



## THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY 2020 – 2024 : CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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### ABSTRACT

*The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly affected the global landscape, reshaping international relations and national policies across the world. This paper examines the impact of the pandemic on Nigeria's foreign policy, analyzing both the Opportunities it created and the challenges it presented. The study adopted the Realist theory and employed qualitative method in its method of data collection and analysis, the study highlights how the crisis disrupted Nigeria's oil-dependent economy, hindered traditional diplomatic engagements, and exacerbated security concerns. However, it also explores how Nigeria leveraged its regional leadership role, strengthened its digital diplomacy, and advanced health diplomacy through collaborations such as the COVAX initiative. The paper argues that the pandemic, while posing significant challenges, also provided Nigeria with a platform to diversify its economy, deepen regional integration through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and enhance its global diplomatic presence. By utilizing a qualitative research methodology, this study assesses Nigeria's evolving foreign policy strategies during and after the pandemic, concluding that Nigeria must adapt its diplomatic framework to address future global challenges. The findings underscore the importance of economic diversification, digital diplomacy, and multilateral engagement in ensuring Nigeria's resilience and global influence in a post-pandemic world. The paper recommended that, Nigerian foreign policy need to undergo strategic adjustment to enhance the country's global influence, foster economic growth and address security concerns in the international system.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Nigeria's foreign policy, Digital diplomacy, Regional integration, Global health diplomacy, Multilateralism.

### 1.0

### INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in December 2019, rapidly transformed the global landscape, affecting virtually every aspect of human life, from health and economies to international relations. As a global health crisis, it reshaped how countries interacted with one another and fundamentally altered the dynamics of diplomacy, trade, and foreign policy. For



Nigeria, a country with a complex and diverse foreign policy, the pandemic presented both unique opportunities and significant challenges. Prior to the pandemic, Nigeria's foreign policy was largely characterized by its leadership role in Africa, strong ties with international organizations, and emphasis on economic diplomacy (Obi, 2020). However, the pandemic revealed vulnerabilities in these areas and forced Nigeria to adapt quickly to new realities. This adaptation, while difficult, also opened up new avenues for strengthening Nigeria's role in international affairs, particularly in the areas of health diplomacy, regional cooperation, and economic diversification.

The Nigerian foreign policy, guided by the principles of Pan-Africanism, economic development, and international cooperation, encountered substantial challenges as the pandemic disrupted global trade, diplomatic engagements, and security arrangements. According to the Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2020), Nigeria's foreign policy focuses on fostering international peace and security, regional economic integration, and addressing global challenges such as poverty and health crises. Yet, the COVID-19 pandemic threw these priorities into disarray. The pandemic's economic impact led to a sharp decline in global oil prices, which significantly affected Nigeria's economy, as oil exports are a major revenue source (Ajayi, 2020). The imposition of travel bans and border closures further strained Nigeria's diplomatic engagements and limited the country's ability to interact effectively with international partners, especially in areas of trade and humanitarian assistance.

Furthermore, the pandemic exacerbated existing health challenges in Nigeria and Africa more broadly, highlighting the importance of health diplomacy in foreign policy. As Nigeria faced increased pressure to manage its healthcare system and secure necessary medical supplies, it also realized the need for strengthened cooperation with international organizations and other nations. The Global Health Security Agenda, as well as Africa's public health response, became central to Nigeria's foreign policy during the pandemic. At the same time, the pandemic underscored the need for Nigeria to diversify its economy and reduce its dependence on oil exports, a matter that would have long-lasting implications on its international trade and diplomatic strategies (Akinmoladun, 2021). Despite the significant challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic also presented Nigeria with several opportunities to redefine its foreign policy and enhance its global influence. Nigeria's strategic response to the pandemic led to the country playing a leading role in regional health diplomacy through initiatives such as the African Union's Africa CDC (Centers for Disease



Control) and the COVAX initiative, aimed at securing equitable vaccine access for African nations (Chikwendu, 2021). Moreover, the crisis underscored the importance of multilateralism and reinforced Nigeria's commitment to international cooperation, particularly in areas related to global health, security, and economic recovery. As many nations focused inward during the pandemic, Nigeria seized the opportunity to strengthen its ties with regional and global partners, thereby enhancing its position in international affairs.

