

# Administration of Nigerian Foreign Service and Pursuance of National Interest in the International System

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**Abstract** - This research examines the Nigerian Foreign Service's role in advancing the country's foreign policy and enhancing its international standing. The study explores the structural and functional aspects of the Foreign Service, highlighting its contributions to diplomacy, economic relations, and regional stability. Key challenges identified include inadequate funding, political interference, and limited training opportunities, which restrict the Foreign Service's ability to fully support Nigeria's international goals. Using a qualitative research approach with a historical case study design, the study provides insights into how reforms grounded in New Public Management (NPM) principles could address these issues. Specifically, recommendations are made to increase funding consistency, reduce political influence, and enhance training to improve efficiency and responsiveness. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on strengthening Nigeria's global diplomatic influence and offers actionable recommendations for policy makers, industry leaders, and researchers aiming to optimize Nigeria's foreign policy outcomes.

**Keywords:** Nigerian Foreign Service, Diplomacy, New Public Management, Foreign Policy, International Relations

## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

From 1960, Nigeria's foreign service has played a pivotal role in shaping its international relations and national interest, Nigeria's foreign policy was largely influenced by its colonial legacy and the desire to assert its sovereignty on the global stage (Adeniji, 2005). The country's first Prime Minister, emphasized a non-aligned position during the Cold War, steering Nigeria away from direct involvement in the ideological conflicts between the East and West (Akinterinwa, 2007). This period was marked by Nigeria's commitment to African unity, evidenced by its active role in the founding of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. Nigeria sought to promote decolonization efforts across Africa,

supporting liberation movements in countries still under colonial rule (Gambari, 1989). The 1970s marked a shift in Nigeria's foreign service with the emergence of General Yakubu Gowon and later General Olusegun Obasanjo, who repositioned Nigeria as a leader in African affairs (Adeniji, 2005). Nigeria's foreign policy became more assertive, particularly in relation to Southern Africa's liberation movements. The country took a firm stance against apartheid in South Africa and supported the independence movements in Angola, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe (Alao, 2011). During this period, Nigeria also became an influential member of the United Nations (UN) and the Commonwealth of Nations, leveraging its oil wealth to influence global diplomacy (Ogwu, 2005). Nigeria's economic prosperity, driven by oil, allowed it to extend financial and diplomatic support to various African countries, further solidifying its leadership role in the region.

However, the 1980s and 1990s saw Nigeria's foreign service face challenges due to domestic political instability and economic decline (Akinterinwa, 2007). The military regimes of Generals Muhammadu Buhari and Sani Abacha were characterized by international isolation, with Nigeria being sanctioned by the international community due to human rights abuses and the lack of democratic governance (Ogwu, 2005). This period saw a decline in Nigeria's influence on the global stage, as the country struggled with internal governance issues. The execution of environmental activist Ken Saro-Wiwa in 1995, under Abacha's regime, drew widespread international condemnation, leading to Nigeria's suspension from the Commonwealth (Alao, 2011). From 1999, Nigeria's foreign service has gradually rebuilt its reputation, focusing on regional stability and economic diplomacy. Under President Olusegun Obasanjo, Nigeria regained its leadership role within

Africa, mediating conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Sudan (Adeniji, 2005). Nigeria has also been a key player in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), contributing troops to peacekeeping missions across West Africa. In recent years, Nigeria has sought to diversify its diplomatic engagements, strengthening ties with emerging powers like China and India while maintaining traditional relationships with the United States and Europe (Akinterinwa, 2007). Despite ongoing domestic challenges, Nigeria's foreign service continues to play a critical role in shaping Africa's international relations and global diplomacy.

