

AN ASSESSMENT OF NIGERIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE COMMONWEALTH IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria's relations with the Commonwealth of Nations exhibit a peculiar record of sweet & sour relations. The Commonwealth of Nations is an association of independent former British colonies that meet periodically to discuss common issues that affect them. Even as an infant member, Nigeria in collaboration with India and Tanganyika, in 1961 succeeded in persuading other member countries in expelling apartheid South Africa from the Commonwealth. Humiliated leaders of the racist regime in return supported Biafra in the 1967-1970 civil war in Nigeria. Five years later, Britain's reluctance to sell arms to Nigeria may have played a role in the military leadership enacting harsh measures against Britain's economic interests; because of her resistance to majority rule in Zimbabwe. In spite of the fact that there are trickles of economic benefits coming Nigeria's way from the Commonwealth, it has not translated into making her the manufacturing hub of Africa which is a vogue for serious contenders to the elite G20. This underperformance serves as the motivation for the study. The study is a qualitative one where data was generated through secondary sources such as journals, periodicals, textbooks, internet materials, newspapers and magazines. Concepts/theories of economic relations and interdependence were defined and clarified as framework for the study. At the end, recommendations were advanced for a more beneficial engagement with the Commonwealth; principal among which is the need for Nigeria to take advantage of manufacturing advancement of developed members to grow her industrial/manufacturing sector/sub-sector.

Keywords: *British, Crown, Colonies, Independent, Manufacturing, Queen*

Introduction

The Commonwealth is an assemblage of all independent former British Colonies who meet on periodic basis to discuss issues of common interests/benefits to all of them with the Queen of England at the head. Even though the body was established in 1931, it was in 1949 that the

phrase “common allegiance with the crown” was dropped. This singular action opened the door for newly independent and sovereign states to join the associations with few members initially. However, as more colonies obtained their freedoms and independence from Britain, they immediately joined in the league of Independent British Colonies (IBCs) called the Commonwealth. The membership became bloated in the 1960s when most third world countries of Africa and Caribbean got their independence. It was during this hey period that Nigeria joined the Commonwealth in 1960 (Olusanya, 1986). On the attainment of her political independence in 1960, Nigeria became an automatic member of the Commonwealth and have since used the forum for conducting economic relations with member countries either on bilateral or multilateral basis. .

As stated above, the idea of the Commonwealth was mooted in the late 19th Century precisely in 1867. Whereas, the evolutionary trend of the modern Commonwealth could be traced to the early 20th Century and it is more precisely dated back to 1931 and 1949 where it had its roots in the British Commonwealth of Nations that originated from the British Empire. With the first colony in the Irish Pale in 1169, the English steadily acquired more territory until the British Empire covered a quarter of the globe, comprising the United Kingdom, Bermuda (1512), the thirteen American colonies (1514), St. Christopher (1623), Barbados (1626), Nevis (1628), Bahamas (1629), and Antigua and Montserrat (1632). Others were Jamaica (1655), the Virgin Islands (1713), Dominica (1763), St. Vincent and Grenada (1763), Ceylon (1798), Guyana (1814), the Seychelles (1814), Burma (1824), India (1828), Aden (1839), Australia (1840), New Zealand (1840), the Falkland Islands now Malvinas (1842), Hong Kong (1842), South Africa (1845) and Singapore (1854). Also there were Lagos now South West Nigeria (1861), the Fiji Islands (1874), Cyprus (1878), Northern Nigeria (1885), Trinidad and Tobago (1889), Uganda (1890), Mauritius (1890), Malaya (1895), Egypt (1898), Tanganyika now Tanzania (1919) and Kenya (1921). At its height in the early 1900s, the British Empire included over 20 percent of the world’s land area and more than 400 million people (Faseke, 2003; Whiteman, 2008).

