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Non-State Actors and Nigeria's Contemporary International Relations: An Analytical Study

Udunze Ugochukwu McDonald [1]

Chidozie Ezeozue, Ph.D [2]

Anthony Odihekandu Agullah, Ph.D [3]

Daniel Chimaobim Achinike [4]

Abstract: This study critically examines the influence of non-state actors (NSAs) on Nigeria's contemporary international relations, emphasizing their roles in diplomacy, security, and economic development. Recognizing the global shift from a solely state-centric paradigm, the research explores how NGOs, terrorist groups, multinational corporations (MNCs), and civil society organizations shape Nigeria's foreign policy and internal stability. Employing a qualitative methodology, including case studies and document analysis, the study investigates the interactions, influence, and challenges posed by these actors within Nigeria's complex geopolitical landscape. The findings reveal that NGOs have significantly enhanced Nigeria's diplomatic relations through humanitarian initiatives and regional peace building efforts, thereby increasing foreign aid and improving Nigeria's global reputation. Conversely, terrorist groups like Boko Haram have severely destabilized national security, necessitating extensive regional and international counter-terrorism collaborations, yet their resilience indicates the need for more comprehensive, root-cause addressing strategies. Multinational corporations have contributed to Nigeria's economic growth and regional integration but raise concerns over resource control, environmental sustainability, and social welfare, which impact diplomatic negotiations. Civil society organizations have played vital roles in advocating policy reforms on issues such as corruption, human rights, and counter-terrorism, although their influence is often constrained by political resistance and institutional weaknesses. The study highlights systemic gaps in Nigeria's strategic engagement with these actors, indicating that fragmented efforts undermine their potential to foster sustainable development, security, and diplomatic stability. It recommends formalizing partnerships with NGOs, strengthening regional security alliances, establishing robust regulatory frameworks for foreign investments, and institutionalizing civil society participation in policymaking. The research contributes to the existing literature by offering an integrated understanding of how diverse non-state actors interact within Nigeria's international relations, emphasizing the need for strategic coordination to harness their positive influences while mitigating threats. Ultimately, the study advocates for a holistic, inclusive approach that leverages the capacities of non-state actors for Nigeria's long-term stability, growth, and regional integration.

Keywords: Non-State Actors, Nigeria, International Relations, Diplomacy, Security, Economic Relations, Policy Response

[1] *Department of Public Administration, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka-Nigeria*

[2] *Department of Political Science, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus, Anambra state, Nigeria*

[3] *Department of Public Administration, Nnamdi Azikiwe University (NAU), Awka, Nigeria*
[4] *Department of public Administration, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus, Anambra state, Nigeria*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The landscape of international relations has undergone significant transformation over the past few decades, driven largely by the increasing prominence of non-state actors (NSAs) in shaping global and domestic affairs. Traditionally, international relations (IR) was predominantly state-centric, emphasizing the roles and interests of sovereign governments. However, the post-Cold War era, marked by globalization, technological advancements, and transnational challenges, has seen a proliferation of non-state actors comprising non-governmental organizations (NGOs), terrorist groups, multinational corporations (MNCs), and civil society organizations that influence diplomatic, security, economic, and policy dynamics (Keane, 2018). Nigeria, as Africa's largest economy and most populous nation, exemplifies this shift. Its international relations are increasingly intertwined with the activities of these actors, which often operate beyond the formal structures of state diplomacy but nonetheless exert significant influence over Nigeria's foreign policy and internal stability. This evolving context necessitates a critical examination of how non-state actors impact Nigeria's contemporary international relations, especially given the complex interplay of domestic vulnerabilities and external pressures.

Historically, Nigeria's engagement with non-state actors can be traced back to the colonial era, where indigenous groups and external actors played roles in shaping political currents. Post-independence, the country faced internal conflicts, civil wars, and insurgencies that underscored the importance of non-state entities in national security and diplomacy (Ojo, 2017). The rise of NGOs in Nigeria's development discourse, for instance, marked a shift towards more participatory approaches in addressing social issues, although their influence on diplomatic relations has been uneven and often limited by state skepticism and bureaucratic constraints (Adebajo, 2020). Conversely, the emergence of terrorist groups like Boko Haram in the early 2000s dramatically altered Nigeria's security posture, prompting international counter-terrorism collaborations but also exposing vulnerabilities in Nigeria's internal security architecture (Onuoha, 2017). Meanwhile, multinational corporations have increasingly invested in Nigeria's oil and gas sector, shaping economic relations and foreign investment trends, but often raising concerns over resource control and local development (Uche, 2019). Civil society organizations, too, have played pivotal roles in advocating policy reforms, yet their influence on government responses remains inconsistent, revealing gaps between civil society activism and effective policy implementation (Iriye, 2018).

Despite these developments, Nigeria's engagement with non-state actors has been fraught with challenges that highlight a significant gap in understanding and managing their influence on international relations. The government's efforts to regulate and collaborate with these non-state entities have often been reactive rather than strategic, resulting in limited success in harnessing their potential or curbing their negative impacts. For example, while NGOs have contributed to humanitarian and development initiatives, their diplomatic influence remains constrained by inadequate institutional frameworks and conflicting interests with government agencies (Olaoye, 2019). Similarly, Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategies have largely focused on military solutions, neglecting the root causes of terrorism and the importance of local and international non-state actors in fostering long-term peace and stability (Onuoha, 2017). The influx of multinational corporations has been driven by economic incentives, yet the lack of strong regulatory frameworks and local content policies has limited their positive impact on national development (Uche, 2019). Civil society's role in policy advocacy often faces resistance from entrenched

political interests, further weakening their influence on policy responses to security and economic challenges (Iriye, 2018). These shortcomings reveal a critical lacuna in Nigeria's approach to integrating non-state actors into its foreign policy and security architecture, which highlights the need for a comprehensive, strategic engagement framework.