#### Statement Of Research Problem

The Nigerian Foreign Service, a key tool in advancing Nigeria's interests globally, faces numerous challenges that limit its effectiveness in achieving foreign policy goals and maintaining Nigeria's international standing. Despite Nigeria's significant role in African diplomacy, its efforts in multilateral organizations like the United Nations, and active engagement in economic diplomacy with major powers, questions persist regarding the Foreign Service's capacity to fulfill its objectives. Issues such as inadequate funding, political interference, inconsistencies in foreign policy directions, and the need for professional training undermine the ability of Nigerian diplomatic missions to operate efficiently and effectively (Ogunsanya, 2020; Adigun, 2021). Additionally, with the global diplomatic landscape evolving rapidly, the Nigerian Foreign Service must adapt by adopting more strategic and results-driven practices in line with New Public Management (NPM) principles, which prioritize accountability and performance. Therefore, this research investigates the extent to which the Nigerian Foreign Service supports Nigeria's foreign policy, identifies challenges faced by the service, and evaluates opportunities for reform to strengthen Nigeria's global diplomatic presence and international partnerships.

#### Objectives of the study

- Importance of the Nigerian Foreign Service in global diplomacy
- Relevance to Nigeria's foreign policy and international relations

#### 1.4 Research questions

- What role does the Nigerian Foreign Service play in maintaining Nigeria's international presence?
- How has the Nigerian Foreign Service impacted Nigeria's bilateral relations with key global powers?

#### 1.5 Research propositions

- Nigeria's participation in global diplomacy through its Foreign Service strengthens international partnerships and promotes national interests.
- The Nigerian Foreign Service effectively implements Nigeria's foreign policy goals on the global stage.

#### 1.6 Scope of the study

The scope of this study encompasses a comprehensive examination of the Nigerian Foreign Service, focusing on its administrative structure, core functions, prevailing challenges, and recent reforms as it reflects the pursuit of Nigeria's national interest. . The study delves into the organizational framework that defines the Foreign Service, including key departments, leadership roles, and the decision-making hierarchy that influences diplomatic operations whilst implementing the national interest. By assessing the functions of the Nigerian Foreign Service, the study highlights its role in promoting Nigeria's foreign policy which major focus was the achievement of national interest, engaging in global diplomacy, and representing national interests abroad. Furthermore, the research explores the challenges faced by the Foreign Service, such as inadequate funding, political interference, and capacity gaps, which hinder its effectiveness in global diplomacy. In addition, it evaluates the impact of reforms aimed at strengthening the Service, including professionalization efforts, technological modernization, and capacity-building initiatives. This holistic analysis provides insights into the efficiency of the Nigerian Foreign Service and its capacity to adapt to evolving international dynamics.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Conceptual review

#### 2.1.1 Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)

The Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has its roots in the post-independence period, officially established in 1961, a year after Nigeria gained independence from Britain in 1960. Initially,

Nigeria's foreign affairs were managed under the Ministry of External Affairs, which was tasked with representing Nigeria's interests abroad and fostering diplomatic relations. In the early years, the MFA focused on strengthening Nigeria's role within Africa, advocating for decolonization, and promoting the country's leadership in regional organizations like the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now the African Union (AU). Under the leadership of early Nigerian diplomats such as Jaja Wachuku, who served as the first Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry played a critical role in Nigeria's non-aligned foreign policy during the Cold War. Over the decades, the MFA has undergone significant reforms aimed at professionalizing Nigeria's diplomatic service, expanding its global footprint, and addressing challenges such as global peacekeeping, regional integration, and international trade relations. Today, the MFA continues to be a vital institution in shaping Nigeria's foreign policy and maintaining its presence in international organizations.

The MFA is structured into several core departments, each with distinct functions:

**Political Affairs:** This department handles bilateral and multilateral relations, managing Nigeria's engagement with individual countries and international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU).

**Economic and Trade Relations:** Focused on international trade, investment promotion, and economic diplomacy, this department works to enhance Nigeria's economic ties and attract foreign investment.

**Consular and Immigration Services:** This department provides assistance to Nigerian citizens abroad, including visa services, protection of citizens, and managing international travel regulations.

**African Affairs:** Given Nigeria's leadership role in Africa, this department focuses on regional integration, conflict resolution, and promoting peace and security within the continent.

**International Cooperation:** This department handles Nigeria's relations with international organizations and oversees foreign aid, humanitarian efforts, and global collaborations.