In addition to strengthening health diplomacy, the pandemic also brought to light the critical importance of digital diplomacy. As traditional face-to-face diplomatic meetings became impossible due to travel restrictions, Nigeria, like other countries, embraced digital platforms for conducting foreign policy dialogues. Virtual summits, online conferences, and digital engagement became essential tools for Nigeria to continue fostering international relations. This shift to digital diplomacy presents an opportunity for Nigeria to modernize its foreign policy approach, making it more efficient, accessible, and adaptable to global challenges (Ola, 2020). Through this transition, Nigeria has the potential to expand its diplomatic outreach, engage a broader audience, and enhance its global visibility.

The economic challenges posed by COVID-19 also created an opportunity for Nigeria to reassess its reliance on oil revenues and to shift its foreign policy priorities towards diversification and sustainable development. Nigeria's foreign policy has long been tied to its oil industry, but the pandemic demonstrated the vulnerability of this strategy. The reduction in oil prices and global demand during the pandemic pushed Nigeria to explore other avenues for economic growth, including strengthening regional trade agreements and seeking new trade partners. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which officially launched in January 2021, provides Nigeria with an opportunity to enhance intra-Africa trade and increase its participation in the global economy. The AfCFTA offers Nigeria a pathway to economic recovery and a platform to foster regional integration (Akpan, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on Nigeria's foreign policy, highlighting both vulnerabilities and opportunities. While the pandemic posed significant challenges, such as economic disruptions, diplomatic isolation, and health crises, it also offered Nigeria the chance to redefine its foreign policy priorities. By embracing digital diplomacy, strengthening health cooperation, and diversifying its economy, Nigeria has the potential to emerge from the pandemic more resilient



and better positioned to influence global and regional affairs. Moving forward, Nigeria's foreign policy will need to adapt to a post-pandemic world, emphasizing multilateralism, regional cooperation, and the development of sustainable economic strategies. The lessons learned during this period will undoubtedly shape Nigeria's foreign policy for years to come.

**The aim of the study** is to critically examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Nigeria's foreign policy, focusing on both the opportunities it created and the challenges it presented for the country in the international arena. The seminar aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Nigeria's foreign policy has evolved in response to the pandemic and how the country can leverage the lessons learned during this period to enhance its global and regional influence in the post-pandemic world. Through expert discussions, presentations, and group activities, participants will explore the strategic adjustments Nigeria has made in its diplomatic, economic, and security policies and identify pathways for enhancing its foreign policy effectiveness in a changing global landscape.

## **2.0**

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Conceptual Review**

#### **2.1.1 COVID-19 Pandemic:**

The COVID-19 pandemic refers to the global outbreak of a novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) that emerged in December 2019 in Wuhan, China, and rapidly spread across the world. It is characterized by its high transmissibility and severe impact on public health, economies, and global governance. Governments implemented lockdowns, travel restrictions, and health protocols to curb its spread, significantly disrupting economies and everyday life. The pandemic posed unprecedented challenges to healthcare systems, global trade, and diplomatic relations. Countries had to adjust their foreign policy priorities to address the immediate health crisis, while also managing economic recovery and maintaining international relations. The pandemic emphasized the interconnectedness of nations and the importance of global cooperation in addressing shared challenges.



### **2.1.2 Nigeria's Foreign Policy:**

Nigeria's foreign policy refers to the strategies, principles, and actions undertaken by the Nigerian government to safeguard its national interests and promote its standing on the global stage. The guiding principles of Nigeria's foreign policy are Pan-Africanism (the belief in the unity and cooperation of African nations) and economic diplomacy, focusing on trade, investment, and development, especially within the African context. Nigeria's foreign policy emphasizes multilateralism, peacekeeping, conflict resolution, and security, particularly in West Africa. Additionally, the country actively engages with international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Nigeria's foreign policy aims to maintain strong diplomatic ties with both African and global powers, balancing its regional influence with global partnerships.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts the Realism theory. The Realism theory of international relations was adopted for this study to analyze the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Nigeria's foreign policy. Realism, one of the dominant paradigms in international relations, posits that the international system is anarchic, meaning there is no central authority governing the relations between states. Realists argue that states are the primary actors in international politics, and their primary goal is to secure their national interest, particularly in terms of power and survival (Mearsheimer, 2001). This theory is grounded in the belief that states operate in a competitive environment where military, economic, and political power determine the ability of a state to protect its interests and achieve its objectives.