A crucial step in the evolution of the Commonwealth was taken in the 1840s, with the adoption of the famous Lord Durham Report that resulted in the acceptance of the popular demand for self-government in Canada and thus laid the foundation for the emergence of the first Dominion in 1867. By 1914, all the other colonies of settlement including

Australia (1902), New Zealand (1907) and South Africa (1910) had also achieved Dominion status. A dominion status implies a self-government status and a considerable degree of freedom in their foreign relations. The 1917 Imperial War Conference recognized the Dominions as autonomous nations within an imperial Commonwealth. The Imperial Conference of 1921 recognized the dominions as autonomous nations. However, until 1926, the term British Commonwealth of Nations was synonymous with the British Empire. The report of the Inter-Imperial relations Committee of the 1926 Imperial Conference generally known as the Balfour report referred to the dominions as autonomous communities within the British Empire, which were freely associating as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations (Faseke, 2003).

Consequently, the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Dominions was clearly, defined in the aftermath of the Imperial Conference of 1926, with the adoption of a statement that read as follows:

They (dominions) are autonomous communities within the British Empire equal in status, in no way subordinate to one another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs though united by a common allegiance to the Crown and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.... (Faseke, 2003)

The lifting of the status of the dominions to that of the modern Commonwealth according to Babawale could be, traced to the London Declaration of 1950, which allowed the acceptance of the British Monarch as the symbolic head of the Commonwealth regardless of the constitutional provisions of member states. In addition, the adoption of a set of principles, which serve as operative guidelines for the Commonwealth, helped create a sense of purpose and unity within the association (Babawale, 2004).

Article 1 of the Commonwealth clearly states that the Commonwealth shall operate solely on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its members. Article 2 of the Commonwealth provides for the following objectives:

- i. Cooperation in political, economic, ecological, humanitarian, cultural and other fields;
- ii. Comprehensive and well-balanced economic and social development of the Member States within the framework of a common economic space, inter-state cooperation and integration;

- iii. Ensuring human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the universally recognized principles and norms of international law;
- iv. Cooperation among the Member States in safeguarding international peace and security;
- v. Implementing effective measures for the reduction of armaments and military expenditures, for the elimination of nuclear and other kinds of weapons of mass destruction, and for the achievement of universal and complete disarmament;
- vi. Promoting free communication, contacts and free movements within the Commonwealth for the citizens of the Member States;
- vii. Mutual judicial assistance and cooperation in other spheres of legal relationships;
- viii. Peaceful settlement of disputes and conflicts among the States of the Commonwealth.

Another significant step in the evolution of the Commonwealth began with the independence of India in 1947. India decided to adopt a republican constitution although they still maintained their link with the Commonwealth. In 1949, the phrase “common allegiance with the crown” was dropped. This singular action opened the door for newly independent and sovereign states to join the associations. Some States that consequently joined included Ghana (former Gold Coast, 1957), Malaysia (1957), Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Cyprus (1960), Tanganyika (1961), etc. In addition, both Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia gained their independence in 1964 and came to be known as Malawi and Zambia respectively. Others such as Bangladesh joined in 1972, Papua New Guinea (1975), Seychelles (1976), Solomon Islands, Tivulu, and Dominica joined in 1978. States such as Tonga, Western Samoa and Fiji joined in 1970. Cameroun and Mozambique joined in 1989 and 2000 respectively. Today, the Commonwealth is made up of fifty-four sovereign countries, their dependencies, and two special members- the island nations of Nauru and Tuvalu (Faseke, 2003; Microsoft Encarta premium 2009).

Nigeria’s most positive period of relations with the Commonwealth came with the election of one of her former diplomats, Emeka Anyaoku, as Secretary General. Anyaoku reports that ten years after independence, Nigeria offered Colonel Theophilus Danjuma to Chair a Court Martial in St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguila Commission. When Bangladesh broke away from

Pakistan, Anyaoku's shuttle diplomacy across Commonwealth countries in West Africa (Ghana, Gambia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria) and Tanzania won tentative diplomatic recognition for the new state. In 1992 Ben Nwabueze, a professor of Constitutional Law, was appointed by President Arap Moi of Kenya to undertake the task of "adapting Kenya's constitution to serve the transition to multi-party elections"; a process tenaciously fought for by opposition political parties and civil society groups, but much resisted by Moi's government. As the regime was increasingly turning to violence against the opposition, this offered to pave a vital path to peaceful political transition.