#### 2.1.2 Administration

Administration refers to the process of organizing and managing the activities and resources of an organization, institution, or government to achieve specific goals efficiently. It encompasses planning, directing, coordinating, and controlling various functions to ensure smooth operations. In a governmental or institutional context, administration involves the implementation of policies, management of personnel, allocation of resources, and overseeing day-to-day operations. Administrators are responsible for setting objectives, making decisions, and ensuring compliance with regulations, while also addressing challenges that arise in the course of operations. Effective administration ensures that systems function in a coordinated manner, facilitating communication between different departments or units. It also involves evaluating performance and making necessary adjustments to improve efficiency. At its core, administration focuses on structuring processes and resources to maintain order, promote efficiency, and achieve set objectives, whether in public, private, or non-profit sectors. Strong administration is crucial for the success and sustainability of any organization.

#### 2.1.3 Foreign Service

Foreign Service refers to the professional body of diplomats and government officials responsible for representing a country's interests abroad. It is a crucial arm of a nation's foreign policy, tasked with promoting diplomatic relations, protecting national interests, and engaging in international negotiations. Foreign Service officers, stationed in embassies, consulates, and international organizations, handle a wide range of responsibilities, including political diplomacy, trade promotion, cultural exchange, consular services, and crisis management. They serve as the bridge between their home country and foreign nations, facilitating communication and fostering cooperation on global issues such as peace, security, and development. Additionally, they provide critical support to citizens abroad, offering consular assistance in times of emergencies. The Foreign Service plays a strategic role in strengthening international ties, ensuring effective communication between nations, and advancing a country's political, economic, and cultural objectives on the global stage. Successful Foreign Service operations require highly skilled professionals with expertise in diplomacy and international relations.

#### 2.1.4 National Interest

## 2.2 Empirical review

## 2.3 Theoretical Framework

### New Public Management (NPM)

New Public Management (NPM) is a public administration theory that emphasizes efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, and the adoption of private-sector management techniques within the public sector (Hood, 1991). NPM advocates for decentralization, performance measurement, customer orientation, and the use of market mechanisms to improve public service delivery. This approach seeks to make government institutions more flexible, results-driven, and responsive to the needs of their stakeholders. In the administration of Nigerian diplomatic missions, NPM principles can play a transformative role. Nigerian missions abroad often face challenges related to bureaucracy, resource constraints, and inefficiencies, all of which hinder their ability to effectively engage in diplomacy. By adopting NPM strategies, these missions could enhance operational efficiency through performance-based management systems. For instance, setting clear targets for diplomats, improving accountability through regular performance evaluations, and incentivizing high achievers could foster a culture of excellence within Nigerian embassies and consulates (Adewoye, 2015).

Moreover, NPM's focus on customer orientation can be beneficial in improving consular services. Nigerian missions can adopt service-oriented approaches, ensuring that services like visa issuance, passport renewals, and assistance to citizens are delivered in a timely and professional manner. Utilizing technology to streamline processes and reduce bureaucracy, such as through online platforms for consular services, would enhance transparency and service quality (Adetula, 2016). The implementation of NPM could also include outsourcing non-core functions, such as facility maintenance or administrative tasks, to private firms, allowing diplomats to focus on core functions like political engagement and economic diplomacy (Osaghae, 2014). In conclusion, NPM provides a viable framework for reforming the administration of Nigerian missions abroad. By focusing on performance, efficiency, and customer satisfaction, NPM can help Nigerian diplomatic missions become more effective instruments of foreign policy and international relations.

