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Parliamentary Diplomacy and Foreign Policy Implementation in Nigeria

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Abstract **Original Research Article**

Parliamentary diplomacy as a tool of implementation of Nigeria's foreign policy has been explored in this paper. Traditionally, the executive organ played the key role in the process of implementing the country's foreign policy. However, taking into consideration the complexity of modern international relations and the necessity to increase the level of democratic control, parliament has become increasingly involved in international politics. This study explores to what extent the parliamentary diplomacy contributes to foreign policy implementation and its limitations. In terms of methodology, the study takes a quantitative approach by means of a structured questionnaire administered to 40 respondents knowledgeable in political and international issues. It was found that there is a positive correlation between the two variables indicating that parliamentary diplomacy helps to implement the foreign policy of the country, although it is less efficient than the executive organ. The results also show that diplomatic actions of parliament are more effective in terms of improving visibility and cooperation than policy-making. The limitations of such involvement include the dominance of the executive organ, lack of funding and poor coordination. To sum up, parliamentary diplomacy serves as a supportive tool of Nigeria's foreign policy making.

Keywords: Parliamentary Diplomacy, Foreign Policy, Nigeria, National Assembly, Mixed Methods.

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1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Historically, foreign policy formulation is a function of the executive branch owing to the constitutionality of treaty ratification and international affairs (Ameen, Arowona, and Abdulquadir, 2024). This scenario has promoted state-centered foreign policy formulation where the legislative involvement is relatively insignificant. Due to increasing complexity in global governance and the necessity of democratizing foreign policy, foreign policy processes have evolved (Lenz et al., 2025). Against this backdrop, parliamentary diplomacy has emerged as an auxiliary tool to foreign policy formulation. Generally, parliamentary diplomacy entails the involvement of the legislature in international affairs through diplomatic discussions and cooperation through institutional channels. Unlike traditional diplomacy, parliamentary diplomacy is consultative in nature (Miller, 2025). According to Adewuyi (2021), parliamentary diplomacy contributes to international cooperation and policy discussion through institutional forums such as Inter-Parliamentary Union and ECOWAS Parliament. At times, legislatures exercise indirect influence on foreign policymaking through agenda setting (Ngara,

2025). However, according to Gil-Besada (2025), parliamentary diplomacy faces significant barriers arising from its non-binding and consultative nature.

Empirical evidence on the African continent reveals the contribution of institutions like the Pan-African Parliament in the process of regional integration and cooperation. However, such initiatives face challenges such as institutional weakness, inadequate funding, and policy enforcement problems (Adewuyi, 2021; Ameen, Arowona, and Abdulquadir, 2024). Thus, parliamentary diplomacy remains under-developed in Africa despite its numerous advantages. In Nigeria, the legislature is constitutionally bound to be involved in foreign policy formulation through treaty ratification and oversight while participating in international activities that improve international image of Nigeria. Nevertheless, according to various studies, the foreign policy processes in Nigeria are highly centralized and largely dominated by the executive (Fineman, 2019). Such scenario poses fundamental questions regarding the effectiveness of parliamentary diplomacy in the process of foreign policy implementation in Nigeria. Furthermore, the studies carried out in this context are descriptive in nature and do not include any empirical measurement of parliamentary diplomacy. Therefore, the current study seeks to address this gap by presenting a quantitative analysis of the issue.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The current study utilizes liberal institutionalism and pluralist theory to explain parliamentary diplomacy in Nigeria.

The liberal institutionalism argues that institutions promote cooperation and interaction between states in the international system (Keohane, 1984). Within this theoretical perspective, the institutions through which parliamentary diplomacy functions include Inter-Parliamentary Union and ECOWAS Parliament. The theory also argues that the effectiveness of institutions depends on the presence of authority. In this case, the effectiveness of parliamentary diplomacy in facilitating international cooperation depends on the power and authority of these institutions. On the other hand, pluralist theory asserts that policy making in a state involves several actors other than the executive (Dahl, 1961). In foreign policy making, the other actors include the legislature (Putnam, 1988). Nevertheless, the involvement of these actors in the process of policy making is dependent on their power, which is relatively unequal in states. In Nigeria, the dominance of the executive undermines the effectiveness of the legislature.