In spite of the massive diplomatic maneuvers by Nigeria within the Commonwealth, nothing appreciable has come the country's way in the form of economic rewards or benefits. Apart from foreign goodwill coming from well-advantaged members, nothing tangible has been achieved in the area of the attraction of FDI for growing Nigeria's industrial and manufacturing sector/sub-sector in the Fourth Republic. It is because of this lack of strategic foresight by successive governments to woo FDI from technologically developed members of the Commonwealth to domesticate their industries in the country in order to turn Nigeria into a manufacture-driven economy in the Fourth Republic; that informed the motivation for the study.

Conceptual/Theoretical Clarifications

The concept of international relations and theory of interdependence have been defined and clarified as framework for the study below:

International Relations

International Relations is all forms of interactions that takes place between one nation and the other or between a nation with other non-state actors like the Commonwealth. International Relations has been defined by Holsti (1978), as "all forms of interactions between members of separate societies whether government sponsored or not". He went on to add that international relations would include analysis of foreign policies or political processes between nations; but with its interests in all facets of relations between distinct societies.

For Legg and Morrison (1971); the subject of international relations is concerned with all forms of interactions between members of separate entities across national boundaries of nation-states. These interactions cover

political, economic, cultural, social, technological, environmental, security and military dimensions. It could be peaceful contact or violent contact, and must involve at least two entities, and must take place across national boundaries.

Ofoegbu (1985), on the other hand defines international relations as all interactions between actors in the international system. He categorizes international relations into four groups namely: (i) ***International Political Relations*** – which is concerned with political issues only, such as competition, compromises, and every form of struggle aimed at the allocation of values. (ii) ***International Economic Relations*** – which covers economic issues only. It reflects on international economic order, trade, loan issues, debts, aids, sanctions etc. (iii) ***Cultural International Relations*** – comprising issues like cultural and intellectual exchanges etc.; and (iv) ***Private International Relations*** – embracing contacts between individuals at a private capacity, but which cuts across national boundaries such as maintaining a pen-pal friend abroad. The emergence of powerful social media via the internet such as: facebook, twitter, 2go, youtube, whatsapp, and other instantaneous means of interactions across the globe have increased the tempo and magnitude of private international relations on an unimaginable level. Here the involvement of the State is minimal, and can be restricted only to the issuance of passports and visas where physical movements of private actors are involved. Hence, to regulate the activities of private and state actors in the nascent international system, there has to be increase in active collaboration among international security agencies to ensure that all conform to international law.

While contributing to the concept of International relations, Seymon Brown view it as concerned with every form of interactions between and amongst nations. Such cross-national interactions can also occur between corporations, social, sub-regional, regional and trans-national economic groups. An example is the interaction between member states of the Commonwealth. The moment such interactions cross a state's boundary; it is of interest to the study of International Relations. International relations recognize and respond to the fact that the foreign policy goals that nations pursue can be a matter of permanent consequences to some or all of the other nations (Brown, 1998).

Interdependence Theory

This theory was first, introduced by two American psychologists Harold Kelley and John Thibaut in 1959; but was formalized as a theory in 1978. They see interdependence theory as part of a large scale of social exchange theories. Social exchange theories look at how people exchange rewards and cost in a relationship. Keohane and Nye (1977, 1987) were among the pioneering scholars who adopted a hitherto psychological theory of interdependence to serve as a framework for the analysis of phenomena in international relations. The duo of these political scientists stressed that from the foreign policy standpoint, the position of individual government is how to benefit from international exchanges, while maintaining as much autonomy as possible. The theory is all about maximizing rewards (reaping greater economic benefits) and minimizing cost in international interactions. Amongst the benefits to be reaped by Nigeria in its interdependent relations with other countries and international business partners is the attraction of Foreign Direct Investment; which should be directed at the manufacture of finished unique products for exports. This will expand the country's foreign revenue sources and moved it away from overdependence on a mono external revenue sources (Oil and Gas [O&G]).

The assumption of this theory is that it is all about maximizing benefits and rewards in a country's interactions with other countries, international organizations or business partners. The theory has been adopted and utilized by this study to assess the extent to which Nigeria has maximize benefits/rewards and minimize costs in her relations economic relations with the Commonwealth.