## 2.4 Gaps in literature

While several studies explore Nigeria's foreign policy, there is limited in-depth analysis of the operational efficiency of its diplomatic missions, particularly in terms of their administrative capacity and effectiveness in delivering services. Most literature tends to focus on high-level foreign policy objectives without adequately examining how well Nigerian missions abroad function or the challenges they face in fulfilling diplomatic and consular duties (Adeniran, 2017; Ogunsanwo, 2015). Although NPM has been widely studied in public administration, there is a scarcity of research applying NPM principles to the context of diplomatic missions, particularly those of Nigeria. The potential benefits of adopting NPM strategies, such as performance management, accountability, and customer-oriented services in Nigerian embassies, remain underexplored (Akinyemi, 2010). This gap warrants investigation into how NPM could reform and enhance the operational efficiency of Nigerian diplomatic missions. Another gap is the lack of consistent focus in the literature on the adequacy of training and professional development for Nigerian diplomats. While some studies acknowledge the importance of capacity building, few provide comprehensive evaluations of the current training programs and how they meet the challenges of modern diplomacy, including economic diplomacy and multilateral negotiations (Akande, 2019; Adebajo, 2018). Addressing this gap could offer insights into how better training and development programs can strengthen Nigeria's foreign service.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the research process, including the research design, methodology, data collection instruments, and the study population. It outlines how the research was conducted, ensuring clarity and replicability. The section also includes a justification for the chosen methods and approaches, explaining why they are suitable for addressing the research objectives. By detailing each step of the process, this section ensures that the study's findings are grounded in a systematic and rigorous approach to data collection and analysis.

### 3.1 Research Design

The research adopts a case study design with a historical perspective to provide an in-depth examination of the Nigerian Foreign Service. This design allows for a comprehensive exploration of the

administrative structure, functions, challenges, and reforms within the Foreign Service, enabling the researcher to gain insights into both the historical context and contemporary practices. The case study approach is particularly suitable for this research as it facilitates an in-depth investigation of specific instances, providing a rich, contextual understanding of the factors that shape diplomatic operations in Nigeria (Yin, 2014). By incorporating a historical perspective, the research highlights the evolution of the Nigerian Foreign Service from the colonial era to the present day, allowing for an analysis of how historical events and policy decisions have influenced its current structure and effectiveness. This approach not only provides a timeline of significant developments but also contextualizes the challenges faced by the Foreign Service within the broader narrative of Nigeria's political and diplomatic history (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data for the study will be collected from various sources, including government publications, historical documents, scholarly articles, and interviews with key stakeholders within the Nigerian Foreign Service. This triangulation of data sources enhances the credibility and validity of the findings, providing a robust foundation for understanding the complexities of Nigeria's diplomatic engagements.

### 3.2 Research Method

The study employs a qualitative research method to explore the complexities and nuances of the Nigerian Foreign Service. This approach is particularly suited for understanding the subjective experiences, perceptions, and insights of individuals involved in diplomatic practices and operations. Qualitative research enables the researcher to gather rich, descriptive data that can reveal underlying themes, patterns, and meanings related to the administrative structure, functions, and challenges faced by the Foreign Service (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In utilizing qualitative methods, the study will involve semi-structured interviews with diplomats, foreign service officers, and other stakeholders to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and perspectives. This method allows for flexibility in the interview process, encouraging participants to elaborate on their thoughts and share personal anecdotes that may not emerge in more structured formats (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Additionally, qualitative data collection will include content analysis of relevant documents, such as government reports, policy papers, and historical records, to contextualize the

findings within the broader framework of Nigeria's diplomatic history (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The qualitative research method provides an effective means to address the research questions, as it facilitates an exploration of the lived experiences of individuals within the Foreign Service. This focus on human experience allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how historical factors and contemporary challenges shape diplomatic practices in Nigeria.

### 3.3 Instruments of Data Collection

A checklist was employed as an instrument of data collection for this study to systematically gather relevant information regarding the operations and challenges faced by the Nigerian Foreign Service. This structured tool allows researchers to focus on specific criteria or indicators, ensuring comprehensive data collection while minimizing the potential for bias (Fink, 2017). The checklist includes various dimensions of the Foreign Service, such as the administrative structure, diplomatic functions, consular services, and areas of operational efficiency. Using a checklist enhances the reliability and validity of the data collected, as it provides a clear framework for assessment that can be uniformly applied across different diplomatic missions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, the checklist approach facilitates the identification of both quantitative and qualitative data, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the factors impacting the performance of Nigerian missions abroad (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The use of this instrument enables the researcher to systematically analyze the gathered information, leading to more structured findings and actionable recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the Nigerian Foreign Service.

