairs. The establishment of the embassy by the United States of America in Nigeria led to the improvement of diplomacy between the two countries. As a major oil-producing nation in Africa, oil diplomacy has remained one of the most effective means of manipulating and strengthening diplomatic negotiations between the two countries. The manifestation of oil diplomacy in the foreign policy pursuit of Nigeria to other nations has relegated the capacity of diversifying its potentials to include other aspects of diplomacy such as the effective use of culture to promote a more cordial diplomatic relationship between Nigeria and the United States. Owing that Nigeria is a country highly rich in culture and cultural diversity, it is of great importance that the country seeks for ways to maximise its diplomatic potentials using cultural

exchanges especially in developing diplomatic relations with the United States.

Given that the United States of America occupies a highly strategic position in the international politics owing to its great economic, political and military standing, diversifying means of relating with the US will be of great value to Nigeria especially in terms of trade, and acquisition of military hardware equipment for fighting insecurity in the North East and other parts of the nations. Nigeria’s relationship with the United States has differed over various regimes. Nigeria’s first republic (1960-1966) witnessed a low level of diplomatic relations with the United States as the pattern of Nigeria’s relationship within this period was shaped by the nature of domestic politics, the British heritage, the character of Nigerian leaders at that time especially the Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa (Idahosa and Adebajo, 2017). At this point, Britain enjoyed prominence in terms of trade, political, economic and military; and the entire foreign policy of Nigeria. While the relationship with the US was not as antagonistic as it was with countries of the Eastern bloc such as Russia, the US did not have much influence in Nigeria’s diplomatic relationship. Not until the era of the oil boom of the 1970s did Nigeria pursue a robust foreign policy relying on its enormous oil deposit.

This period allowed Nigeria to pursue an active foreign policy as it did not depend on any nation to recover from the civil war. It was within this period activeness of Nigeria’s foreign policy that the United States committed to purchasing over 31 per cent of Nigeria’s oil in 1974 and became closer between 1976 and 1979 (Idahosa and Adebajo, 2017). This period also witnessed a growing cordial relationship between Nigeria and the United States as the then Head of state, Olusegun Obasanjo successfully conducted a visit to the States in October 1977 and the reciprocal visit by President Carter in April 1978; a similar visit that was earlier rejected by the United States during the regime of General Gowon between 1974 and 1975. At this point, Nigeria’s diplomatic prowess hinged on the enormous prospects of its oil power; however the non-diversification of “oil diplomacy” by the Nigeria government as at this time, continued to see to the dwindling impacts of Nigeria both in the international affairs and as a regional power. An effect can be seen in the recent economic depression of 2015-2017 and downward price of oil due to devastating impacts of Coronavirus on the global market.

Notwithstanding the above failures of Nigeria’s government to fully utilise the elements of culture in

manipulating diplomatic trends with the United States and other countries has been fully utilised by Asian countries in different countries of the world, it would also be totally wrong to say that culture and cultural exchanges have not played important roles in strengthening diplomatic ties between Nigeria and the United States. There have been impactful manifestations of culture and cultural exchanges in the relationship between Nigeria and the United States, especially in the fields of Literature, Arts, Music, Entertainment and Sports. Although on an unequal balance, Nigeria has maintained its relationship with the United States using its rich cultural diversity exhibited especially in music and stage drama to promote cultural dialogues and counter violent extremism as well. The Embassy of the United States in honour of Black History, organises several events on black history for a period of one month, showcasing the beauty and viability of Black History in strengthening diplomatic ties with various black countries in the world. In this year's events (2020) the United States Embassy at Nigeria collaborated with the Department of Theatre and Performing Arts, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria to host different arts, music and literature on Nigeria and African culture.

Cultural festivals have been a great model of projecting Nigeria's image abroad and strengthening diplomatic ties between Nigeria and the United States of America. Cultural festivals such as Argungu Fishing Festival, Calabar Carnival, Osun-Osogbo Festival, Durbar, Eyo, Black and Igue festivals. These festivals have drawn tourists from all over the world to Nigeria seeking to have a first hand of Nigeria's culture and this in the long translate to developing diplomatic relations in the form of public-private investment between state governments and international organisations seeking to invest in the cultural potentials of Nigeria. Cultural festivals remain a potent way of promoting and strengthening Nigeria's diplomatic relations with the United States.