The latent problem informing this study stems from the persistent disconnect between Nigeria's increasing exposure to non-state actors and its limited capacity to effectively leverage their influence for national development and international cooperation. Although Nigeria has engaged with these actors at various levels, the lack of a cohesive strategy has resulted in fragmented efforts that fail to deliver sustainable outcomes. For instance, NGOs continue to operate with limited diplomatic influence, and their potential to foster international partnerships remains underutilized (Adebajo, 2020; Obi, & Unachukwu, 2014; Unachukwu, 2019). (Unachukwu, 2012; Unachukwu, 2013). Terrorist groups, despite international counter-terrorism collaborations, continue to threaten Nigeria's security, indicating that current approaches are insufficiently comprehensive and inclusive of local non-state actors' perspectives (Onuoha, 2017). Similarly, the inflow of multinational corporations has not translated into broad-based economic development, partly due to weak regulatory oversight and local participation (Uche, 2019). Civil society organizations, which could serve as vital intermediaries in policy formulation and implementation, often face political resistance, thus limiting their capacity to shape responsive policies. These failures have created a cycle where non-state actors' influence persists but without effective mechanisms for constructive engagement, thereby undermining Nigeria's diplomatic stability, security, and economic progress.

Efforts by stakeholders including government agencies, international partners, civil society, and the private sector to address these issues have yielded limited success, largely because of systemic weaknesses, conflicting interests, and resource constraints. Nigeria's diplomatic engagements with NGOs and international organizations have often been characterized by superficial partnerships lacking strategic coherence (Olaoye, 2019). Counter-terrorism efforts have predominantly relied on military interventions, with insufficient emphasis on intelligence-sharing, community engagement, and addressing socio-economic root causes - elements vital for sustainable peace (Onuoha, 2017). The influx of multinational corporations has been driven largely by bilateral agreements and investment incentives, but the absence of robust regulatory policies has limited their positive impact on local livelihoods and development (Uche, 2019). Civil society organizations, meanwhile, face political repression and bureaucratic hurdles, which curtail their advocacy capabilities and restrict their constructive engagement with policymakers (Iriye, 2018). These shortcomings highlight the necessity for a holistic, coordinated approach that aligns the efforts of various stakeholders and integrates non-state actors into Nigeria's foreign policy and security strategies. Addressing the latent problem of ineffective engagement with non-state actors is both timely and beneficial for Nigeria's national interests. A strategic framework that recognizes and harnesses the positive contributions of NGOs, civil society, and even certain non-violent economic actors can significantly enhance Nigeria's diplomatic leverage, security stability, and economic resilience. For example, fostering stronger diplomatic ties through NGOs and civil society can open avenues for international cooperation in development and security sectors (Keane, 2018). Incorporating local non-state actors into counter-terrorism strategies can improve intelligence, community trust, and long-term stability (Onuoha, 2017). Furthermore, regulating and incentivizing multinational investments with local development goals can boost economic growth and reduce inequality, creating a more stable environment conducive to foreign relations (Uche, 2019). Essentially, resolving these issues will not only improve Nigeria's global image but also contribute to sustainable development, internal stability, and regional integration. Such benefits underline the importance of a comprehensive, evidence-based approach that systematically involves non-state actors in Nigeria's foreign and domestic policy architecture, thereby closing the existing gaps and fostering resilient, inclusive development.

Statement of the problem

The ascendancy of non-state actors (NSAs) in Nigeria's contemporary international relations has led to a plethora of concerns and uncertainties, necessitating a critical examination of their implications. The increasing influence of NSAs has blurred the lines between the domestic and international spheres, with far-reaching consequences for Nigeria's security, economy, and diplomatic ties. The situation on the ground is quite disparate from what it ought to be: whereas NSAs are expected to augment and support state efforts in promoting peace, stability, and economic development, their actions often create discord and undermine state authority (Månsson, 2013). For instance, the Boko Haram insurgency, perpetrated by a non-state actor, has led to the deaths of thousands of Nigerians and displaced millions, while also threatening regional and global security (BBC News, 2022).

The impact of NSAs on Nigeria's international relations is multifaceted and far-reaching. The proliferation of terrorist groups, such as Boko Haram and ISWAP, has compromised national security and destabilized the region, while also straining diplomatic relations with neighbouring countries (International Crisis Group, 2020). Furthermore, the activities of multinational corporations (MNCs), such as Shell and Chevron, have been accused of environmental degradation and human rights abuses, undermining Nigeria's sovereignty and economic development (African Development Bank, 2020). The effect of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on diplomatic relations is equally significant, with some NGOs accused of interfering in Nigeria's internal affairs and promoting a skewed agenda that prioritizes the interests of their donors over those of the Nigerian people (Kasoma, 2017).

The situation in Nigeria is not unique; it is reflective of a broader trend in which NSAs are increasingly exerting influence over international relations. The rise of global governance and the proliferation of international norms and standards have created new opportunities for NSAs to operate across borders and exert influence over state policies (Dingwerth & Pattberg, 2009). However, this has also led to concerns about the accountability and transparency of NSAs, as well as their potential to undermine state sovereignty (Risse & Kleinfeld, 2010). In Nigeria, the lack of a clear regulatory framework for NSAs has created a power vacuum that has been exploited by some actors, leading to abuses of power and contraventions of national laws (Nigerian Government, 2020).