Assessment of Nigeria's Economic Relations with the Commonwealth

Commonwealth - Nigeria relations have been relatively straightforward since the country's political independence in 1960, with the exception of the many eras of military rule in Nigeria that brought about a long period of uncertainty and instability that threatened Nigeria's political future. In addition, the many military interventions in Nigeria's governance system, as well as the high level of disregard for human rights and the rule of law left many States and international organizations with no choice but to label and treat Nigeria as a pariah state. Nigeria-Commonwealth relations were most distressed under military rule as Nigeria violated many provisions of the popular Harare Convention and was thus suspended for a period under the Abacha administration. Consequently, Nigeria's relations

with the Commonwealth under military rule became more frosty. Hence, the continuous mounting of pressure on Nigeria's military dictatorship by the Commonwealth, aided in piling a lot of pressure on them to relinquish power in an un-ceremonial way on May 29, 1999 when the democratically elected government of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo assumed political power (Adeoti, 2003).

There is no gain saying that Nigeria has participated actively and positively in the Commonwealth since it joined the body in 1960; such as debates on the floor of the Summit as well as proposing Resolutions and the adoption of same on critical issues that affect members. Nigeria has benefited from the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC) in the field of training of personnel among members. Pursuant to this, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) was established in 1987. According to the Commonwealth Education Steering Committee (CESC), Nigeria and Pakistan represents one-third (1/3) of the Commonwealth's "out-of-school population"; numbering about 75 million children. The Commonwealth of Learning is supporting e-learning in the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). The COL is to identify and reward a number of worthy projects in member countries. The Federal Polytechnic Ado Ekiti in Nigeria is one of the beneficiaries of this programme. Nigeria has benefited from the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) where thirty-seven Nigerian Universities and other Tertiary Institutions are under various forms of Commonwealth-sponsored Masters and PhD scholarships (Mcintyre, 2000; Falode, 2003; Daniel, 2009).

According to the Commonwealth Education Steering Committee, Nigeria and Pakistan represents one-third of the Commonwealth out-of-school population numbering about 75 million children. This therefore necessitates a special state status, and a comprehensive plan of action in order to curtail the abnormal trend especially in Nigeria's Northern states, where education is not really a priority. In addition, 85 per cent of children out of school in the Commonwealth live in just six countries: Ghana, India, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria and Pakistan. Sixty per cent of these were girls, and these countries account for 30 per cent of the global total of children who do not attend school. In all, there are 27 million primary aged children out of school in Commonwealth countries (Eze, 2004; Malinga, 2007)

In Nigeria, teacher training institutions and other schools are building up and introducing new eLearning programmes. Organisations

such as National Teachers' Institute and the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) are launching ambitious eLearning initiatives to upgrade the qualifications of in-service teachers. COL is supporting these initiatives by providing training in instructional design, audio and video script writing, video production and designing eLearning materials, as well as advocacy, facilitating partnerships and quality assurance (Daniel, 2009).

The goal of achieving sustainable development in the education sector in Nigeria cannot be achieved using only conventional and traditional methods. Open and distance learning offers the promise of fashioning new techniques, new technologies and new approaches to this end. In addition, Nigeria must produce 40,000 teachers annually for the next ten years in order to cope with the huge growth in student population nationwide. The National Teachers' Institute, Open University of Nigeria and the Commonwealth of Learning are partners in meeting this formidable and ambitious objective (Perinbam, 2003; Akhaine, 2003).

The absence of a national policy on ICT in education is an impediment to the achievement of sustainable development in the educational sector in Nigeria. The Ministry of Education created its ICT department in February 2007, notwithstanding, several government agencies and other stakeholders in the private sector have initiated ICT-driven projects and programmes to impact all levels of the educational sector. The challenge is the lack of electric power and telecommunications infrastructure in a substantial part of the country. Mobile telecommunication currently covers 60% of the national territory, but mobile telephone companies generally power their base stations using electric power generators since the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) is unable to supply them with regular power. This phenomenon is prevalent nationwide and constitutes the bottleneck to effective countrywide deployment of ICT in education (Agyeman, 2007).