Through the use of these theories, the role of parliamentary diplomacy in the improvement of foreign policy implementation in Nigeria becomes clear.

3. METHODOLOGY

The current study uses a quantitative research design and a survey to evaluate the role of parliamentary diplomacy in Nigeria's foreign policy formulation. The choice of this methodology is based on the ability of quantitative approach to produce numerical data that can be analyzed statistically to determine relationships between variables (Lim, 2024). The population for this study consists of people who have knowledge of international and political affairs. The target population consists of students, academics, and other people with interest in international affairs. Forty respondents were purposely selected. The data was collected using a structured Likert scale questionnaire that measures two variables: parliamentary diplomacy (independent) and foreign policy implementation (dependent). The methods used for analysis include descriptive statistics and correlation analysis that were done in Excel. Validity and reliability of the research were ensured through thorough literature review. Participation was voluntary and confidentiality was guaranteed during the research process. Limitations of the study include small sample size and perception data that might limit the generalization of results.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The next part discusses the analysis of data obtained from 40 respondents on the influence of

parliamentary diplomacy on the execution of Nigeria's foreign policy. The analysis is divided into three main parts: demographic profile of the respondents, description of statistics, and hypothesis testing.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4.1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	24	60%
Female	16	40%
Total	40	100%

The table shows that 60% of respondents are male, while 40% are female, indicating a relatively balanced gender distribution.

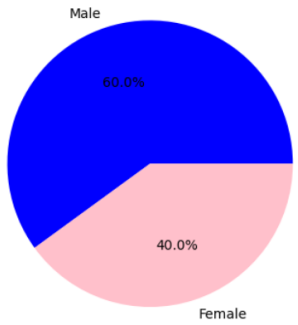


Figure 4.1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

The gender distribution among the respondents is illustrated in Figure 4.1. According to the results, 60% are males while 40% are females, making it almost an even gender distribution with more males.

Table 4.2: Educational Qualification

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Undergraduate	18	45%
Postgraduate	22	55%
Total	40	100%

A majority (55%) of respondents are postgraduate students or graduates, suggesting that respondents possess a reasonable level of academic exposure relevant to the study.

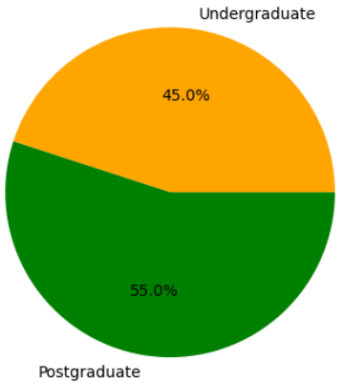


Figure 4.2: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Figure 4.2 gives the distribution of the surveyed participants in relation to their level of educational qualifications. According to the chart, 55 percent of the respondents have postgraduate qualifications, while 45 percent have undergraduate qualifications. The above implies that a majority of the respondents have higher levels of education.

4.3 Awareness of Parliamentary Diplomacy

Table 4.3: Awareness Level

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	30	75%
No	10	25%
Total	40	100%

The results indicate that 75% of respondents are aware of parliamentary diplomacy, suggesting a relatively high level of awareness among the sampled population.

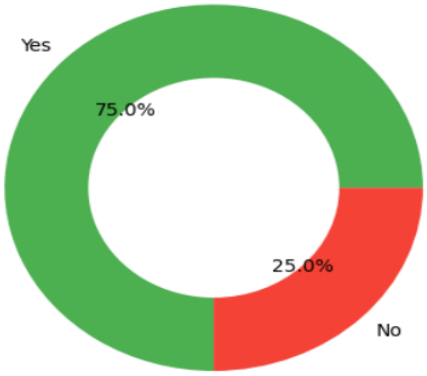


Figure 4.3: Awareness of Parliamentary Diplomacy

The donut chart depicted in Figure 4.3 represents the level of awareness about parliamentary diplomacy among respondents. According to the donut chart, the awareness level was 75%, while the level of unawareness was 25%. In general, the donut chart reveals that awareness is the dominant status.