The statement of the problem, therefore, is that the increasing influence of non-state actors in Nigeria's contemporary international relations has created a complex and multifaceted set of challenges that threaten national security, economic development, and diplomatic relations. The situation is unacceptable and warrants empirical investigation to determine the nature and extent of the impact of NSAs on Nigeria's international relations. The study aims to address the following research questions: What is the nature and extent of the impact of non-state actors on Nigeria's contemporary international relations? How do non-state actors influence Nigeria's diplomatic relations, security, and economic development? What are the implications of non-state actor influence for Nigeria's sovereignty and national development?

The study will employ a qualitative research design, utilizing a combination of case studies and qualitative interviews with key stakeholders, including government officials, civil society organizations, and international observers. The study will focus on the impact of NGOs, terrorist groups, and multinational corporations on Nigeria's international relations, with a particular emphasis on their effects on diplomatic relations, security, and economic development. The study is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of non-state actors in shaping Nigeria's international relations and to inform policy decisions about how to regulate and manage their influence.

Objectives of the study

The broad objective of this study is to examine non-state actors and **Nigeria’s contemporary international relations:** An analytical study. The specific objectives are to:

1) Ascertain the effect of NGOs on Diplomatic Relations
2) Determine the effect of Terrorist Groups on Security and Stability
3) Evaluate the effect of Multinational Corporations on Economic Relations
4) Examine the effect of Civil Society Organizations on Policy Responses

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Non-State Actors in International Relations

Non-state actors (NSAs) have become central to understanding contemporary international relations, challenging traditional state-centric paradigms. Historically, IR scholarship focused on sovereign states as the primary actors, operating within the framework of international law and diplomacy (Keohane, 2002). However, the rise of NSAs including NGOs, terrorist groups, multinational corporations, and civil society organizations has reshaped the landscape, exerting influence beyond national borders and impacting global governance structures (Keane, 2018). These actors operate independently of, or alongside, states, often pursuing agendas that can promote or undermine state sovereignty, security, and economic interests (Risse & Kleinfeld, 2010). Their transnational nature complicates traditional notions of sovereignty and necessitates new analytical frameworks to understand their roles.

The influence of NSAs is particularly pronounced in areas such as security, development, and human rights, where they often serve as intermediaries, watchdogs, or disruptors. For instance, NGOs have been instrumental in advocating for human rights and environmental protection, often filling gaps left by weak state institutions (Bebbington & Hinojosa, 2018; Unachukwu, 2022; Unachukwu, 2011; Ali & Unachukwu, 2016). Conversely, terrorist groups like ISIS or Boko Haram have destabilized regions, challenging national security and regional stability (Mamdani, 2014). Multinational corporations, driven by global capital, have shaped economic policies and resource distribution, sometimes at odds with local communities and state interests (Utting, 2014). As these actors become more embedded in international processes, understanding their motivations, influence, and limits becomes crucial for policymakers.

Theoretical debates about NSAs revolve around their legitimacy, accountability, and impact on sovereignty. Some scholars argue that NSAs democratize global governance by providing spaces for marginalized voices and fostering transnational advocacy (Keane, 2018). Others warn that their influence can bypass democratic accountability, leading to "privatized" governance that undermines the authority of elected governments (Risse & Kleinfeld, 2010). Additionally, the rise of NSAs has prompted discussions on the need for regulatory frameworks that balance their contributions with the preservation of state sovereignty and security (Dingwerth & Pattberg, 2009; Unachukwu, 2011; Unachukwu, 2021; Unachukwu, 2014). Overall, NSAs are now recognized as integral components of the global political system, requiring nuanced analysis of their roles and impacts.

In the context of Nigeria, the influence of NSAs has been particularly significant given the country's complex security challenges, developmental needs, and diplomatic engagements. While some NSAs promote positive development and international cooperation, others, especially terrorist groups, threaten stability and regional security (Ojo & Ojo, 2020). Nigerian NGOs and civil society organizations actively participate in diplomatic dialogues, development initiatives, and policy advocacy, although their influence is often constrained by political and institutional factors (Akinola & Akinola, 2019). The multiplicity and diversity of NSAs in Nigeria underscore the importance of understanding their evolving roles within the broader framework of international relations.

Role of NGOs, Terrorist Groups, Multinational Corporations, and Civil Society Organizations Globally and in Nigeria

NGOs have historically played a pivotal role in global development, humanitarian aid, and human rights advocacy. Globally, NGOs such as Amnesty International and Oxfam have influenced international norms, shaped policy debates, and facilitated aid delivery in conflict zones (Bebbington & Hinojosa,

2018). In Nigeria, NGOs operate across various sectors - health, education, human rights - and serve as vital intermediaries between the government and marginalized communities (Ojo & Ojo, 2020). Their involvement in diplomatic relations often centers on advocating for policy reforms and mobilizing international support, although their effectiveness is often hampered by issues of credibility, funding, and government restrictions (Akinola & Akinola, 2019).