In furtherance of the Commonwealth's commitment to Nigeria, an expert was provided on behalf of the Commonwealth Secretariat to the Psychiatric Hospital in Yaba, Lagos, to establish a School of Occupational Therapy and to train local experts. The Psychiatric Hospital in Yaba is known for its specialist care but the number of qualified occupational therapists in public hospitals has declined despite an increase in demand for care, particularly care related to drug abuse and poverty-related stress. The project helped address the national shortage of occupational therapists. Schemes such as the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan

(CSFP) have also helped individuals and countries into prestigious educational heights and it is envisaged that a revision of the CSFP can help a greater number of beneficiaries through awards, grants, scholarships, and other forms of motivation and support tools. In addition, a total of 37 Nigerian Universities (federal and state-owned) are under various forms of Commonwealth-sponsored Masters/PhD scholarships (Agwu, 2004; Adeleke, 2004).

The Commonwealth Technical Cooperation and Assistance (CTCA) in Nigeria has benefited from the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Assistance (CFTA) through which the Commonwealth delivers development assistance to member countries. It is multi-lateral Fund established in 1971. The Commonwealth has also been assisting Nigeria in fights against corruption through the deployment of Commonwealth experts based in the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) Training Institute. The Commonwealth Representative Mr. Abbay was posted to EFCC for two years from September, 2007. This followed a request by the Nigerian Government for CFTC assistance to tackle corruption. In addition, Commonwealth experts have been, posted to Psychiatric Hospital Yaba Lagos to establish a School of Occupational Therapy and to train local experts (Sueni, 2003; Sutton, 2001; Nyityo, 2003).

The Commonwealth Telecommunications Organization (CTO) is an international development partnership between Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth governments, business and civil society organisations. It provides the international community with effective means to help bridge the digital divide and achieve social and economic development, by delivering to developing countries unique knowledge-sharing programmes in the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the specific areas of telecommunications, IT, broadcasting and the internet. They also aim to enhance ICT access in developing countries, by focusing on entrepreneurship at the retail, consumer-oriented end of telecommunications. The proliferation and success of privately owned and operated “telecentres”, or telephone shops, in Senegal and the Gambia has necessitated their export to other countries (Commonwealth African Rural Connectivity Initiative-COMARCI-Executive Summary and Conclusions.). The CTO also has the goal of ensuring faster access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) connectivity for most Africans due to the current nature of the dynamic global knowledge society. The affordable

use of ICTs in Africa is critical, as it will to improve the delivery of governmental and business services to isolated communities, and also help achieve the core objective of empowering people through literacy, education, knowledge, employable skills, poverty reduction and wealth creation. It is these developmental objectives that have driven the creation of the COMARCI. The Commonwealth Telecommunication Organization (CTO) has provided technical assistance to Nigeria through the Entrepreneurial Strategies for Stimulating Telecommunication Market Development (ESSTMD), which aims at cutting the prevalent unemployment rates by training youths and providing opportunities to entrepreneurs in the Telecommunication sector. The sum of \$12 billion was earmarked for ICT development in Nigeria and the rest of Africa. The Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) has aided human resource development efforts in Nigeria by offering professional training courses in development through the Youth Work Education and Training Programme (YWETP). Other Commonwealth youth programmes which Nigeria has actively participated in includes the Commonwealth Games. Nigeria has successfully hosted the All Africa Games (COJA) in Abuja in 2005 heavily assisted by the Commonwealth (Nyityo, S (2003); Whiteman 2008, p.271).

The Commonwealth has inbuilt economic collaborative efforts among its members such the British DFID as well as the spirit of assisting each other. The \$18 billion debt write-off for Nigeria by the London and Paris Club was, heavily facilitated by Commonwealth Secretariat Debt Recovery and Management System (CSDRMS). Since 2005, the CSDRMS has been actively involved in Nigeria's Debt Management (DMO). Other assistance coming to Nigeria from the CSDRMS include conferences that have resulted in the signing of agreements, protocols and frameworks between various countries (Nigeria inclusive) to foster trade, economic growth and general development of member countries (Abubakar, 2003).