4.4 Descriptive Analysis of Key Variables

Table 4.4: Parliamentary Diplomacy (Independent Variable)

Statement	Mean Score
Legislators actively engage in international diplomacy	3.9
Parliamentary participation enhances cooperation	4.1
Participation in Inter-Parliamentary Union improves Nigeria's global presence	4.2
Engagement in ECOWAS Parliament strengthens regional influence	4.0

The fact that mean values are higher than 3.5 implies that respondents tend to see diplomats engaging in diplomacy and believe that this makes it possible for them to foster international involvement.

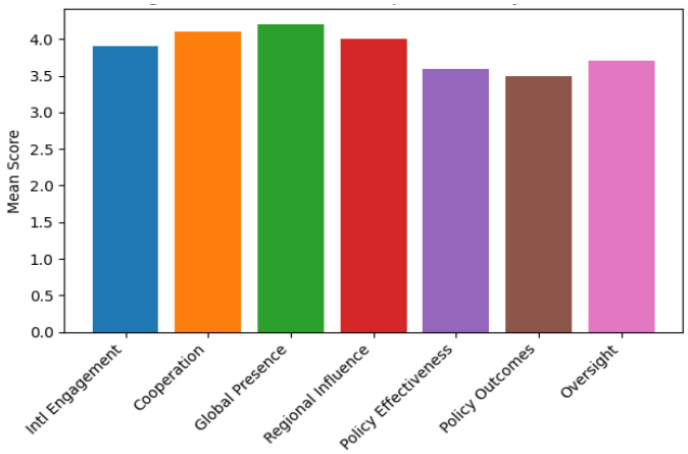


Figure 4.4: Mean Score Comparison of Key Variables

The mean scores of the variables associated with parliamentary diplomacy and foreign policy implementation are shown in Figure 4.4. It is shown in the figure that the variables associated with international interaction like global influence and cooperation have relatively high mean scores, while policy variables have relatively low mean scores. It is indicative that parliamentary diplomacy is considered more effective in fostering international interaction than policy making.

Table 4.5: Foreign Policy Implementation (Dependent Variable)

Statement	Mean Score
Parliamentary diplomacy improves foreign policy effectiveness	3.6
Legislative involvement enhances policy outcomes	3.5
Oversight strengthens foreign policy decisions	3.7

The mean scores indicate moderate agreement, suggesting that while respondents perceive parliamentary diplomacy as beneficial, its impact is not considered strong or decisive.

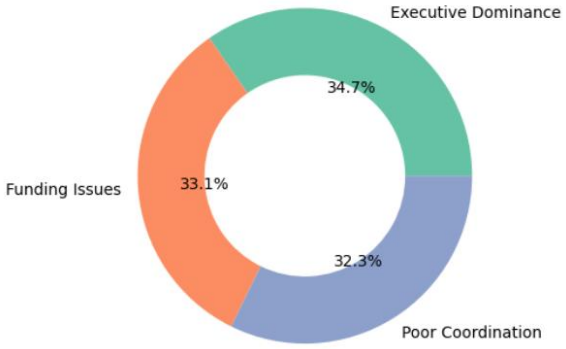


Figure 4.5: Distribution of Challenges to Parliamentary Diplomacy

Diagram 4.5 depicts a donut chart where color plays an essential role in emphasizing the major constraints that have an impact on parliamentary diplomacy in Nigeria. The major constraint, according to this diagram, is the executive dominance, accounting for 34.7%. Other constraints include funding problems and lack of coordination, each accounting for 33.1% and 32.3%, respectively. In this case, one may conclude that while executive dominance is the biggest constraint, there are others too.

4.5 Analysis of Challenges

Table 4.6: Constraints to Parliamentary Diplomacy

Challenge	Mean Score
Executive dominance limits effectiveness	4.3
Lack of funding affects performance	4.1
Poor coordination reduces impact	4.0

Respondents strongly agree that structural challenges significantly limit parliamentary diplomacy, with executive dominance identified as the most critical constraint.