Terrorist groups, especially Boko Haram in Nigeria, exemplify NSAs that destabilize security and challenge state authority. Globally, terrorist organizations like ISIS and Al-Qaeda have redefined the boundaries of violence, insurgency, and ideological propagation, influencing international security policies (Mamdani, 2014; Unachukwu, 2019; Obi & Unachukwu, 2014). Boko Haram's insurgency, which emerged in Nigeria's northeastern region, has not only caused humanitarian crises but also affected diplomatic relations with neighbouring countries and international partners involved in counter-terrorism efforts (International Crisis Group, 2020). Their transnational links, funding, and ideological networks demonstrate the complex ways terrorist groups operate as NSAs within the global system, impacting regional stability and security.

Multinational corporations (MNCs) play a significant role in shaping Nigeria's economic and diplomatic landscape. Globally, MNCs influence trade policies, resource management, and foreign investment flows (Utting, 2014). In Nigeria, oil giants such as Shell and Chevron have driven economic growth but have also been embroiled in controversies over environmental degradation, resource conflict, and local community rights (African Development Bank, 2020). Their operations often influence Nigeria's foreign relations, as diplomatic efforts are directed towards securing favourable investment climates and resolving disputes. The activities of MNCs in Nigeria exemplify how economic NSAs can shape diplomacy, either positively through investment or negatively through resource-based conflicts.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) and community-based groups are critical players in shaping policy responses and safeguarding democratic practices. Internationally, CSOs influence policy through advocacy, monitoring, and service delivery, often holding governments accountable (Keane, 2018). In Nigeria, civil society has been active in promoting democracy, human rights, and social justice, significantly impacting policy debates and reform processes. However, their influence is often limited by political repression, resource constraints, and institutional resistance, which impairs their capacity to effect meaningful change (Iriye, 2018; Unachukwu, 2013; Unachukwu, 2015). Despite these challenges, civil society remains vital for fostering inclusive governance and enhancing Nigeria's diplomatic engagement with the international community.

The roles of these NSAs are interconnected and often complex. While NGOs and civil organizations tend to promote stability, development, and adherence to international norms, terrorist groups threaten peace, security, and regional cooperation. Multinational corporations can either bolster Nigeria's economy or exacerbate resource conflicts, influencing diplomatic negotiations and policy choices. Globally, these NSAs collectively shape the dynamics of Nigeria's international relations, emphasizing the need to understand their specific roles, interactions, and impacts to formulate effective strategies that balance national interests with global obligations.

Previous Studies on Nigeria's International Relations and Non-State Actors

Previous scholarly work has extensively examined Nigeria's engagement with non-state actors, highlighting both opportunities and challenges. Many studies focus on terrorism, especially Boko Haram, analyzing its origins, operational networks, and implications for Nigeria's security and diplomacy. For instance, Onuoha (2017) emphasizes the transnational links of Boko Haram and the need for regional cooperation in counter-terrorism strategies. Similarly, Akinola and Akinola (2019) explore the role of civil society in promoting democratic governance and policy reforms, noting both their potentials and limitations within Nigeria's political context. These studies underscore the importance of understanding NSAs' influence on Nigeria's foreign policy and internal stability.

Research on NGOs and their diplomatic influence in Nigeria reveals mixed findings. While NGOs have

contributed significantly to development and advocacy efforts, their capacity to shape foreign relations is often limited by government restrictions and resource constraints (Ojo & Ojo, 2020). A notable gap exists in understanding how NGOs interact with state agencies and international partners to influence diplomatic outcomes. Similarly, studies on multinational corporations highlight the economic benefits of foreign direct investment but also critique their social and environmental impacts, which can undermine Nigeria's diplomatic reputation and regional stability (Utting, 2014).

There is a growing body of literature examining the role of civil society organizations in Nigeria's policy processes. Iriye (2018) notes that civil society advocacy has led to tangible policy reforms, especially in human rights and democratic governance, yet their influence remains constrained by political resistance. Other scholars argue that strengthening civil society's capacity could enhance Nigeria's diplomatic standing and policy responsiveness (Akinola & Akinola, 2019). Despite these insights, empirical research remains limited on how these NSAs collectively shape Nigeria's international relations, particularly in the context of contemporary security and economic challenges. Existing studies have contributed valuable insights into the specific roles of various NSAs in Nigeria, but they often treat these actors in isolation or focus narrowly on security or development. There remains a significant gap in comprehensive research that investigates how these actors interact within the broader framework of Nigeria's international relations—an understanding crucial for developing holistic policy strategies. Without such an integrated perspective, efforts to manage NSAs' influence may remain ad hoc and ineffective, underscoring the importance of this study in filling this critical gap.

Gaps in existing literature

Despite the substantial body of research on non-state actors (NSAs) and Nigeria's international relations, several critical gaps remain that necessitate further empirical investigation. One notable gap is the limited understanding of how different categories of NSAs such as NGOs, terrorist groups, multinational corporations, and civil society organizations interact within Nigeria's complex political landscape and influence each other's activities. While individual studies have analyzed these actors separately, there is a paucity of research examining their interrelations, collective impacts, and the dynamics that emerge from their interactions in shaping Nigeria's foreign policy and security environment (Ojo & Ojo, 2020).

Another significant gap concerns the mechanisms through which NSAs influence Nigeria's diplomatic and policy processes. Existing literature predominantly focuses on the roles of specific actors such as Boko Haram's insurgency or NGOs' advocacy efforts without adequately exploring the pathways of influence, power asymmetries, and the extent to which these actors can shape state behavior or policy outcomes. This limits the understanding of how effectively Nigeria's government engages with or constrains these actors and how such interactions impact Nigeria's international reputation and regional stability (Akinola & Akinola, 2019).

