

Impact of Nigeria's Strategic Alliances With South Africa: Diplomatic, Security And Economic Dimensions

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Abstract

The study examined the public perception of Nigeria's strategic alliances, focusing on their effects on diplomacy, security, national interest alignment, and economic development, with particular attention to its bilateral relations with South Africa. Descriptive research design was adopted using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The study population was 180 while the sample size was 123. Out of 123 copies of a questionnaire distributed, 111 were retrieved and analyzed using SPSS version 21. Findings revealed that Nigeria's global diplomatic relevance, national security improvements, and alignment of national interests with international partners are significantly influenced by its engagement with South Africa. In particular, the

country's collaborations with South Africa, alongside its engagements with regional and global organizations such as ECOWAS and the United Nations, are recognized for enhancing Nigeria's diplomatic stature and regional security frameworks. However, the findings also highlight skepticism about the economic outcomes of these alliances, particularly regarding trade diversification, domestic industrial growth, and technological development. The study recommended that strategic alliances—especially with South Africa—should be guided by clearly defined national priorities such as economic diversification, security enhancement, and technological advancement. The capacity of institutions involved in foreign policy formulation and implementation must be enhanced

to improve their negotiation strength, monitoring capability, and evaluation of international agreements. Agencies such as the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), and National Intelligence Agency (NIA) should be equipped with modern tools, training, and resources to ensure effective and professional diplomacy. Economic partnerships with South Africa should be strengthened by focusing on trade diversification, improving industrial capacity, and aligning bilateral cooperation with Nigeria's national development goals.

Keywords: Diplomatic, Economic, Security, Strategic Alliances

Introduction

In the contemporary global system, nations increasingly rely on strategic alliances to advance their developmental goals, enhance security, and improve their standing in international affairs (Ogbonnaya & Aremu, 2021; Okon & Udoh, 2023). Strategic alliances ranging from bilateral and multilateral agreements to regional and global partnerships have become essential instruments in shaping national growth trajectories, especially for countries in the Global South. For developing countries like Nigeria, which seek to achieve economic diversification, political stability, and enhanced global influence, foreign

partnerships offer opportunities to attract foreign direct investment (FDI), access advanced technologies, and gain diplomatic leverage (Adeniyi, 2022; Eze & Chukwuma, 2020).

Nigeria, as Africa's most populous nation and one of its largest economies, has historically played a prominent role in regional and continental diplomacy. Since independence in 1960, the country's foreign policy has evolved from the Afrocentric emphasis of the First Republic to more pragmatic, interest-driven approaches in recent years (Ojo & Adetula, 2019). Nigeria's active participation in organizations such as the African Union (AU), ECOWAS, the United Nations, and OPEC; its history of peacekeeping missions; and numerous bilateral trade and security agreements underscore its strategic use of diplomacy for national development objectives (Ibrahim & Onuoha, 2021). Notably, its bilateral relations with South Africa another major African power have emerged as a defining axis in continental politics, shaping cooperation on peacekeeping, conflict resolution, trade, and regional integration within the AU and beyond.

However, despite these engagements, Nigeria continues to face critical developmental challenges, including infrastructure deficits, widespread unemployment, insecurity, and economic

volatility. These persistent issues have raised concerns about the effectiveness of Nigeria's foreign policy and whether its strategic alliances particularly with South Africa and other global partners have translated into meaningful national growth outcomes (Ibeanu & Ifedi, 2023; Ugwueze, 2024). While Nigeria has forged significant partnerships with South Africa, China, the United States, the European Union, and neighboring African states, the sustainability and developmental impact of these alliances remain contested and warrant closer academic scrutiny. This study, therefore, seeks to critically analyze Nigeria's foreign policy directions with a focus on its strategic alliances, especially with South Africa, and their implications for national growth.

Statement of the Problem

Despite Nigeria's active engagement in global and regional affairs through various strategic alliances, the country continues to grapple with slow economic growth, insecurity, poor infrastructure, and a weak industrial base. Over the years, Nigeria has entered into multiple bilateral and multilateral partnerships with global powers such as China, the United States, and the European Union, as well as with key African states like South Africa, and within regional bodies like ECOWAS and the African Union. These alliances are often touted as avenues

for promoting investment, securing peace, and advancing technological and diplomatic cooperation.