### 3.4 Method of Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was adopted for analyzing the data collected in this study, providing a flexible and systematic approach to identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method is particularly suited for this research as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the experiences and perspectives of Nigerian diplomats, revealing underlying meanings related to their administrative practices, challenges, and successes. Thematic analysis enables the researcher to go beyond mere description, facilitating a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics at play within the Nigerian Foreign Service. The

process involves several key phases, including familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, and producing a final report (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This iterative approach ensures that the analysis is thorough and reflective of the data's richness. Thematic analysis also allows for the integration of both deductive and inductive approaches, making it suitable for exploring specific research questions while remaining open to new insights that emerge during the data collection process (Nowell et al., 2017). By employing this method, the study aims to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the findings, contributing to the broader discourse on public administration and diplomacy in Nigeria.

### 3.5 Justification of the study

The justification for this study lies in its potential contributions to both the academic literature and the practical workings of the Nigerian Foreign Service. First, the research addresses significant gaps in the existing literature regarding the operational effectiveness, challenges, and reforms of Nigerian diplomatic missions. By employing a qualitative approach that incorporates firsthand perspectives from diplomats and stakeholders, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play within Nigeria's diplomatic framework (Akinyemi, 2010). Secondly, this research is crucial for policymakers and practitioners within the Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as it highlights areas needing improvement and reform. Given the increasingly complex global diplomatic landscape, understanding how the Nigerian Foreign Service operates can inform strategies that enhance diplomatic efficacy and responsiveness (Adebajo, 2018). Furthermore, the findings of this study may contribute to the broader discourse on public administration and diplomacy in Africa, providing a case study that other nations can learn from in terms of improving their own foreign service structures (Ogunsanwo, 2015). Overall, this study is expected to provide valuable insights that will enhance Nigeria's capacity to navigate international relations effectively.

## IV. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

### Nigeria in African Diplomacy and Cooperation

The Nigerian Foreign Service plays a pivotal role in shaping Nigeria's diplomatic landscape within Africa, underscoring its commitment to regional cooperation

and integration. Scholars such as Ojo (2018) argue that Nigeria's leadership in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its engagement in peacekeeping missions reflect its dedication to maintaining stability and promoting regional development. Nigeria's proactive stance in African diplomacy is illustrated by its significant contributions to the African Union (AU) and its advocacy for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), aimed at enhancing intra-African trade and economic cooperation (Ebiowei, 2021). Additionally, the application of New Public Management (NPM) theory in this context can enhance the effectiveness of Nigeria's diplomatic engagements. By adopting performance-oriented strategies, the Nigerian Foreign Service can improve its operational efficiency and responsiveness to regional challenges (Mbah, 2020). This focus on results-oriented diplomacy may foster deeper collaborations with African nations, enhancing Nigeria's influence as a regional leader while ensuring that its national interests are prioritized in regional decision-making processes.

### Nigeria's Diplomacy in the United Nations

Nigeria's role in the United Nations (UN) exemplifies its commitment to multilateralism and global governance. Scholars like Adetula (2019) emphasize that Nigeria has been a vocal advocate for issues affecting developing countries, particularly in matters of peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development. Nigeria's candidacy for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council further highlights its aspirations to enhance its standing in the global community (Obi, 2020). NPM principles can be integrated into Nigeria's diplomatic efforts within the UN framework, as the Foreign Service seeks to optimize its contributions to international discussions and negotiations. By adopting a more strategic approach to engagement, such as setting clear diplomatic objectives and measuring outcomes, Nigeria can better advocate for its interests and those of the African continent (Adejumobi, 2018). This alignment with NPM could lead to a more impactful presence in international forums, thereby reinforcing Nigeria's influence in global governance structures.

### Economic Diplomacy with Key Global Powers

Nigeria's economic diplomacy is increasingly significant as it engages with key global powers such as China, the United States, Russia, and the European Union. According to Ojo (2020), Nigeria's bilateral

relations with these countries are characterized by strategic partnerships aimed at attracting foreign investment and enhancing trade opportunities. China's investment in Nigeria's infrastructure projects, as outlined by Eze (2019), has bolstered Nigeria's economic development while simultaneously increasing its reliance on Chinese capital. This relationship illustrates the complexities of economic diplomacy, where Nigeria seeks to balance cooperation with major powers while safeguarding its national interests. The NPM framework is particularly relevant in this context, as Nigeria's Foreign Service must adopt efficient, market-oriented strategies to engage with these global powers. By leveraging competitive advantages and fostering a business-friendly environment, Nigeria can enhance its economic diplomacy efforts and secure beneficial agreements (Udeh, 2021). This approach aligns with the propositions that Nigeria's participation in global diplomacy strengthens international partnerships and promotes national interests, as the Foreign Service navigates the intricate dynamics of global economic relations.