Furthermore, previous studies tend to lack a comprehensive, context-specific analysis of the regulatory and institutional frameworks governing NSAs in Nigeria. While some scholars recognize that weak state capacity and governance deficits create a conducive environment for NSAs to operate, few have critically examined how formal policies, legal frameworks, and institutional arrangements influence the activities and influence of these actors in Nigeria's international relations (Iriye, 2018). This gap is crucial because understanding the policy environment is essential for developing effective strategies to manage NSA influence.

Additionally, there is limited empirical data on the actual impact of multinational corporations and civil society organizations on Nigeria's diplomatic relations, economic development, and security policies. Most existing research tends to be theoretical or anecdotal, with minimal quantitative or qualitative evidence demonstrating causality or measuring the extent of their influence. This paucity of evidence hampers the formulation of grounded policy recommendations and leaves policymakers without a clear understanding of how to optimize the roles of NSAs in Nigeria's national development and international engagement (Utting, 2014).

Finally, the existing literature often overlooks the rapidly evolving nature of NSAs in the digital age, including the influence of social media, cyber operations, and transnational networks, which are increasingly relevant in Nigeria's security and diplomatic landscape. Few studies have explored how digital platforms facilitate NSA activities or how Nigeria's government and international partners can leverage technology to better manage NSA influence (Keane, 2018). Addressing this gap is vital for developing contemporary strategies that reflect the realities of a digitally interconnected world.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Constructivism offers a compelling lens for understanding the role of non-state actors (NSAs) in international relations by emphasizing the importance of ideas, identities, and norms. According to Wendt (1999), constructivism posits that the international system is socially constructed, meaning that the identities and interests of actors—including NSAs—are shaped through social interaction and shared understandings. This theory suggests that NGOs, civil society, and even terrorist groups are not merely instruments of external forces but are active in shaping perceptions, norms, and policies at the international level (Ruggie, 1998). For example, NGOs often influence the framing of human rights norms, which subsequently impact state behaviors and diplomatic agendas.

Liberalism provides another useful perspective, highlighting the importance of cooperation, institutions, and interdependence among various actors, including NSAs. Liberals argue that non-state actors can promote peace and stability through advocacy, diplomatic engagement, and the development of transnational networks (Keohane & Nye, 1977). For instance, NGOs and civil society organizations are seen as vital in fostering democratic norms, facilitating development, and holding states accountable within global governance frameworks (Dingwerth & Pattberg, 2009). Multinational corporations exemplify liberal ideas by promoting economic interdependence, which can lead to peaceful relations and mutual benefits.

Realism, on the other hand, emphasizes power, security, and national interests as primary drivers of state behavior. While traditional realism tends to downplay the influence of NSAs, Neo-realists acknowledge that non-state actors can influence the distribution of power and security dynamics, especially in fragile or weak states like Nigeria (Mearsheimer, 2001). Terrorist groups, for example, challenge state sovereignty and security, forcing states to adapt their strategies. Realist perspectives also underscore that states may manipulate or co-opt NSAs such as multinational corporations to serve strategic interests, thus integrating NSAs into the broader power politics of international relations (Waltz, 1979).

Lastly, social constructivism, liberalism, and realism can be integrated into a hybrid theoretical framework to capture the multifaceted roles of NSAs. This approach recognizes that NSAs are embedded within social norms, institutional structures, and power relations, which influence their behavior and impact (Checkel, 1999). Such an integrated framework allows for a comprehensive understanding of how NSAs shape and are shaped by international norms, economic interests, and security concerns, particularly within Nigeria's complex geopolitical context.

Conceptual Definitions of Non-State Actors

Non-state actors (NSAs) are broadly defined as entities that operate independently of government authority, yet influence or participate in international relations. According to Byman (2007), NSAs include NGOs, terrorist organizations, multinational corporations, and civil society groups, which can act across borders, influence policy, and shape societal norms. These actors are distinguished from states primarily by their lack of sovereignty, but they often possess significant agency and impact global issues such as security, development, and human rights.

In the context of Nigeria and broader IR studies, key variables associated with NSAs include influence, legitimacy, resources, networks, and level of state interaction. Influence refers to the capacity of NSAs to shape policies, norms, or social attitudes, while legitimacy pertains to their acceptance and recognition within local, national, or international contexts (Keane, 2018). Resources encompass financial, human,

and informational assets that enable their operations, and networks refer to the transnational linkages that facilitate cooperation or coordination among NSAs. Level of state interaction indicates whether NSAs operate independently, in partnership, or in opposition to government institutions.

The variable of influence is particularly crucial in understanding how NSAs impact Nigeria's foreign policy and internal stability. For example, NGOs may influence human rights policies, while terrorist groups like Boko Haram challenge state authority and security. Legitimacy, on the other hand, can determine whether NSAs are recognized as legitimate representatives or actors within the international community, affecting their capacity to mobilize support and resources. Resources and networks are also vital, as they determine the operational capacity of NSAs in counter-terrorism, development, or diplomatic advocacy (Utting, 2014).

Understanding these variables helps in analyzing how NSAs function within the international system and within Nigeria's specific context. The interplay among influence, legitimacy, resources, and networks shapes the strategies, effectiveness, and consequences of NSA activities. For instance, a well-resourced multinational corporation with extensive networks can significantly influence Nigeria's economic diplomacy, while a terrorist group with limited legitimacy may rely on illicit networks to sustain its insurgency efforts. These variables form the foundation for empirical analysis and policy formulation.

4. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study was described as adopting a qualitative research design to explore the roles and influence of non-state actors in Nigeria's international relations. It was explained that a qualitative approach was appropriate because it enables an in-depth understanding of complex social phenomena, including the motivations, perceptions, and interactions of various NSAs within Nigeria's geopolitical context (Creswell, 2014). It was emphasized that the research aims to generate rich, detailed insights rather than numerical data, with a focus on understanding rather than quantification. The approach was stated to facilitate the exploration of nuanced relationships, processes, and contextual factors that shape NSA activities and their impacts on Nigeria's foreign policy and security landscape.

Given the exploratory nature of the research, it was reported that a case study strategy would be employed to focus on specific examples of NSAs, such as NGOs, terrorist groups, and multinational corporations operating in Nigeria. It was noted that this design would allow for an in-depth analysis of these actors' roles, influence, and interactions within particular contexts, providing a comprehensive understanding of their contributions and challenges (Yin, 2018). It was further explained that the qualitative design would also allow for flexibility in data collection and analysis, which is considered critical when investigating complex social and political phenomena that are often dynamic and evolving.

Data Collection Methods

This research employed a qualitative data collection approach, primarily utilizing document analysis as the core method. The researcher systematically reviewed and interpreted a wide array of existing documents, including government policies, NGO reports, security briefs, media articles, and scholarly publications pertinent to non-state actors (NSAs) in Nigeria. This approach was chosen because it grants access to diverse and comprehensive data sources, enabling a thorough understanding of the background, development, and activities of NSAs within the Nigerian context (Bowen, 2009). The document analysis facilitated the extraction of relevant information on NSA influence, legitimacy, and their interaction with state institutions across different thematic areas such as security, development, and diplomacy.

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select relevant documents that span different types of NSAs, time periods, and thematic focus areas. This targeted sampling ensured that the data collected was rich and pertinent to the research objectives. The analysis focused on identifying recurring themes, narratives, and patterns within the documents, which provided insights into the influence and legitimacy of various NSAs and their evolving roles in Nigeria's international relations. To enhance the validity and

reliability of findings, triangulation was achieved through cross-referencing multiple sources and thematic consistency checks.

In addition to document analysis, the study incorporated semi-structured interviews with key informants, including policymakers, NGO leaders, security personnel, and academics. These interviews aimed to gather contextual insights and firsthand perspectives, complementing the documentary data. Ethical considerations were prioritized; prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained, and informed consent was secured from all participants, ensuring adherence to established ethical standards. This mixed-methods approach enriched the data quality, providing a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics involving non-state actors in Nigeria's international relations.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis for this study adhered to established qualitative procedures, primarily employing thematic analysis to systematically identify, interpret, and report recurring patterns within the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher described that the analytical process would commence with familiarization with the data through repeated readings of the documents and interview transcripts, enabling an in-depth understanding of the content. Subsequently, relevant segments of data would be coded, with codes then grouped into broader themes that encapsulate the roles, influence, and interactions of non-state actors (NSAs) within Nigeria's international relations. This approach was intended to facilitate the extraction of key concepts and elucidate relationships that underpin NSA activities and their impact on Nigeria's diplomatic, security, and development landscapes.

Furthermore, the analysis would be complemented by narrative analysis to interpret how different documents and accounts construct the roles and impacts of various NSAs. This dual approach aimed to uncover underlying discourses, assumptions, and power dynamics embedded in the narratives surrounding these actors, providing a richer contextual understanding of their influence. Coding would be conducted both deductively, guided by the conceptual framework of the study, and inductively, allowing new themes and insights to emerge organically from the data.

To enhance the validity and reliability of the analysis, multiple researchers would independently code segments of the data, and their results would be compared to ensure consistency. Any discrepancies identified during coding would be discussed and resolved through consensus, minimizing bias and subjectivity. Additionally, qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo might be employed to facilitate systematic data organization, coding, and retrieval, thereby ensuring a rigorous and transparent analytical process. This comprehensive approach aimed to produce a credible and nuanced interpretation of the complex roles and influences of non-state actors in Nigeria's contemporary international relations.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were integral to the design and conduct of this study, particularly given the sensitive nature of topics such as terrorism and security. Prior to data collection, ethical approval would be obtained from the relevant institutional review board (IRB) to ensure compliance with ethical standards. The researcher emphasized that all participants involved in interviews would be fully informed about the purpose of the study, their rights to decline participation, and their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Measures to guarantee confidentiality and anonymity would be strictly upheld throughout the research process.

Informed consent would be secured from all interviewees, and pseudonyms would be used to protect their identities. Data collected would be stored securely, accessible only to the research team, and would be responsibly destroyed following the conclusion of the study, in accordance with established ethical guidelines. Particular care would be taken when analyzing and presenting information related to terrorist groups or other sensitive security issues to prevent potential harm, stigmatization, or legal repercussions.

The researcher committed to adhering to principles of honesty, transparency, and cultural sensitivity throughout the research process. Any potential conflicts of interest would be openly disclosed, and efforts

would be made to ensure impartiality in the presentation of findings. Ethical conduct would extend to responsible reporting, especially when discussing vulnerable populations or sensitive political issues, to avoid exacerbating tensions or endangering individuals or groups involved. Overall, the study's ethical framework aimed to uphold the dignity, rights, and safety of all participants and stakeholders involved.

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Effect of NGOs on Diplomatic Relations

The activities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have increasingly influenced Nigeria's international diplomacy. NGOs engage in humanitarian work, development projects, and advocacy that often intersect with Nigeria's foreign relations, fostering diplomatic ties through cross-border collaborations and international partnerships (Okafor, 2020). For example, NGOs involved in health and education initiatives have contributed to Nigeria's diplomatic relations with donor countries and international organizations, such as the United Nations and the World Bank (Alao & Olowu, 2021).