However, the translation of these strategic alliances into measurable national growth remains ambiguous. For instance, while the Nigeria–China partnership has led to visible infrastructural projects, it has also raised concerns about debt sustainability, job creation for locals, and policy dependence. Similarly, Nigeria's complex relationship with South Africa characterized by both cooperation and rivalry has produced mixed outcomes. While bilateral agreements between the two leading African economies have supported collaboration in trade, peacekeeping, and regional integration, tensions such as xenophobic attacks on Nigerians in South Africa and competition for continental leadership have undermined the full potential of this partnership. In the same vein, security alliances have not substantially curbed the persistent insurgency in the North-East or widespread banditry in other regions.

There is thus a noticeable gap between the formulation of foreign policy and its practical outcomes, particularly regarding how strategic international relationships contribute to domestic development. This problem is further compounded by a lack of policy continuity, limited institutional capacity, and poor monitoring and

evaluation of foreign engagements. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the directions of Nigeria's foreign policy through the lens of its strategic alliances especially with South Africa and evaluating their actual impact on national growth.

Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by the following objectives:

- i. To identify the strategic alliances Nigeria has formed with South Africa, other countries, and international organizations.
- ii. To assess the impact of these alliances on Nigeria's economic development, political stability, and security architecture.

Research Questions

The study seeks to provide answers to the following questions:

- i. What are the strategic alliances Nigeria has formed in recent decades, particularly with South Africa, and what are their objectives?
- ii. In what ways have these alliances influenced Nigeria's economic growth, political stability, and national security?

Conceptual Discourse

i. Strategic Alliances: Strategic alliances are defined as formal agreements between nations to pursue shared goals while retaining individual sovereignty. These may include security partnerships, economic cooperation, technology transfers, and diplomatic collaborations.

ii. Foreign Policy: According to Nye (2017), foreign policy shapes the strategic orientation of states, determining how they interact with others to achieve national objectives. Alliances serve as instruments through which states project power, secure resources, and manage geopolitical risks.

iii. Nigeria's Foreign Policy Historical Context: Nigeria's foreign policy has evolved across different administrations. The First Republic was marked by a strong Afrocentric focus, aiming to support liberation movements and African unity (Aluko, 1981). The post-military and democratic eras saw a shift toward economic diplomacy, with emphasis on attracting foreign investment and expanding trade. Under various administrations including those of Obasanjo, Jonathan, and Buhari Nigeria has sought strategic partnerships with

countries like China, the U.S., India, and multilateral bodies (Adebajo, 2014).

- iv. **Strategic Alliances and National Development:** Ogwu (2016) argue that strategic alliances enhance a nation's ability to access foreign capital, expertise, and markets. Nigeria's collaboration with China under the Belt and Road Initiative has brought significant infrastructure investments. However, critics argue that such alliances often lack transparency and accountability, undermining their developmental potential (Okolie & Ugwueze, 2020). Furthermore, alliances in the ECOWAS region have helped in conflict resolution and peacekeeping, especially in countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone showing the link between regional diplomacy and national/regional security.

Empirical Review

Adebajo (2010) assessed Nigeria's foreign policy in West Africa and concluded that while Nigeria plays a leading role in regional peacekeeping and diplomacy, its strategic alliances often lack alignment with concrete economic development outcomes. This observation aligns with the recurring critique that Nigeria's foreign policy has been more symbolic than pragmatic. Similarly, Ogunnubi

and Okeke-Uzodike (2016) examined Nigeria–South Africa relations, revealing that despite shared leadership aspirations on the continent, internal political tensions and policy inconsistencies have hindered meaningful developmental gains from this strategic partnership.