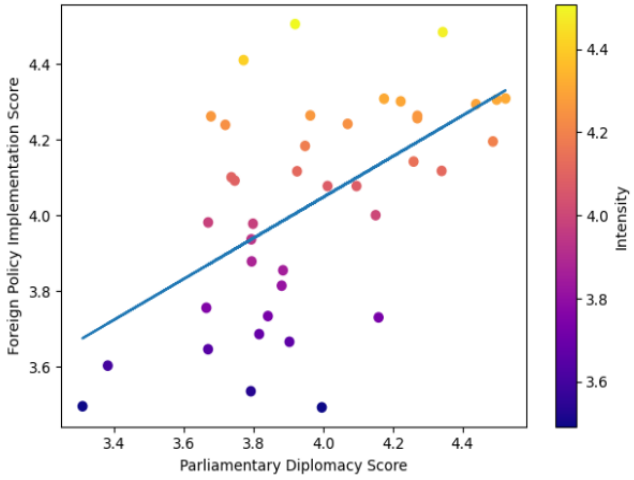


Figure 4.6: Correlation between Parliamentary Diplomacy and Foreign Policy Implementation

A scatter plot illustrated in Figure 4.6 reveals the association between parliamentary diplomacy and foreign policy execution. The positively sloped regression line reveals the existence of a positive correlation while the color variation is a reflection of different intensities. While there exists a positive relationship, it can be seen from the scattered nature of the data points to be a moderate rather than strong correlation. The existence of this kind of correlation shows that parliamentary diplomacy is an essential factor in foreign policy execution.

4.6 Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses

• H0: Parliamentary diplomacy does not have a significant impact on foreign policy execution

• H1: Parliamentary diplomacy does have a significant impact

Table 4.7: Correlation Analysis

Variables	Correlation (r)
Parliamentary Diplomacy & Foreign Policy Implementation	0.58

Moderate positive correlation (r = 0.58) is a clear indication of the connection between parliamentary diplomacy and the implementation of foreign policy; nevertheless, the connection is not strong enough to speak about the dominant role of parliamentary diplomacy in policy making.

In accordance with the results obtained from the study, one may make the following conclusions:

1. A high level of awareness of parliamentary diplomacy.

2. Wide recognition of active and useful role of parliamentary diplomacy in international relations.

3. Positive moderate influence of parliamentary diplomacy on foreign policy implementation.

4. Executive dominance and resource scarcity negatively affect performance.

5. Existence of a positive correlation between parliamentary diplomacy and foreign policy implementation.

5. Discussion of Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of the study in terms of recent empirical research on the topic. Integrating the findings and the relevant literature, this chapter attempts to increase the understanding of the significance, efficiency, and limitations of parliamentary diplomacy in Nigeria.

5.2 Parliamentary Diplomacy and Foreign Policy Implementation

The results of the survey show that parliamentary diplomacy and foreign policy implementation are connected by moderate positive correlation. Legislative activity influences foreign policy making without having a dominant role, i.e. parliamentary diplomacy works as an additional tool in the processes of foreign policy making. These results coincide with contemporary empirical research according to which legislators become more active in their international activities, while still facilitating the policy making process (Miller, 2025). Parliamentary diplomacy helps establish dialogue and interaction; however, this kind of diplomacy cannot influence the final policy outcomes due to its advisory and non-binding nature (Gil-Besada, 2025).

5.3 Effectiveness of Parliamentary Diplomacy

It has been found that parliamentary diplomacy is not very efficient in influencing policy outcomes. At the same time, this diplomatic tool helps in increasing the international visibility of the country and establishing international cooperation. These results correspond to recent empirical research connecting legislative diplomacy to norm diffusion and agenda-setting but not to the policy making (Ngara, 2025). Empirical data show that active involvement of the legislature in international parliamentary institutions positively impacts the international visibility and cooperation of a country (Adewuyi, 2021). Nevertheless, the legislature rarely manages to influence decision making in a meaningful way. Thus, one may say that parliamentary diplomacy is a tool of soft power, which allows increasing the international visibility of a country but does not govern foreign policy processes.