In the context of Nigeria's foreign policy during the COVID-19 pandemic, realism highlights how the nation's priorities shifted toward ensuring national security and economic stability amidst global uncertainty. As global trade slowed and health crises intensified, Nigeria, like many other states, focused on securing vital resources, such as medical supplies and vaccines, and sought to protect its sovereignty by managing its borders (Barkin, 2010). Moreover, realism helps to explain Nigeria's reliance on multilateral engagements to safeguard its interests in regional security and economic recovery efforts during the pandemic, demonstrating the competitive, self-interested nature of foreign policy decisions.



### **3.0**

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

For this study, a descriptive research design will be employed. Descriptive research aims to provide an accurate and detailed account of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Nigeria's foreign policy, highlighting the challenges faced and the opportunities that emerged. This design is appropriate because it allows the researcher to systematically describe the changes and responses in Nigeria's foreign policy without manipulating variables. The research will focus on understanding the nature of these shifts and offering insights into how Nigeria adapted its foreign policy strategies in response to the pandemic, without attempting to influence or control the phenomena being observed.

### **3.2 Method of Data Collection**

The secondary data collection method will be utilized for this study. Secondary data involves gathering existing information that has been previously collected, analyzed, and published by other researchers, organizations, or institutions. Sources will include academic journals, government reports and publications from international organizations (e.g., United Nations, African Union), policy papers, news articles, and relevant books. These sources will provide a comprehensive understanding of how the pandemic affected Nigeria's foreign policy, based on previous research, official government documents, and reports from international bodies and think tanks. This method allows for the use of a wide range of pre-existing information that provides insights into the trends and developments in Nigeria's foreign relations during the pandemic.

**3.3 Method of Analysis:** The qualitative method of analysis will be employed to interpret the secondary data. Qualitative analysis will involve content analysis, where the researcher will systematically examine the information gathered from various sources to identify key themes, patterns, and trends related to Nigeria's foreign policy before, during, and after the pandemic. Through thematic analysis, the researcher will categorize and interpret the data to uncover the challenges Nigeria faced, the opportunities it explored, and the strategic adjustments made in response to the pandemic. This method will also help in understanding the broader implications of



these findings on Nigeria's future foreign policy direction. By focusing on qualitative insights, the study aims to provide an in-depth, nuanced understanding of the complex issues involved.

## **4.0**

## **FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

### **4.1 Overview of The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Nigeria's Foreign Policy**

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in late 2019, significantly impacted global politics, economics, and social structures. Nigeria, as one of the largest economies in Africa, was not immune to these disruptions. The pandemic reshaped the country's foreign policy in numerous ways, presenting both challenges and opportunities that influenced its diplomatic, economic, and security strategies. This overview highlights the key effects of the pandemic on Nigeria's foreign policy, with a focus on its economic diplomacy, regional and international engagements, and security concerns.

Prior to the pandemic, Nigeria's foreign policy had been heavily reliant on oil exports, with much of its economic diplomacy focused on maintaining strong trade relations with oil importing nations, such as the United States and China. However, the onset of the pandemic triggered a sharp decline in global oil demand, leading to a significant drop in oil prices. The Nigerian economy, heavily dependent on oil revenues, was severely affected, resulting in a recession by the end of 2020 (NNPC, 2020). This economic downturn forced Nigeria to reevaluate its foreign policy priorities, particularly in terms of trade relations and economic diversification. In response to the global economic slowdown, Nigeria shifted its focus toward regional cooperation and integration. The country began to prioritize the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which it signed in 2020, aiming to reduce its dependence on external markets and foster intra-Africa trade (Ajayi, 2021). Nigeria's involvement in AfCFTA was seen as a strategic move to mitigate the economic impacts of the pandemic and enhance its trade relations within the African continent. Moreover, the country strengthened its economic engagements with regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to promote regional economic recovery and post-pandemic growth.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted traditional diplomatic practices, particularly face-to-face meetings, international summits, and travel-based engagements. Nigeria, like other nations, was



forced to adapt its diplomatic approach. In the early stages of the pandemic, Nigeria quickly embraced digital diplomacy, leveraging online platforms to maintain communication with international stakeholders. Virtual diplomatic meetings and summits became essential for Nigeria to continue advancing its foreign policy interests despite the physical limitations imposed by the pandemic. Nigeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs highlighted how digital diplomacy became vital for sustaining relations with key partners and international organizations such as the United Nations and the African Union (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). Additionally, Nigeria's role in global health diplomacy became more prominent during the pandemic. The country worked alongside international organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) to secure medical supplies and vaccines, while also contributing to the continent's broader efforts to manage the pandemic (Chikwendu, 2021).