Ezirim (2021) conducted a quantitative evaluation of Nigeria–China bilateral relations, demonstrating a positive correlation between strategic Chinese investments in infrastructure and Nigeria's economic growth metrics. However, the study also raised concerns about growing debt dependency and the opaque nature of some bilateral agreements. Likewise, Omede and Bakare (2014) reviewed Nigeria–United States relations in the context of security cooperation and found that while U.S. support has strengthened Nigeria's counterterrorism capacity, gaps in mutual trust and inconsistencies in domestic policy have reduced the long-term benefits of the alliance. Beyond Nigeria, Obasi (2022) analyzed strategic alliances in the ECOWAS region and found that countries that actively engage in structured regional partnerships experience more consistent economic growth due to shared infrastructure, trade incentives, and diplomatic coordination. This finding reinforces the value of multilateralism promoted by liberal institutionalist theory.

Despite these contributions, most of the studies reviewed have focused on

bilateral relations or security-oriented partnerships without a holistic analysis of how strategic alliances impact broader national development indicators such as industrial growth, technology transfer, or governance reform. Moreover, few studies integrate theoretical frameworks like realism or liberalism to interpret Nigeria's foreign policy behavior. This study, therefore, fills a crucial gap by evaluating Nigeria's strategic alliances through both empirical data and theoretical interpretation, focusing on their alignment with national development goals from 1999 to 2024.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts realism theory championed by Morgenthau (1948) and Waltz (1979). Realism, a dominant theory in international relations, posits that the international system is anarchic, and that states act primarily in pursuit of power and national interest to ensure their survival and security. The theory assumes that states are rational, unitary actors operating in a self-help system where power is the primary currency. From a realist perspective, alliances are not formed out of goodwill or shared values but are instead strategic moves aimed at gaining advantages in the global power structure.

Nigeria's foreign policy direction exemplifies these realist assumptions,

as its alliances with global powers such as China and the United States are often driven by practical interests such as accessing foreign investment, enhancing military capacity, and strengthening diplomatic leverage (Akinola & Obadare, 2020; Eze, 2021). Similarly, Nigeria's engagement with South Africa reflects a realist struggle for influence in Africa, as both states being continental powers compete and cooperate to shape regional leadership, promote trade, and strengthen security mechanisms within the African Union (AU) and ECOWAS frameworks. Through realism, Nigeria's engagement with international organizations like ECOWAS and the AU can also be viewed as strategic efforts to maintain regional dominance and manage external threats.

The relevance of realism to this study lies in its ability to explain Nigeria's foreign partnerships as pragmatic responses to economic and security pressures rather than ideological commitments. However, realism has been criticized for its state-centric focus, its neglect of non-state actors and transnational forces, and its limited consideration of cooperation, values, and global norms (Dunne & Schmidt, 2017). Despite these limitations, realism remains applicable to this study by providing a grounded understanding of how Nigeria particularly in its relations with South Africa uses strategic alliances to pursue national growth objectives in a competitive international system.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive research design, using both qualitative and quantitative methods (mixed-methods approach). The study population of 180 includes personnel from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), foreign policy analysts, academics in international relations, and diplomatic corps. The sampling is 123 derived through Krejcie and Morgan formula. Out of 123 copies of a questionnaire, 111 were retrieved and analyzed using SPSS version 21.

derlying construct, and the instrument can be considered reliable for research purposes.

Data Presentation and Interpretation

Table 4.2.1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.783	12

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

The reliability analysis indicates that the 12-item scale has a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.783, which reflects an acceptable level of internal consistency among the items. According to conventional benchmarks, an alpha value above 0.7 is considered acceptable, above 0.8 is good, and above 0.9 is excellent. Therefore, the value of 0.783 suggests that the items on the scale are consistently measuring the same un-

Table 4.2.2: Strategic alliances Nigeria has formed with South Africa, other countries and international organizations