Apart from the visit of President Goodluck Jonathan to Perth Australia in November, 2011 where he attended the Commonwealth Heads of State and Government Summit, Nigeria is a member of the Commonwealth Ministerial Taskforce of Twelve Foreign Ministers on the Reform of the Commonwealth (CMTTFMRC). Since then, Nigeria has continued to participate actively in the meetings convened to consider the draft charter of the Commonwealth among other proposals intended to reposition the organization in line with the recommendation of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) (MFA-AR, 2012).

If and when Nigeria finally adopts the local content policy of boosting the manufacturing sector over and above oil sector, it stands to reap huge financial reward (expanded external revenue sources) through the strategic conduct of her economic relations among member countries. Her manufactured goods will find ready markets in the economies of member countries. This in addition to other available markets in: the entire African countries, D. 8 members and OPEC member countries; will extricate Nigeria from overdependence on an exhaustible source of external revenue (oil). Thus, manufacturing is not only an alternative source of foreign revenue to Nigeria, but a viable one for that (Agwu, 2004).

Following his assumption of power as an elected president of Nigeria in 1999, Obasanjo completed Nigeria's return to the Commonwealth through the hosting of the meeting of its Heads of State and Governments, at which the British monarch attended, after the last she attended in Nigeria in 1956. Both Gowon and Shagari had invited her but each had been overthrown by military coups before she could come (Whiteman 2008, p.271).

Nigeria has attempted to assist needy members of the Commonwealth while receiving assistance from others. For example, between 1985 and 2009, Nigeria's National War College (later National Defence College) trained top military officers from Commonwealth countries Gambia, Lesotho, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. By 2009, graduates of the College included the Chief of Army Staff of Namibia, and the Chiefs of Naval and Air Staff, respectively, of Ghana. To underline the character of the programme as military aid Nigeria paid the full cost of training. Nigeria has sent her own officers for training to Indian and Pakistani defence academies. Apart from the military collaboration, Nigeria has benefited from the Commonwealth Scholarship scheme as well as the Rhodes Scholar programme through which many Nigerians obtained higher qualifications from institutions in Commonwealth countries. Emeka Anyaoku, former Secretary General of the Commonwealth, reports that when the 1966 Lagos Conference of Commonwealth Heads of Government failed to convince Prime Minister Harold Wilson to use force to terminate Ian Smith's Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Rhodesia, Nigeria came up with the face-saving measure of Britain funding the establishment a Special Commonwealth Programme of Assistance to train Rhodesian Africans to prepare for the

administration of an independent Zimbabwe. In the year 2000 the programme sought to train 8,500 Namibians (Anyaoaku 2004, p.67-69).

In 2008, former President Obasanjo intervened to resolve the post-2007 election political stalemate between President Kibaki's ruling Peoples' National Union (PNU) and Odinga's Orange Democratic Movement (ODM). Both parties were convinced that each had won the presidential election as the opposition ODM had won a majority of seats in Parliament while the ruling PNU insisted it had won the presidency. The stalemate resulted in inter-communal violence unprecedented in Kenya's post-colonial politics in which over 1,500 people died and an estimated 650,000 people were internally, displaced. Obasanjo reportedly drew Odinga's attention to the fact that Kibaki had resisted pressure from those who sought intervention of the armed forces against the opposition. Such violence would have provoked temporary international verbal condemnation but the international community would have eventually settled back to offer Kibaki diplomatic recognition after protests had died down. Odinga relented and accepted to serve in a coalition government in which he shared power with PNU as the First Prime Minister. That President Obasanjo had, before leaving office in May 2007, began selling crude oil to Kenya's refinery at a concessionary price prior to the post-2007 election violence, must have had a cushioning effect in his mediation talks with Kenya's warring politicians (Adeleke, 2004; Wigwe, 2009).

Obasanjo also introduced the novel practice of serving as "Chairman-in-Office". Obasanjo made a point of actively following Commonwealth dossiers during his two years as Chairman, and it has been said that no other Commonwealth leader has visited the Commonwealth secretariat in London to talk to its staff. As earlier stated, the role of the commonwealth towards Nigeria's debt reprieve was quite commendable. It was on the basis of this President Obasanjo publicly praised the role played by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and his Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, in pushing the Paris Club of debtor nations to cancel the country's \$18 billion in debt on condition that Nigeria paid \$6 billion arrears of interest charges(Whiteman 2008, p.271).

