

NI GERI A'S M E M B E R S H I P I N T H E C O M M O N W E A L T H O F N A T I O N S

(1995- 2007)

By:

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ADP16/ 17/ H0660

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**A T H E S I S W R I T T E N I N T H E D E P A R T M E N T O F I N T E R N A T I O N A L
R E L A T I O N S, F A C U L T Y O F A D M I N I S T R A T I O N A N D S U B M I T T E D T O T H E
P O S T G R A D U A T E C O L L E G E, O B A F E M A W O L O W O U N I V E R S I T Y, I L E - I F E,
N I G E R I A, I N P A R T I A L F U L F I L M E N T O F T H E R E Q U I R E M E N T S F O R T H E
A W A R D O F M A S T E R O F S C I E N C E (M S c.) D E G R E E I N I N T E R N A T I O N A L
R E L A T I O N S**

2019

ABSTRACT

The study examined the impacts of democracy on Nigeria's membership in the Commonwealth of Nations and investigated the strategies used by the Nigerian government to consolidate her position in the Commonwealth of Nations. It also evaluated the benefits of Commonwealth developmental programmes to Nigeria. These were with a view to providing information on the role of multilateral institutions in the development of member states.

Primary and secondary data were utilized for the study. Primary data was gathered through unstructured in-depth interview with 20 purposively selected respondents drawn from the British High Commission, Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Education; Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA); and the Department of International Relations at the Obafemi Awolowo University. Secondary data were sourced from books, journals, articles, newspapers, conference materials and the internet. Data obtained was analyzed descriptively.

The results revealed that democracy impacted positively on Nigeria's membership in the Commonwealth of Nations starting from Nigeria's readmission into the organization and further extended to other benefits such as business opportunities for economic development, women empowerment programmes, youth exchange programmes for social development, deployment of Commonwealth electoral observers group to monitor and promote democratic tenets. Also, result showed that apart from adherence to the principles of the organization, the Nigerian government also adopted a Summit Diplomacy to consolidate her position within the Commonwealth. These involved re-establishing diplomatic contacts, establishing bilateral and multilateral relationships with member states and also ensuring an active participation in all of the organisations and its affiliated organs' activities. Finally, result revealed that Commonwealth made significant

developmental assistance to Nigeria in social and economic development, educational assistance in form of scholarships and access to open education an example is the National Open University of Nigeria, technological knowledge as well as facilities and trainings for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) towards institutional capacity building. It also partnered with other agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for strengthening the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

The study concluded that the positive impact of democracy as well as the diplomatic strategies adopted by Nigeria strengthened Nigeria-Commonwealth relations during the period under study.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

An important feature of the twentieth century international relations is the institutionalization of interactions among sovereign states. Experiences of the cold war depicts that states value the institutionalization of their relations ever more highly (Faseke, 2009) thus leading to the establishment of organizations/institutions to respond to arising global issues. Studies have shown that organizations die yearly giving way for new ones established in line with the happenings around the world (Faseke, 2009).

The Commonwealth of Nations simply refers to as the Commonwealth is a voluntary multilateral organization of 53 member states, all except two countries (Rwanda and Mozambique) are former British colonies (Vivekananda, 1974). It is an organization whose member countries have distinct ways of life, traditions, and cultures. It also includes countries with different economic capabilities ranging from developing to developed (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2019).

Historically, the Commonwealth was an evolutionary outgrowth of the British Empire (Britannica, 2019). The growth of the organization could be traced to 1867 when Canada attained a dominion status (Ugwukah, 2014). Being one of the oldest association of sovereign countries, its source goes back to the British Empire. In 1931, the British Empire transmuted into the British Commonwealth of Nations and colonies under it were gradually granted independence (Oakland, 2002). The term "Commonwealth of Nations"

was first used by a Scot, the fifth Earl of Rosebery (later Prime Minister) in the year 1884. During his visit to Australia, he recognized that change was expected to take place pertaining to the independence of British colonies. During the Imperial conference of 1926, the title British Commonwealth of Nations was formally adopted, and one after the other, countries who were British colonies started gaining their freedom as independent countries (Wilkie, 2016). In 1949, the term “British” was removed from the title in order to portray the changing nature of the association which was fast becoming an association of sovereign independent countries (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2019). The present Commonwealth has been able to outgrow its imperial origins thereby becoming a significant power for good at the international arena, with recognition and status at the United Nations. The organization is one of the largest multilateral institutions in the world and its Heads of Government meeting involving leaders of member countries is said to be the second largest convergence of heads of states after the United Nations (Faseke, 2009).

The Commonwealth of Nations being an independent organization consists of Great Britain and other sovereign states who had decided to sustain ties of alliance and realistic cooperation and who acknowledged the British Monarch (the Queen of England) as the symbol of leadership of their organization (Ugwukah, 2014). The informal links that once existed between the countries of the Commonwealth were consolidated with the establishment of the Commonwealth Secretariat in 1966 in London and a bureaucracy was established to support the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth in handling the questions of democracy and development, as well as peace and order particularly in the developing member countries in Asia, Pacific, Africa and the Caribbean. Therefore, what began as Great Britain and the white dominions has gradually

metamorphosed into a multiracial Commonwealth of fifty-three nations and territories (Ugwukah, 2014).

Upon attaining independence from Britain, some of the countries that were once under the rule of Britain decided to retain the British Monarch as its head of state. The monarch is an important point of identification that has kept the Commonwealth together in times of conflict and crisis (Oakland, 2002). By mid-20th century, most of the British territories including Nigeria gained independence, and the empire had changed into the Commonwealth of Nations, an organization of sovereign states devoted to the British crown and partaking in unique trade interest (Oakland, 2002).

Nigeria, prior to its independence had engaged in external relations with countries of the world and joining the Commonwealth of Nations can be regarded as a natural selection for her, partly because of her historical ties with Britain as well as being in line with the principle of her foreign policy. A careful reading of Nigeria's foreign policy since inception explained among other things that Nigeria would be actively involved in membership of multilateral organization that have a functional relevance for the country especially the United Nations and the Commonwealth (Fawole, 2003) and also serve as an important platform for the pursuits of her Foreign Policy objectives and National Interests (Ubi and Akinuotu, 2014). Nigeria's historical origin and ties with Britain also explains why joining the organization was a logical move. Since then, the Commonwealth of Nations has played significant roles particularly in helping Nigeria to preserve her territorial integrity.

Nigeria's close ties with Britain and Commonwealth earned her industrial support from Canada and the United Kingdom. The Commonwealth Development Corporation also has