S/N	Items	SD	D	U	A	SA	Total	Re- mark
1	Nigeria's strategic alliances with other countries (South Africa) have positively influenced its economic development.	29 (26.1%)	30 (27%)	6 (5.4%)	20 (18%)	30 (8.3%)	111 (100%)	Dis- agree
2	Partnerships with international organizations have enhanced Nigeria's global diplomatic relevance.	4 (3.6%)	9 (9.1%)	7 (6.3%)	59 (53.2%)	29 (26.1%)	111 (100%)	Agree
3	The Nigerian government effectively leverages strategic alliances for national security improvement.	4 (3.6%)	14 (12.6%)	4 (3.6%)	65 (58.6%)	24 (21.6%)	111 (100%)	Agree
4	Nigeria's collaborations with foreign countries align well with its national interests.	9 (8.1%)	19 (17.1%)	1 (.9%)	48 (43.2%)	34 (30.6%)	111 (100%)	Agree
5	The outcomes of Nigeria's international alliances are effectively communicated to the public.	13 (11.7%)	20 (18%)	7 (6.3%)	40 (36%)	31 (27.9%)	111 (100%)	Agree
6	Strategic alliances have led to significant technological and educational advancements in Nigeria.	28 (25.2%)	24 (21.6%)	24 (21.6%)	40 (36%)	11 (9.9%)	111 (100%)	Agree

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

The data presented in the table offers insight into respondents' perceptions of Nigeria's strategic alliances with other countries and international organizations, including its bilateral relations with South Africa. Out of six items assessed using a Likert scale, five were rated with an overall "Agree" remark, while one received a "Disagree" rating. Specifically, the first item whether Nigeria's strategic alliances with other countries have positively influenced its economic development was disagreed with by a slight majority (26.1% strongly disagreed and 27% disagreed), resulting in a total of 53.1% negative responses and leading to a "Disagree" remark. This outcome reflects persistent public skepticism about the economic dividends of partnerships, even with leading allies such as South Africa, despite their high-profile bilateral trade and investment agreements.

In contrast, all other items reflected general agreement. For instance, Item 2, which evaluates whether partnerships with international organizations have enhanced Nigeria's global diplomatic relevance, had a strong level of agreement (53.2% agree, 23.4% strongly agree). Similarly, Item 3 on leveraging alliances for national security showed high agreement (58.6% agree and 21.6% strongly agree), suggesting confidence in the government's strategic cooperation with both global partners and African counterparts, including South Africa,

on peacekeeping and counterterrorism efforts. Item 4, which explores alignment with national interests, also drew majority agreement (73.8% combined agree and strongly agree), as did Item 5, concerning public communication of alliance outcomes (63.9%).

However, Item 6 on technological and educational advancement through alliances yielded a more divided response, with 46.8% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing and 45.9% agreeing or strongly agreeing. Although it still received an overall "Agree" remark, the mixed responses highlight uncertainties about whether alliances, including those with South Africa, are successfully translating into tangible gains in knowledge transfer, innovation, and human capital development.

Overall, the responses indicate a generally positive perception of Nigeria's strategic alliances, particularly in the areas of diplomacy, security, and alignment with national interests. Nevertheless, skepticism remains regarding their economic impact and technological benefits, underscoring the need for Nigeria to strategically recalibrate its partnerships especially with South Africa to ensure they deliver measurable outcomes in line with national development priorities.

Table 4.2.3: Impact of alliances on Nigeria's economic development, political stability, and security architecture

S/N	Items	SD	D	U	A	SA	Total	Re- mark
1	Strategic alliances have contributed significantly to Nigeria's economic growth and investment opportunities.	23 (20.7%)	80 (72.1%)	4 (3.6%)	2 (1.8%)	2 (1.8%)	111 (100%)	Dis- agree
2	Foreign partnerships have helped stabilize Nigeria's political institutions and governance.	2 (1.8%)	13 (11.7%)	7 (6.3%)	54 (48.6%)	35 (31.5%)	111 (100%)	Agree
3	Nigeria's security architecture has improved due to international defense and security collaborations.	3 (2.7%)	7 (6.3%)	5 (4.5%)	62 (55.9%)	34 (30.6%)	111 (100%)	Agree
4	Nigeria's political system has become more resilient as a result of international diplomatic engagement.	2 (1.8%)	25 (22.5%)	6 (5.4%)	49 (44.1%)	29 (26.1%)	111 (100%)	Agree
5	Joint security operations and intelligence sharing through alliances with South Africa have contributed to enhancing Nigeria's national security	5 (4.5%)	17 (15.3%)	2 (1.8%)	69 (62.2%)	18 (16.2%)	111 (100%)	Agree
6	Economic policies influenced by international alliances have positively impacted local industries	12 (10.8%)	16 (14.4%)	3 (2.7%)	50 (45%)	30 (27%)	111 (100%)	Agree