The Commonwealth, which encompasses one-third of humanity, and a diversity of cultures, has over the years attempted to respond in a profound and decisive manner to the concerns of its members as much as it has done to the changes in the international system. Through consensus, dialogue, faith and commitment to shared goals, the Commonwealth is

truly global and consistent in its values of promoting social equity, equality, development, respect for human rights and good governance. The work of the Commonwealth in the areas of good governance and the promotion of human rights, economic development, civil society, networking, democratic consolidation, human resource development and capacity building, only makes it an invaluable ally in the quest for Africa's renewal (Ugwu, 2003).

McKinnon commended Nigeria's steady strides towards attaining development, noting that aspirations and challenges on the African continent have moved on from political liberation to issues of democracy and good governance, economic and social development, trade, aid, the impact of globalization and stemming the threat posed by HIV-AIDS. He argued that the Commonwealth is one of Nigeria and Africa's best friends and advocates in the mobilization of international support for its economic and social development, including the critical issues of trade access, the scourge of HIV-AIDS and also, bridging the digital divide. The establishment of the CFTC (Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation) has also aided the production of core personnel in many member countries, providing training and expertise in core areas such as jurisprudence, economy, and science and technology. He further added that whilst development is not necessarily a prerequisite for democracy and vice-versa, democracy is more likely to succeed in conditions of economic growth and prosperity than in situations of widespread poverty and economic decline. Similarly, development is more likely to occur and to be sustainable in conditions of democratic accountability, the rule of law and good governance (McKinnon, 2003).

The Good Practice awards were also introduced in 2005, to identify and reward a number of worthy projects during the year-long period of adjudication. Good practices are regarded as projects, policies, strategies or significant interventions which have made a positive difference to primary school children and their teachers or to the school system of a country. A number of Nigerian schools and institutions have been recipients, including the Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti, for their Innovation Enterprise Empowerment training Programme (IEEP), Youth Cultural Association of Nigeria for empowering youths through information and education, the Federal Polytechnic Kaura Namoda, for improving quality in education, Federal Polytechnic, Nekede, for improving quality in education through Information & Communication Technology, Federal Ministry of Education, Federal Secretariat, for achieving Universal Primary Education in Nigeria,

University of Ilorin for mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS, University of Ilorin for their Centre for Supportive Services for the Deaf, amongst many others (Britto, 2003).

The Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) for Africa has also aided human resource development efforts in Nigeria by offering professional training courses in Development through the Youth Work Education and Training Programme. The CYP Diploma course and other short courses relevant to the development of youth in development skills are fully focused on youths. The Commonwealth Diploma in Youth in Development Work is an 18-month distant education course covering various development needs of working with young people and development in general. In Nigeria, the University of Abuja has been teaching the CYP Diploma Programme, with the CYP providing support in the training and development of youths in capacity development. Prof. Mabel Ekwierhoma (Director, Development Centre) added that young people continue to face many challenges e.g. HIV and AIDS, unemployment and teenage pregnancies which education could help curb (Wigwe, 2009; MFA-AR, 2012).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study has established that Nigeria's foreign policy was well utilized in its engagement with the Commonwealth more especially in the period of the First Republic and the military regimes between 1966 and 1979 up to the Second Republic. There was however a twist in Nigeria's economic relations with the Commonwealth during the military regimes of the late 1980s up to 1990s where it turned sour. The ushering in of a civil democratic government of the Fourth Republic in May, 1999 brought about the rejuvenation of positive engagement between the country and the Commonwealth. In spite of all these positive engagements there was no positive transformation of the economic benefits derivable from such into wooing foreign investors (FDI) to bring in foreign capital to invest in the industrial and manufacturing sector/sub-sectors of the domestic economy. Hence, the study hereby recommends that Nigerian the government should active take advantage of its membership of this body to woo FDI from highly industrialize members to come in and domesticate their industries and factories for the local manufacture of unique products and goods for export. The export of these finished goods and products with comparative

competitive advantage in the international market will expand the country's foreign revenue sources.

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