The security situation in Nigeria, already fraught with challenges such as terrorism, insurgencies, and regional instability, was further exacerbated by the pandemic. COVID-19 restrictions, economic hardships, and the disruption of security operations created an environment where militant groups, such as Boko Haram and bandits, were able to gain ground (Obi, 2020). In response, Nigeria maintained its leadership in regional security initiatives, particularly within the G5 Sahel framework and ECOWAS, working to coordinate responses to both the health crisis and regional instability (Akinmoladun, 2021). Despite the challenges, Nigeria's involvement in multilateral security efforts was crucial during the pandemic. The country participated in peacekeeping missions and continued to advocate for stability in the Sahel region, where the security situation had been worsening due to the pandemic's effects on local economies and governance structures.

While the pandemic presented significant challenges for Nigeria's foreign policy, it also opened up opportunities for recalibration. The shift to digital diplomacy, for example, allowed Nigeria to engage more effectively with international organizations and diversify its diplomatic relationships. Furthermore, Nigeria's active role in global health diplomacy, particularly in securing COVID-19 vaccines for Africa, strengthened its position as a leader in African affairs (Chikwendu, 2021). The pandemic also emphasized the importance of multilateralism and regional cooperation, areas where Nigeria has historically been a significant player. By positioning itself as a proponent of regional integration and global health initiatives, Nigeria was able to enhance its



diplomatic standing and contribute meaningfully to post-pandemic recovery efforts.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on Nigeria's foreign policy, compelling the country to adapt to new diplomatic, economic, and security realities. The pandemic highlighted the vulnerabilities of Nigeria's oil-dependent economy, but also provided an opportunity for diversification through regional trade agreements like AfCFTA. Diplomatic engagements shifted toward digital platforms, enabling continued interaction with international partners despite travel restrictions. While the pandemic exacerbated security challenges, Nigeria's leadership in regional security initiatives demonstrated its commitment to maintaining stability in West Africa. Ultimately, the pandemic underscored the need for Nigeria to recalibrate its foreign policy, focusing on multilateral cooperation, regional integration, and sustainable development in the post-pandemic world.

#### **4.2 Challenges on Nigeria's Foreign Policy**

The COVID-19 pandemic brought significant challenges to Nigeria's foreign policy, particularly in the realms of economic stability, diplomatic relations, and security. As one of Africa's largest economies and a prominent player in regional and international relations, the pandemic exacerbated existing vulnerabilities, forcing Nigeria to adjust its foreign policy priorities.

**1. Economic Challenges:** Nigeria's foreign policy has long been shaped by its dependence on oil exports. As a major oil producer, Nigeria's economic diplomacy was centered around securing markets for its oil. However, the pandemic led to a massive drop in global oil demand, resulting in a steep decline in oil prices. This exposed Nigeria's economic vulnerabilities and forced a rethinking of its foreign policy approach. The Nigerian economy entered a recession in 2020, heavily impacted by the oil price crash and the broader global economic downturn (NNPC, 2020). Consequently, Nigeria faced challenges in maintaining its foreign trade relations and securing investments from traditional partners. The country's reliance on oil revenues highlighted the need for greater economic diversification, but the pandemic delayed efforts to diversify Nigeria's economic and diplomatic engagements.

**2. Diplomatic Challenges:** The pandemic also disrupted Nigeria's traditional diplomatic



practices, which have historically involved face-to-face meetings, bilateral visits, and international summits. Travel restrictions and lockdowns limited the ability of Nigerian diplomats to conduct regular visits and negotiations with key foreign partners. This posed a significant challenge to Nigeria's diplomatic efforts, particularly in maintaining strong bilateral relations with major powers such as the United States and China. Furthermore, the cancellation or postponement of international conferences affected Nigeria's ability to influence global policy discussions. While digital diplomacy emerged as a solution, it could not fully replace the in-person engagements necessary for effective diplomacy, particularly in high-stakes negotiations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020).