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

The data from the second table evaluates respondents' perceptions of the impact of alliances on Nigeria's economic development, political stability, and security architecture. Out of the six questionnaire items, five received an overall "Agree" remark, indicating positive perceptions, while one was rated "Disagree," highlighting concerns in a specific area. Item 1, which states that strategic alliances have contributed significantly to Nigeria's economic growth and investment opportunities, was overwhelmingly disagreed with (20.7% strongly disagreed and 72.1% disagreed), totaling 92.8% negative responses. This suggests a strong perception among respondents that strategic alliances including those with South Africa have not yet translated into tangible economic growth or increased investments at the national level.

Conversely, Items 2 to 6 all received predominantly positive responses. Item 2, on foreign partnerships stabilizing Nigeria's political institutions, had 80.1% agreement (48.6% agree and 31.5% strongly agree), indicating strong support for the political benefits of international collaboration. Item 3 shows that a large majority (86.5%) believe that Nigeria's security architecture has improved due to international defense and security collaborations. In this regard, respondents appear to recognize the role of bilateral cooperation with

South Africa and other regional partners in peacekeeping and intelligence-sharing initiatives. Similarly, Item 4, on political resilience through diplomatic engagement, had 70.2% agreement, though it also recorded 22.5% disagreement, suggesting that some skepticism remains about the consistency of diplomatic outcomes.

Item 5, which focuses on joint security operations and intelligence sharing, was rated positively by 78.4% of respondents, reinforcing the perception that alliances especially with South Africa in areas of counterterrorism and peacekeeping have strengthened Nigeria's security framework. Finally, Item 6, concerning the impact of international economic policies on local industries, also received an "Agree" remark, with 72% of respondents expressing agreement or strong agreement. This reflects optimism about the long-term potential of alliances, though the overwhelming disagreement on Item 1 suggests that Nigerians remain cautious about the immediate economic dividends of such partnerships.

Table 4.3. Regression

Table 4.3.1. Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.374 ^a	.140	12	.81082	1.645

a. Predictors: (Constant), impact b. Dependent Variable: strategic
Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

The model summary reveals a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.374, indicating a weak to moderate positive relationship between impact and strategic. The R Square value is 0.140, meaning that impact explains 14.0% of the variance in strategic. The Adjusted R Square is slightly lower at 0.132, which accounts for the sample size and number of predictors, showing a modest explanatory power. The standard error of the estimate is 0.81082, indicating the average distance between observed and predicted values of strategic. The Durbin-Watson statistic is 1.645, which falls within the acceptable range (1.5 to 2.5), suggesting that there is no significant autocorrelation in the residuals, and thus the independence of errors assumption is reasonably met.

Table 4.3.1. ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	11.653	1	11.653	17.725	.000 ^b
Residual	71.661	109	.657		
Total	83.314	110			

a. Dependent Variable: strategic b. Predictors: (Constant), impact
Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

The ANOVA results indicate that the model is statistically significant, with an F-value of 17.725 and a p-value of .000 ($p < 0.01$). This suggests that impact has a significant

effect on strategic, meaning that changes in impact are associated with meaningful changes in strategic. The regression sum of squares is 11.653, representing the portion of variance in strategic explained by impact. The residual sum of squares is 71.661, which reflects the portion of variance not explained by the model. The total variance in strategic is 83.314. Although the model is statistically significant, it explains only a modest portion (14%) of the total variance, as indicated in the model summary. Thus, while impact is a significant predictor of strategic, its effect size is relatively small, and other variables likely contribute to strategic as well.