5.4 Structural Constraints and Institutional Limitations

Another important result that deserves attention is the extent to which structural constraints and institutional limitations undermine the effectiveness of parliamentary diplomacy. It has been found that executive dominance, resource scarcity, and poor coordination have a negative impact on the effectiveness. This finding corresponds to research stating that foreign policy continues to be centralized in the executive branch, hence limiting the role of the legislature in the policy making process (Ameen, Arowona, and Abdulquadir, 2024). Although the legislature has some tools in foreign policy making, such as the right to the treaty ratification and executive oversight, it still takes a reactive position in the process (Arowosegbe and Akomolafe, 2016). Furthermore, Fineman (2019) states that executive dominance of the resources makes the involvement of the legislature impossible due to democratization of foreign policy.

5.5 Participation versus Influence

It should be noted that the current study makes the distinction between the participation in foreign policy decision making and legislative activity. Despite the fact that the legislature participates in foreign policy making processes, this participation does not lead to any influence on policy making. According to recent research, the processes of parliamentary diplomacy take place in the context of structural constraints, thus providing limited legislative authority (Gil-Besada, 2025). Besides, in terms of the governance of complex foreign policy problems, the authority is distributed unevenly, and

power is centralized in the executive (Lenz et al., 2025).

5.6 Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of the current study have important implications for the development of parliamentary diplomacy in Nigeria. Even though the legislature contributes to foreign policy processes by means of participation and collaboration, the appropriate resources are needed in order to turn the involvement into an impact.

5.7 Summary of Discussion

Thus, the results of the study have demonstrated that:

The influence of parliamentary diplomacy on the foreign policy implementation is moderate and limited.

It is more effective in increasing the international visibility and cooperation than in shaping the policy.

It is limited by the executive dominance, inadequate funding, and poor coordination.

Participation of the legislature does not reliably lead to the influence on policy.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

The present study has examined parliamentary diplomacy as the mechanism of implementation of the foreign policy of Nigeria. The findings demonstrate that the role of parliamentary diplomacy in foreign policy is not significant and limited (Stavridis, 2002). Though it has helped in increasing the international visibility and involvement in the processes of international cooperation, it does not have sufficient authority to shape the policies (Hrbek, 2010). Besides, the results of the study have shown that executive dominance, inadequate funding, and coordination problems greatly undermine the effectiveness of parliamentary diplomacy, thus confirming the centralized nature of foreign-policy process in Nigeria (Akindele, 2018). In accordance with the institutional theory, the effectiveness of parliamentary diplomacy depends on the institutional capacity and authority (Keohane, 1984). Consequently, the parliamentary diplomacy is a relatively untapped tool in Nigeria.

6.2 Recommendations

Taking into account the results obtained, it is suggested that Nigeria:

- Improves the capacity of the legislature by means of training, research, and proper funding;

- Establishes executive-legislative coordination in foreign policymaking;

- Institutionalizes parliamentary diplomacy;

- Guarantees proper funding and resources for participation in international parliamentary organizations;

- Promotes specialization in foreign affairs committees;

- Improves the legislative oversight function.

6.3 Contribution and Limitation

Contribution

The present study adds empirical data to the literature devoted to the quantitative assessments of parliamentary diplomacy in Nigeria, which has traditionally been descriptive. Also, it differentiates between the participation in policy-making and the influence of parliamentary diplomacy on policy implementation, thus confirming recent claims made by Ngara (2025) and Gil-Besada (2025). Besides, it offers empirical data for Africa where the institutional constraints still influence legislative diplomacy.

Limitation

Despite its advantages, the study has limitations. First of all, the relatively small sample reduces the generalizability of the findings. The perception-based data used in the study introduces the subjective bias in respondents' answers. Besides, the pure quantitative approach cannot fully reflect the

institutional context.

6.4 Conclusion

The issue of parliamentary diplomacy in Nigeria has been analyzed as a part of foreign-policy implementation. It has been found out that although parliamentary diplomacy contributes to certain aspects of foreign policy implementation, its influence is not considerable and is of a supervisory nature. Involvement in the processes of foreign policy tends to enhance the international visibility, communication, and cooperation more than it shapes the policy content. Besides, the structural factors of the Nigerian political system and coordination difficulties have considerably undermined the efficiency of parliamentary diplomacy. It corresponds to the literature that portrays the process of foreign-policy implementation as centralized in the executive with subordinate roles of legislature (Ameen, Arowona, and Abdulquadir, 2024; Fineman, 2019).

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