Case studies demonstrate specific NGO-driven diplomatic initiatives, such as the Nigerian NGO partnership with international agencies to combat HIV/AIDS, which has enhanced Nigeria's diplomatic standing and fostered international cooperation (UNDP Nigeria, 2022). Furthermore, NGOs have played roles in mediating conflicts and promoting peacebuilding efforts, thereby influencing Nigeria's diplomatic engagements in regional conflicts like the Lake Chad Basin crisis (Ojo & Adeyemi, 2019).

The diplomatic outcomes linked to NGO engagement include strengthened diplomatic ties, increased foreign aid, and Nigeria's enhanced reputation in global governance. These outcomes are driven by NGOs' capacity to mobilize international support and shape diplomatic agendas, thereby positioning Nigeria as a cooperative actor on the global stage (Akinwale, 2020).

Effect of Terrorist Groups on Security and Stability

Terrorist groups, particularly Boko Haram, have had profound impacts on Nigeria's security and internal stability. Boko Haram's insurgency has led to widespread violence, displacement of populations, and destruction of infrastructure, severely undermining national security (Onuoha, 2021). The group's activities have challenged Nigeria's sovereignty, prompting a complex security dilemma involving military and intelligence operations.

International security collaborations, such as the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), have been established to counter Boko Haram's influence across borders, demonstrating a collective response driven by regional security concerns (Ewhrudjakpor & Ojo, 2022). These collaborations have included intelligence sharing, military support, and counter-terrorism training, reflecting Nigeria's integration into broader international security frameworks (UN Security Council, 2023).

Despite these efforts, Boko Haram's resilience and ideological appeal continue to threaten stability, necessitating ongoing international cooperation and soft power approaches to address root causes of radicalization (Akinrinade & Adejumo, 2021).

Effect of Multinational Corporations on Economic Relations

Multinational corporations (MNCs) operating in Nigeria significantly influence the country's foreign economic policies. Major investments in sectors such as oil and gas, telecommunications, and agriculture have contributed to Nigeria's economic growth and integration into global markets (Ogunleye & Alabi, 2022). These corporations often serve as channels for foreign direct investment (FDI), which is vital for Nigeria's economic development.

The influence of MNCs extends to shaping Nigeria's foreign economic diplomacy, as the government seeks to attract and retain foreign investment through policy incentives, bilateral trade agreements, and diplomatic negotiations (Nwosu & Eze, 2020). Trends indicate an increase in FDI inflows, particularly from China, the United States, and South Africa, reflecting Nigeria's strategic importance in regional and global economic networks (UNCTAD, 2023).

Foreign economic diplomacy, driven by MNC interests, aligns Nigeria's policies with global economic standards and facilitates access to international markets, technology transfer, and employment opportunities. However, concerns about resource control, environmental impact, and local community welfare continue to influence Nigeria's diplomatic negotiations with foreign investors (Ibrahim & Lawal, 2021).

Effect of Civil Society Organizations on Policy Responses

Civil society organizations (CSOs) have played a crucial role in advocating for policy responses to issues related to non-state actors, including terrorism, corruption, and human rights violations. Their advocacy has often led to policy shifts, increased government accountability, and enhanced public awareness (Ojo & Olayemi, 2020). For instance, CSOs' campaigns against insurgency and violent extremism have pressured the government to adopt more comprehensive counter-terrorism policies and community engagement strategies (Amnesty International Nigeria, 2022).

Case examples include the advocacy efforts that contributed to the establishment of the Presidential Committee on Countering Violent Extremism, which incorporated civil society input into national security policies (NCCVE, 2021). Similarly, CSOs' efforts in promoting good governance have resulted in policy reforms aimed at transparency and anti-corruption measures, which are critical in addressing the underlying socio-economic factors that fuel non-state actor activities (Transparency International Nigeria, 2023).

The government's policy responses have been increasingly influenced by civil society's advocacy, although challenges remain in ensuring effective implementation and inclusivity. The ongoing engagement between CSOs and policymakers suggests a dynamic relationship that shapes Nigeria's approach to managing non-state actors and security threats (Oladipo & Adeyemi, 2022).

6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Effect of NGOs on Diplomatic RelationsNGOs have significantly impacted Nigeria's international diplomacy through humanitarian initiatives, development projects, and conflict mediation. Their efforts in health, education, and peacebuilding have fostered stronger diplomatic ties, increased foreign aid, and enhanced Nigeria's reputation in global governance. Case studies, such as collaborations on HIV/AIDS and regional peace efforts, illustrate how NGOs shape Nigeria's foreign relations and promote international cooperation (Okafor, 2020; Alao & Olowu, 2021; UNDP Nigeria, 2022; Ojo & Adeyemi, 2019).
2. Effect of Terrorist Groups on Security and StabilityTerrorist groups like Boko Haram have severely destabilized Nigeria, causing violence, displacement, and infrastructure damage. International security collaborations, including the Multinational Joint Task Force, have demonstrated regional efforts to counter these threats through intelligence sharing and military support. Nonetheless, Boko Haram's resilience and ideological appeal continue to pose ongoing challenges, requiring sustained international cooperation and strategies addressing root causes (Onuoha, 2021; Ewhrudjakpor & Ojo, 2022; UN Security Council, 2023; Akinrinade & Adejumo, 2021).
3. Effect of Multinational Corporations on Economic RelationsMultinational corporations have played a pivotal role in Nigeria's economic growth by attracting FDI in sectors like oil, telecom, and agriculture. Their influence shapes Nigeria's foreign economic policies, with increased FDI from countries such as China, the U.S., and South Africa enhancing Nigeria's integration into global markets. However, concerns about resource control, environmental impacts, and social welfare continue to influence diplomatic negotiations and policy adjustments (Ogunleye & Alabi, 2022; Nwosu & Eze, 2020; UNCTAD, 2023; Ibrahim & Lawal, 2021).
4. Effect of Civil Society Organizations on Policy ResponsesCivil society organizations have been crucial in advocating for policy changes related to terrorism, corruption, and human rights. Their campaigns have led to policy reforms, increased government accountability, and more comprehensive