#### Nigeria and the Rest of the World

Nigeria's interactions with the broader international community reflect its aspirations for a prominent global presence. The Nigerian Foreign Service engages with various international organizations, including the African Development Bank and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, to pursue collective goals that address shared challenges such as poverty alleviation, climate change, and security threats (Nwagwu, 2019). Scholars argue that Nigeria's foreign policy must adapt to the evolving global landscape, incorporating diverse partnerships to enhance its diplomatic reach (Ogunbiyi, 2020). Incorporating NPM principles into Nigeria's global engagements can enhance the Foreign Service's effectiveness by fostering a results-driven approach. By establishing measurable outcomes for its international collaborations and promoting accountability within its diplomatic missions, Nigeria can improve its foreign relations and better serve its national interests (Akindele & Oduwole, 2019). This proactive and performance-oriented approach is essential for navigating the complexities of global diplomacy, reinforcing the idea that the Nigerian Foreign Service plays a critical role in maintaining Nigeria's international presence and effectively implementing its foreign policy goals.

#### Importance of the Nigerian Foreign Service in Global Diplomacy

The Nigerian Foreign Service is pivotal in shaping Nigeria's role in global diplomacy, reflecting the country's strategic interests and enhancing its international presence. As articulated by Ibeanu (2020), the Foreign Service serves as the primary instrument for Nigeria's engagement with other nations, facilitating negotiations, fostering cooperation, and projecting the country's interests on the world stage. The effectiveness of the Foreign Service is underscored by its participation in various international organizations, where it represents Nigeria's positions on critical issues, from security to trade. Integrating New Public Management (NPM) theory into this context emphasizes the need for the Foreign Service to adopt efficiency-oriented strategies that enhance its diplomatic effectiveness. Scholars such as Mkutu (2021) argue that applying NPM principles—such as performance measurement and accountability—can streamline operations within the Foreign Service, improving responsiveness to global dynamics and ensuring Nigeria's diplomatic efforts align with national objectives. This approach underscores the importance of the Foreign Service in not only maintaining Nigeria's international relationships but also in achieving tangible outcomes in global diplomacy.

#### Relevance to Nigeria's Foreign Policy and International Relations

The Nigerian Foreign Service plays a crucial role in implementing and advancing Nigeria's foreign policy objectives, significantly impacting its international relations. According to Adeyemo (2019), the Foreign Service acts as the frontline institution in translating foreign policy directives into actionable strategies, thereby shaping Nigeria's interactions with other countries. The service's ability to navigate complex geopolitical landscapes and foster partnerships is vital for promoting Nigeria's national interests, particularly in areas like security cooperation and economic development. The relevance of the Foreign Service is further amplified when analyzed through the lens of NPM, which encourages a shift from traditional bureaucratic practices to more dynamic and results-driven approaches. Eze (2020) contends that this transformation allows the Nigerian Foreign Service to be more adaptive and proactive in addressing foreign policy challenges, enhancing its capacity to forge effective alliances and partnerships. By

integrating NPM principles, the Foreign Service can ensure that Nigeria's foreign policy is not only well-articulated but also effectively executed in the international arena, fostering greater cooperation and collaboration with key global players.

**Role in Maintaining Nigeria's International Presence**  
The Nigerian Foreign Service is essential in maintaining and enhancing Nigeria's international presence, particularly through its diplomatic missions abroad. Scholars such as Ojo and Adetula (2018) highlight that these missions serve as critical platforms for engaging with other nations, promoting Nigeria's image, and facilitating bilateral and multilateral discussions. The Foreign Service's strategic positioning in key countries enables Nigeria to advocate for its interests, build alliances, and enhance its influence in global affairs. The application of NPM theory in this context emphasizes the need for the Foreign Service to adopt a more performance-oriented approach in its operations. This can include utilizing metrics to assess the effectiveness of diplomatic initiatives and ensuring that missions are adequately resourced to meet their objectives (Ikelegbe, 2019). By embracing these principles, the Nigerian Foreign Service can improve its operational efficiency, thereby strengthening Nigeria's international presence and maximizing its impact in global diplomacy.