Table 4.3.3. Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 1 (Constant)	1.796	.398		4.510	.000
impact	.467	.111	.374	4.210	.000

a. Dependent Variable: strategic

Source: *Researcher's Field Survey, 2025*

The table presents the regression coefficients for a simple linear regression model where strategic is the dependent variable and impact is the independent variable. The unstandardized coefficient for impact is 0.467, which means that for each one-unit increase in impact, the predicted strategic scores increases by 0.467, assuming all other variables are held constant. The standardized coefficient (Beta) for impact is 0.374, indicating a moderate positive relationship between impact and strategic, with a higher standardized coefficient suggesting that impact is a moderate predictor of strategic. Both the constant (intercept) and the coefficient for impact are statistically significant ($p = .000$), with t -values of 4.510 and 4.210, respectively, indicating that both the intercept and the impact predictor are significantly different from zero. This suggests that impact is a significant predictor of strategic, and the relationship between the two variables is both positive and statistically robust.

Table 4.4. Correlations

		strategic	Impact
strategic	Pearson Correlation	1	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)		109
	N	111	110
impact	Pearson Correlation	.374**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	111	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey, 2025

The table presents the regression coefficients for a simple linear regression model where strategic is the dependent variable and impact is the independent variable. The unstandardized coefficient for impact is 0.467, which means that for each one-unit increase in impact, the predicted strategic scores increases by 0.467, assuming all other variables are held constant. The standardized coefficient (Beta) for impact is 0.374, indicating a moderate positive relationship between impact and strategic, with a higher standardized coefficient suggesting that impact is a moderate predictor of strategic. Both the constant (intercept) and the coefficient for impact are statistically significant ($p = .000$), with t-values of 4.510 and 4.210, respectively, indicating that both the intercept and the impact predictor are significantly different from zero. This suggests that impact is a significant predictor of strategic, and the

relationship between the two variables is both positive and statistically robust.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from Objective One show that Nigeria’s strategic alliances reveal a largely positive perception, particularly in areas of diplomacy, security, and national interest alignment. Out of the six questionnaire items, five received an “Agree” rating, affirming respondents’ confidence in the benefits of international cooperation. A significant proportion agreed that alliances with international organizations have enhanced Nigeria’s global diplomatic relevance (76.6%), bolstered national security (80.2%), and supported national interest alignment (73.8%). These findings align with Adetula (2019) and Eze & Ukeje (2020), who argue that Nigeria’s strategic part-

nerships especially with regional bodies like ECOWAS, bilateral ties with South Africa, and global institutions such as the UN have elevated its diplomatic visibility and reinforced regional security frameworks. The public's perception that Nigeria is effectively leveraging these alliances for security gains is echoed in Akinboye & Adebisi (2021), who note that joint military training, anti-terrorism efforts, and intelligence-sharing agreements have strengthened Nigeria's internal security, particularly in counter-terrorism operations.

Conversely, skepticism remains regarding economic returns. The disagreement with Item 1 (53.1% disagreed that alliances have improved economic development) reflects wider concerns in the literature. For instance, Oni & Ayo-dele (2022) assert that while Nigeria has formed numerous bilateral and multi-lateral economic partnerships including trade cooperation with South Africa the impact on trade diversification and domestic industrial growth has been minimal due to policy inconsistency and corruption. This is consistent with Okonkwo (2023), who argues that Nigeria often enters economic alliances from a position of weakness, thereby limiting the strategic advantage gained. Technological and educational outcomes from alliances also received mixed feedback (45.9% agreement vs. 46.8% disagreement). This ambivalence is consistent

with Yahaya & Danjuma (2020), who contend that although foreign technical aid and educational exchange programs exist, their scalability and impact on national development remain constrained by domestic underinvestment and poor coordination.

Findings from Objective Two indicate that Nigeria's political and security partnerships through strategic alliances including its cooperation with South Africa have yielded significant benefits, though persistent challenges remain in translating these alliances into meaningful economic growth. Adeniyi & Olayiwola (2022) found that Nigeria's involvement in regional and international security frameworks, such as the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), ECOWAS-led missions, and bilateral defense collaborations with South Africa, has led to improved tactical coordination and enhanced national security, echoing respondents' agreement in Items 3 and 5. They argue that these alliances have been instrumental in mitigating transnational threats like terrorism and piracy. Similarly, Okonkwo (2023) emphasized that Nigeria's diplomatic engagement particularly with South Africa, the United Nations, and African Union has fostered greater political legitimacy and institutional development. This reflects the 80.1% and 70.2% agreement levels seen in Items 2 and 4 on political stability and resilience.