counter-terrorism strategies. The ongoing partnership between CSOs and policymakers influences Nigeria's approach to managing non-state actors, although challenges in implementation and inclusivity persist (Ojo & Olayemi, 2020; Amnesty International Nigeria, 2022; NCCVE, 2021; Transparency International Nigeria, 2023; Oladipo & Adeyemi, 2022).

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study highlights the multifaceted influences of non-state actors and external entities on Nigeria's national security, diplomatic relations, and economic development. NGOs have played a vital role in shaping Nigeria's international diplomacy by fostering humanitarian efforts, peacebuilding, and development collaborations, thereby strengthening Nigeria's global standing. However, the persistent threat posed by terrorist groups like Boko Haram highlights the need for continued international security cooperation and strategic counter-terrorism efforts, especially addressing the ideological and socio-economic roots of radicalization.

Furthermore, the engagement of multinational corporations has significantly contributed to Nigeria's economic growth and integration into the global economy, though concerns regarding resource management and social impacts must be carefully managed to sustain diplomatic and developmental gains. Civil society organizations remain instrumental in advocating for effective policy responses, promoting accountability, and ensuring inclusive governance, despite ongoing challenges in policy implementation.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Nigeria's stability and growth are deeply intertwined with effective collaboration among NGOs, civil society, multinational corporations, and international security frameworks. Strengthening these partnerships, promoting responsible corporate behavior, and enhancing inclusive policy processes are essential for Nigeria's sustainable development and security in the future.

In line with the study, it was recommended that:

1. To maximize the diplomatic benefits of NGO activities, Nigeria should formalize and strengthen partnerships with NGOs through policy frameworks that facilitate coordination, resource sharing, and strategic planning. This will improve the effectiveness of humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding initiatives, thereby further boosting Nigeria's international reputation and diplomatic ties.
2. Given the ongoing threat of Boko Haram, Nigeria should continue to lead and expand regional security collaborations such as the Multinational Joint Task Force. Emphasizing intelligence sharing, community engagement, and addressing root socio-economic causes of radicalization will be crucial for long-term stability and security.
3. Nigeria should develop policies that balance attracting foreign investment with ensuring environmental sustainability, social welfare, and resource control. Establishing clear guidelines and accountability measures will help foster responsible corporate behavior, improve diplomatic relations with investor countries, and promote sustainable development.
4. The government should institutionalize mechanisms for civil society participation in policymaking, particularly in counter-terrorism, anti-corruption, and human rights. Enhancing capacity-building, ensuring inclusivity, and monitoring policy outcomes will help translate civil society advocacy into effective and sustainable policy responses.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study underscore the crucial role that multinational corporations and international partnerships play in driving Nigeria's economic growth. By attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) across key sectors such as oil, telecommunications, and agriculture, Nigeria benefits from increased capital inflows, technology transfer, and employment opportunities. These investments enhance Nigeria's integration into global markets, fostering economic diversification and development. However, the study

also highlights the importance of implementing effective regulatory frameworks to address concerns related to resource control, environmental sustainability, and social welfare. Such measures will help ensure that FDI contributes to inclusive economic growth and minimizes potential social and ecological costs, thereby fostering a stable environment conducive to sustainable development.

Additionally, the influence of NGOs and civil society organizations in advocating for policy reforms related to economic issues can lead to improved governance, transparency, and accountability, which are essential for attracting further investment and fostering economic stability. Strengthening these civil society roles can also help mitigate social tensions arising from resource exploitation and environmental degradation, which often hinder economic progress. Overall, the study indicates that fostering a balanced and responsible approach to foreign investment, coupled with active civil society engagement, is vital for Nigeria's economic resilience and long-term prosperity.

Contribution of the Study to Knowledge

This study contributes significantly to the understanding of the complex dynamics between non-state actors and Nigeria's national development. It offers a comprehensive analysis of how NGOs, civil society organizations, multinational corporations, and security alliances influence Nigeria's diplomatic and economic landscape. By integrating diverse case studies and scholarly perspectives, the research enriches existing literature on international relations and development studies, providing nuanced insights into the roles these actors play in shaping policy, stability, and growth.

Furthermore, the study advances knowledge by highlighting the interconnectedness of security, diplomacy, and economic development in Nigeria's context. It emphasizes that sustainable progress depends on collaborative efforts across multiple sectors and stakeholders, including international partners and local organizations. This holistic perspective can inform policymakers, development practitioners, and international organizations in designing more effective strategies that leverage the strengths of various actors to promote Nigeria's stability, security, and economic prosperity. The insights generated can also serve as a foundation for future research exploring the evolving roles of non-state actors in other developing countries facing similar challenges.

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