**3. Security Challenges:** Security in Nigeria had already been a major concern, with ongoing conflicts such as the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast and growing banditry in the northwest. The pandemic aggravated these issues by complicating Nigeria's ability to maintain security operations. The imposition of lockdowns and restrictions on movement hindered military activities, while the economic hardships caused by the pandemic provided a fertile ground for insurgents to exploit. Furthermore, the global focus on health crises shifted attention away from other security issues, making it more difficult for Nigeria to secure international support for its security challenges (Obi, 2020).

#### **4.3 Opportunities on Nigeria's Foreign Policy**

Despite the numerous challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the crisis also presented several opportunities for Nigeria to recalibrate its foreign policy, enhance its regional leadership, and diversify its diplomatic and economic strategies.

**1. Regional Integration:** One of the major opportunities that arose from the pandemic was Nigeria's strengthened focus on regional integration. The economic disruptions caused by COVID-19 highlighted the vulnerabilities of relying on external markets, especially given the volatile nature of global oil markets. In response, Nigeria placed greater emphasis on intra-Africa trade and economic integration, particularly through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Signed by Nigeria in 2020, AfCFTA presents a platform for reducing the continent's reliance on external markets, promoting regional economic cooperation, and expanding access to new markets for Nigerian businesses. Nigeria's active participation in AfCFTA was seen as an



opportunity to recover economically from the pandemic by leveraging Africa's growing market potential and fostering economic resilience across the continent (Ajayi, 2021).

**2. Health Diplomacy and Leadership in Africa:** The pandemic provided Nigeria with a unique opportunity to assert itself as a leader in African health diplomacy. The country's proactive engagement with global health organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), helped secure essential medical supplies and vaccines for Nigeria and other African nations (Chikwendu, 2021). Nigeria's involvement in the COVAX initiative, aimed at ensuring equitable vaccine distribution, allowed the country to take a leadership role in supporting Africa's health needs during the pandemic. By actively engaging in multilateral health diplomacy, Nigeria strengthened its global standing, positioning itself as a key advocate for Africa's interests in global health governance.

**3. Digital Diplomacy and International Engagement:** The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the global adoption of digital diplomacy, which opened up new avenues for Nigeria to engage with the international community. With the suspension of physical meetings, Nigeria was able to continue diplomatic engagements through virtual platforms, thus expanding its reach and influence in international dialogues. Digital diplomacy allowed Nigerian diplomats to maintain communication with international partners and organizations, even in the absence of physical travel (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). This new form of diplomacy also allowed Nigeria to engage with emerging partners in technology, education, and innovation, areas that could provide long-term benefits for the country's foreign policy objectives.

**4. Recalibration of Foreign Economic Policy:** Another opportunity arising from the pandemic was Nigeria's push to diversify its economy and reduce its dependency on oil revenues. The global economic disruption caused by COVID-19 underscored the vulnerabilities of oil dependent economies, prompting Nigeria to explore new avenues for economic growth and international partnerships. Nigeria began to focus more on sectors like technology, agriculture and renewable energy, which presented new opportunities for foreign partnerships and investment (Akinmoladun, 2021). By diversifying its economic focus, Nigeria aimed to mitigate the impact of future global shocks and build a more resilient economic base that could be integrated into its broader foreign policy goals.



**5. Strengthening Multilateralism:** Lastly, the pandemic reinforced the importance of multilateralism in tackling global challenges. Nigeria's foreign policy took on a more multilateral approach, advocating for international cooperation in health, economic recovery, and regional security. Nigeria's leadership in multilateral organizations such as ECOWAS and the United Nations allowed the country to play an active role in shaping international responses to the pandemic. Nigeria's ability to coordinate with regional and international actors for common goals during the crisis enhanced its diplomatic standing and demonstrated the value of collaboration over isolation (Obi, 2020).

## **5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound and multifaceted impact on Nigeria's foreign policy, presenting both valuable opportunities and significant challenges. On the one hand, the pandemic exposed the vulnerabilities of Nigeria's oil-dependent economy, disrupted traditional diplomatic practices, and exacerbated existing security challenges, especially in the face of the ongoing insurgency and banditry. The country's foreign policy priorities had to be adjusted as it struggled to maintain international trade relations and navigate the complex realities of a rapidly changing global landscape.

On the other hand, the crisis also opened avenues for Nigeria to recalibrate its approach to foreign policy. The pandemic accelerated the country's push towards regional integration through initiatives like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), fostering greater economic collaboration within Africa. Furthermore, Nigeria capitalized on its role in global health diplomacy, positioning itself as a leader in securing vaccines and health resources for the continent. The crisis also highlighted the need for economic diversification, prompting Nigeria to seek new partnerships and explore emerging sectors such as technology and renewable energy.