However, scholars also echo public skepticism about the economic impact of these alliances. Mohammed & Adebayo (2021) observed that while Nigeria continues to sign bilateral and multilateral economic agreements, the benefits have largely failed to trickle down due to weak implementation, poor infrastructure, and policy inconsistency. This supports the strong disagreement (92.8%) with Item 1 regarding the contribution of strategic alliances to economic growth. Eze & Uche (2022) further argue that although foreign economic policies have occasionally provided sector-specific gains such as in agriculture and technology they are often not comprehensive enough to drive nationwide industrialization. This nuance is reflected in Item 6, where 72% agreed on the impact of alliances on local industries, yet broader economic transformation remains in doubt.

Conclusion

This study set out to analyse Nigeria's foreign policy directions with a focus on strategic alliances and their contribution to national growth. It found that while Nigeria has been actively involved in numerous strategic partnerships both bilaterally and multilaterally the actual developmental benefits of these alliances are mixed. The country's engagement with international organizations has notably bolstered its global diplomatic relevance and enhanced its security frameworks.

The collaboration with regional bodies such as ECOWAS, bilateral relations with South Africa, and global institutions like the United Nations has played a crucial role in Nigeria's political and security dynamics, leading to improved coordination in counter-terrorism efforts, regional peacekeeping, and intelligence sharing.

However, economic outcomes from these partnerships have been less promising. Despite numerous bilateral and multilateral economic agreements including Nigeria–South Africa trade and investment frameworks Nigeria has struggled to see substantial benefits in trade diversification, industrial growth, and technological advancement. This disparity between the diplomatic and security gains on one hand, and the economic challenges on the other, underscores the complexities of effectively leveraging international partnerships for comprehensive national development.

Recommendations

Strategic alliances should be guided by clearly defined national priorities such as economic diversification, security enhancement, and technological advancement. This calls for close collaboration between the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget, and National Planning, and the National Economic Council to ensure

that all foreign engagements directly support Nigeria's medium- and long-term development strategies. The capacity of institutions involved in foreign policy formulation and implementation must be enhanced to improve their negotiation strength, monitoring capability, and evaluation of international agreements. Institutions such as the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), and the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) should be equipped with modern tools, training, and resources to ensure effective and professional diplomacy.

Economic partnerships should be strengthened by focusing on trade diversification, improving industrial capacity, and aligning partnerships with national development goals. In particular, Nigeria should maximize the opportunities offered by its bilateral alliance with South Africa through the Nigeria–South Africa Bi-National Commission, which can drive greater trade flows, industrial linkages, and technology transfer between the two countries. Collaboration between the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Investment, the Central Bank of Nigeria, and the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission will be crucial to achieving this.

The persistent issues of policy inconsistency and corruption must be addressed

to maximize the effectiveness of economic alliances. Strengthening institutional frameworks and ensuring better coordination between government agencies particularly the National Planning Commission, the Federal Ministry of Finance, and Anti-Corruption Agencies will be critical. Nigeria must also invest more in domestic infrastructure and human capital development. Here, bilateral educational and research exchange programs with South Africa should be scaled up, coordinated by the Federal Ministry of Education and the National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion, to support knowledge transfer and long-term national capacity building.

Finally, inclusive growth from security partnerships should be ensured, particularly in conflict-affected regions, by guaranteeing that the benefits from these alliances reach local communities. The Ministry of Defence, the Office of the National Security Adviser, and State Governors should collaborate to extend the positive impacts of security agreements to socio-economic development. Security cooperation with South Africa, especially in peacekeeping, counter-terrorism training, and intelligence sharing, should be further deepened and strategically linked to regional stability and grassroots development.

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