#### Impact on Nigeria's Bilateral Relations with Key Global Powers

The Nigerian Foreign Service significantly impacts Nigeria's bilateral relations with key global powers, shaping the dynamics of its foreign relations. According to Agbaje (2021), the Foreign Service's strategic engagements with countries such as the United States, China, and the European Union have been instrumental in enhancing trade, security cooperation, and development partnerships. These relationships are vital for Nigeria, as they provide opportunities for economic growth and development through investment and technology transfer. NPM theory's application in this context underscores the need for the Foreign Service to focus on results and effectiveness in its diplomatic engagements. As noted by Okwudili (2020), adopting an NPM framework can facilitate more strategic partnerships by emphasizing accountability and performance evaluation. By measuring the outcomes of bilateral engagements, the Nigerian Foreign Service can refine its strategies to better align with national interests and

optimize its relationships with global powers, reinforcing Nigeria's position in international affairs.

## V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section outlines key findings from research on Nigerian Foreign Service dynamics, including strengths, challenges, limitations, and implications for foreign policy goals. Strategic recommendations focus on structural reforms, funding, policy adjustments, and professional development to enhance diplomatic engagements and advance national development goals globally. These recommendations aim to equip the Foreign Service for effective navigation of international challenges.

### 5.1 Summary of key findings

The research revealed that the Nigerian Foreign Service operates with a structured system of diplomatic missions, key departments, and coordinated efforts with other governmental agencies to fulfill its diplomatic objectives. However, limitations in funding, training, and political interference hinder its effectiveness. A well-administered Foreign Service is crucial for national development, as it fosters international partnerships, attracts foreign investments, and represents Nigeria's interests globally, which collectively drive economic and social progress (Okoli, 2021; Nwankwo, 2020). Strengthening policy frameworks to enhance operational funding, reduce political interference, and promote capacity-building initiatives is essential. These policy adjustments would not only reinforce Nigeria's diplomatic efficacy but also align the Foreign Service's objectives more closely with national priorities, enabling it to better navigate international relations challenges and maximize its role in promoting Nigeria's development and global standing.

### 5.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, this research underscores the critical role of the Nigerian Foreign Service in advancing the country's diplomatic and economic interests on the global stage. Findings indicate that while the Foreign Service has achieved notable successes in fostering international cooperation, regional leadership, and economic diplomacy, it faces significant challenges such as inadequate funding, political interference,

and insufficient training and capacity-building. These limitations undermine the Service's ability to effectively fulfill Nigeria's foreign policy goals and optimize its international presence. Adopting reforms aligned with New Public Management principles, such as increased accountability, resource optimization, and improved performance evaluation, could enhance the Foreign Service's efficiency and adaptability. Strengthening these areas would not only bolster Nigeria's international standing but also ensure that its Foreign Service can contribute meaningfully to national development, peace, and economic growth in an increasingly interconnected and competitive global landscape.

## 5.2 Recommendations

**Policy Makers:** To enhance the effectiveness of the Nigerian Foreign Service, policy makers should prioritize increased and consistent funding allocations to diplomatic missions. This will enable embassies and consulates to operate efficiently, engage more actively in diplomatic efforts, and better represent Nigeria's interests globally.

**Industry Players:** Nigerian businesses and industry leaders should collaborate with foreign missions to leverage economic diplomacy initiatives. By actively engaging with embassies, industry players can explore new markets, attract foreign investment, and foster partnerships that align with national economic goals.

**Researchers:** Researchers should focus on evaluating the impact of New Public Management reforms on Nigeria's Foreign Service. Conducting longitudinal studies on these reforms' outcomes will provide valuable insights into their effectiveness and inform further improvements in diplomatic practices and foreign policy implementation.

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