Moreover, the pandemic led to a shift in diplomatic practices, with digital diplomacy emerging as a vital tool for continued international engagement. This new approach allowed Nigeria to maintain communication with global stakeholders despite travel restrictions, thus enhancing its diplomatic reach and influence. In sum, while the COVID-19 pandemic posed immediate challenges to Nigeria's foreign policy, it also provided a platform for the country to strengthen its leadership role



in Africa, diversify its economic base, and adapt to new diplomatic norms. As Nigeria moves forward, it is essential that the country continues to leverage these opportunities to build a more resilient and sustainable foreign policy framework that can withstand future global challenges.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

In light of the opportunities and challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, Nigeria's foreign policy needs to undergo strategic adjustments to enhance the country's global influence, foster economic growth and address security concerns. The following recommendations are made to help Nigeria navigate its post-pandemic foreign policy landscape:

**1. Diversification of the Economy:** Nigeria's heavy reliance on oil exports for economic stability has proven to be a vulnerability, especially during global crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. To safeguard against future economic shocks, Nigeria should accelerate efforts to diversify its economy, focusing on sectors such as technology, agriculture, and renewable energy.

By fostering economic diversification, Nigeria can reduce its dependence on oil revenues and build a more resilient economy that is less susceptible to global price fluctuations (Akinmoladun, 2021). In this regard, Nigeria should prioritize partnerships with both regional and international actors to promote innovation and knowledge exchange.

**2. Strengthening Regional Integration and Trade:** Nigeria should continue to prioritize regional integration through platforms like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to reduce reliance on external markets and foster intra-Africa trade. The pandemic has underscored the importance of a strong, integrated African economy. Nigeria should actively engage in the implementation of AfCFTA, advocating for policies that enable smoother trade flows and reduced barriers to investment and mobility within Africa (Ajayi, 2021). Additionally, Nigeria should leverage its regional leadership role in organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to promote regional peace, security, and economic stability.

**3. Investment in Digital Diplomacy:** The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of digital diplomacy as an essential tool for maintaining international relations. Nigeria should continue to invest in and enhance its digital diplomatic capacity by equipping its diplomatic



missions with the necessary infrastructure and training to engage in virtual negotiations and online multilateral forums effectively. Digital diplomacy can also help Nigeria expand its influence in emerging areas such as technology, global governance, and international trade. It can enable the country to engage with global actors and African counterparts more efficiently, especially when physical travel and face-to-face meetings are limited.

**4. Enhancing Global Health Diplomacy:** Nigeria should maintain and expand its leadership role in global health diplomacy. The country's involvement in initiatives like COVAX and its support for the equitable distribution of vaccines across Africa have reinforced its standing as a major player in global health governance. Moving forward, Nigeria should continue to collaborate with international organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and African Union (AU) to address public health challenges and build stronger health systems across the continent. Nigeria should also take the lead in advocating for increased funding and resources for African health infrastructure, ensuring that future health crises can be better managed at the regional and global levels (Chikwendu, 2021).

**5. Addressing Security Challenges with Regional Cooperation:** The security situation in Nigeria has worsened in recent years, and the pandemic has only complicated efforts to manage internal and regional security challenges. Nigeria should continue to bolster its security partnerships with regional organizations like ECOWAS and global partners, prioritizing collaborative efforts to combat terrorism, insurgencies, and cross-border criminal activities. Strengthening intelligence-sharing mechanisms, joint military operations, and peacekeeping initiatives within the African Union framework is essential. Nigeria should also invest in capacity building for its security forces, ensuring that they can respond more effectively to emerging security threats in the post-pandemic era (Obi, 2020).

**6. Strengthening Multilateralism and Global Engagement:** The pandemic underscored the need for multilateralism in addressing global challenges. Nigeria should continue to play an active role in multilateral organizations such as the United Nations, World Trade Organization, and G20 to influence global policy and ensure that Africa's interests are adequately represented in global discussions. In addition, Nigeria should advocate for greater inclusion of African voices in the decision-making processes of these organizations. By strengthening its multilateral engagements, Nigeria can shape global responses to future crises, ranging from health pandemics to climate change.



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