Nigeria's movie industry (Nollywood) is a potent tool for promoting Nigeria's culture abroad. Over the years, most foreigners relate to Nigeria's culture and people through Nigerian home videos. Films are one of the most influential media in the society that has helped in promoting the nation's cultural values as well as laundering the image of the country abroad (Gloria, 2003). The Nollywood industry is today one of the most important tools of countering negative western narratives about Nigeria, as its project seeks to create a holistic view of Nigeria before its counterparts abroad. A typical example of such negative Western films was Hollywood film 'District

9' produced by Sony Corporation 2010. This film portrayed Nigerians as less than humans to the world. Another devastating image destroyer was documentary by Cable Network News, CNN images of how to rob a bank and a film released by a Canadian, '419 scams', seriously injured the already battered image of Nigeria. Nigerian films in its counter-narratives display the good, bad and ugly side of Nigeria showcasing a holistic aspect of the common lives of ordinary Nigerians. These films which are watched around the world such as in America, Europe, Caribbean, Canada etc., have helped to salvage the image of Nigerians abroad and also creates an avenue of collaboration and partnership between the Nigerian movie industry (Nollywood) and the American Hollywood. In recent times, there have been great collaborations between the two movie industries as major Nigerian actors and actresses are seen featuring in top Hollywood movies. Nigeria's Nollywood movies have become of its primary diplomatic tool; a reason for the inclusion of the industry by Prof. Dora Akunyili in 2009 to serve in rebranding project. Closely related to the films are the overreaching impacts of music in promoting Nigeria's cultural uniqueness abroad. Nigerian music and musicians are gaining high international eminence in the global music industry. It is recorded as one of the most played music around the world. In addition, the National Troupe of Nigeria and the Benue Dance Troupe have consistently toured and performed in foreign countries, extending a hand of friendship to the world. The impacts music and cultural dance has on Nigeria, is the ability to draw diplomats, researchers and tourists from other nations seeking to understudy or train in these dances.

Literature, arts, sports and food are other viable Nigeria's cultural tools that have promoted and continue to promote Nigeria's image abroad. Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" have been celebrated globally as the most acclaimed literature that rejuvenated the self-respect of the African man battered by colonialism and forced religion and culture. Chimamanda Adichie is another influential Nigerian author and cultural Ambassador whose strong opinionated ideas on African cultural feminism through her TedTalks, novels, and fashion projects Nigerian culture and society to the outside world. Her views on Nigerian fashion through her project "Fashion Nationalism" have increased the rate at which foreigners patronise Nigerian fashion. To her, African Traditional fashion should not merely be seen as a piece of the museum but showcase the vibrancy and diversity of African culture.

Nigerian athletes such as Blessing Okagbare, J.J Okocha, Kanu Nwankwo etc. are also serving as excellent tools of promoting cultural exchanges between Nigeria and the outside world. Sports create a viable manifestation of the use of culture in developing diplomatic relationship between Nigeria and the United. Nigerian food and cuisines all over the world, especially in the United States are not only a source of attraction for just Nigerians in the States but also foreigners. Although Nigeria is yet to fully maximise the inherent potentials that abound in projecting its image abroad through its unique cuisine, traditional cuisines remain one of the most viable ways of relating the histories of a people to the outside world.

5. Conclusion

This article has successfully demonstrated the viability of culture “soft power” in establishing and strengthening diplomatic relations among nations in the international community drawing from the successes and experiences of Asian and European nations in upholding and sustaining peaceful co-existence. It also underscored the accruing financial benefits of culture in not just establishing diplomatic relations but also boosting the socio-economic strength of nations. While the article establishes that culture has remained an imperative element of developing and sustaining diplomatic relationship between Nigeria and the United States, it also highlights the deficiencies in the effective use of culture by Nigeria’s government in heightening cultural exchanges and diplomatic relationships between Nigeria and other nations. Culture has not only become imperative in Nigeria’s diplomatic pursuit but highly necessary as the need and call for diversification of Nigeria’s economy in the face of falling global price and relevance of oil. Nigeria been a mono economic nation, the call for development and utilisation of culture for an enhanced diplomatic relationship and improving the economic capacity of Nigeria cannot be more needed than now.

Nigeria should draw experiences from the German example where the German foreign policy is culture oriented. More than half of the budget of the German Foreign Ministry is spent on cultural diplomacy. The British government, Chinese, Korean, French governments are also not relenting on this field of projecting its national image through the use of culture and cultural exchanges in not its political diplomacy but also “dollar diplomacy”. In the final analysis, it is apposite to assert that for over five decades of Nigeria’s existence as an independent state, culture has remained one of the key areas

where diversity has been a blessing rather than a curse. Nigeria has provided costumes to many African nations overrun by foreign culture and values. The huge successes Nigeria has recorded in the literary world, music, sports and Nollywood should be explored to the fullest as areas of comparative advantage. The utilisation and improvement of culture by the Nigerian government remains an unexplored means of pursuing its foreign policy as a developing nation.

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