

Nigerian sports diplomacy as a foreign-policy pursuit: a soft-power review

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Abstract:

Following the 1896 revival of the Olympic Games, sports became a platform for political influence and national competition. The incorporation of sports into the state's political arena has improved the country's diplomatic ties abroad, even though the Nigerian foreign policy has remained centred on Africa. The main objective of this article is to examine Nigerian sports diplomacy as a tool for pursuing its foreign policy. However, more than 60 studies have been analysed to examine how sports are incorporated into state affairs and how they influence a nation's foreign policy efforts to further its interests. However, the reviewed studies revealed tremendous potential advantages that a country gains from hosting or participating in international sporting events. Successful nations in international football and Olympic events want to build their brands, resolve interstate conflicts, attract foreign investment, and foster trade between the host and other countries. The reviewed studies uncovered that a sector of such huge magnitudes that includes sports infrastructure and facilities could not be maintained by the government alone; instead, private-public partnerships had to be established to fund sporting events in the nation, in a move to counter Nigerian flawed sectorial policies, prevalent corruption, and ineptitudes terrorising the nation's sports engine.

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1. Introduction

The sporting and political cohabitation dated back to the 9th century B.C. when the company of Ekecheiria or Armistice was established in prehistoric Greek through the international treaty authorized by three kings – Lycurgus of Sparta, Cleisthenes of Pisa, and Iphitos of Elis, in their efforts, all the rest of the Greek states settled that the convention renowned the stable immunity or the sanctuary of sportspeople in Olympia. Politics revived sports at the beginning of the twentieth century, following the 1896 revival of the Olympic Games. The games quickly became platforms for political influence and national competition. They introduced the Olympic Games to showcase sports for diplomatic purposes, including football, cricket, and tennis (Saliu & Lljunji, 2022). The termed "Christmas truce" during the (1914 to 1918) World War I turned the sport's prominence into calming rival parties (Brown & Seaton, 1994; Schober, 2021) – albeit temporarily, even though the circumstance is frequently referenced as the influence of sport in peace-making, the following three narratives displaced several traits of the relations between sports and politics; strengthening the ties between China and America in the 1970s (Kramareva, & Grix, 2021; Grix, & Brannagan, 2024).

A team of five American wrestlers, along with their spokespersons, visited Iran to compete in the Takhti Cup International. It was the first official delegation trip to Iran prior to the Iranian revolution, which led to the raising of an American flag in Tehran (Merkel, 2016). The group of Indian crickets in the spring of 2004 went to Pakistan for the first time in 15 years, following the general peace talk treaty between South Asian nations along the border of the Kashmir region. The visit occurred with an "informal" appearance of Pakistan's former President Pervez Musharraf to watch a cricket game in India, as the match was also joined by Indian former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Minister for foreign affairs Natwar Singh, as an evident gesture by the Indian government to persuaded Pakistan that the reconciliation of Delhi is real and sincere (Bhaskaran, 2006). The diplomacy of cricket, table tennis, and wrestling demonstrates how international sporting competitions can be shaped into a foreign policy tool and an effective means of improving international relations. The interpretation is broadly supported by prominent politicians, the media, sports administrators, and even musicians, such as U2's frontman Bono (Drezner, 2006; Matviyenko & Gryshuk, 2024). The former United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, applauded the influence of sport in upholding peace and unity globally, as well as encouraging the potentiality of immense sporting events, including the FIFA World Cup and Olympic Games, in unifying the citizens of several nations and revived soured relations, eliminate challenges, and barriers stereotypes, and overpowering most profound conflicts (Anan, 2010, p. 30).

Notably, Nigeria is a diverse country, enriched with several cultures and unified by sport, which has enormously added to the traditional sport of the country, such as Dambe (boxing), the festival of Hausa Martials which referred to learning militaristic skills and contesting to gain glory, displayed masculinity and conveys honour to one's family and village, the Argungu Fishing Festival of 1934, the competition aimed was to capture the largest fish. Nigeria has

been competitive in sports globally, along with several other countries where soccer is common; the Nigerian Super Eagles are among the best football teams in Africa and are ranked 10th globally in international sporting competitions. Even though the country may lack major sporting milestones, its citizens are enthusiastic about the annual events. Foreign policy practices were being shaped shortly before the country's independence (Agyemang, Ayenor, Hammond, & Bortey, 2024). Precisely, the involvement of sports in politics helped shape Nigerian foreign relations, prompting researchers to study sports diplomacy and Nigeria's foreign policy (Efebeh, 2021). Some aspects of international relations, such as sport, have strengthened the diplomatic relations of Nigeria with non-African nations, despite the policy frameworks' continued focus on Africa. The Yar'adua administration formulated the National Sports Policy in 2009, aimed at hosting and showcasing Nigeria's performance in global sporting competitions, specifically the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup finals, to advance its aspiration to enhance its status in the international sporting arena. Nevertheless, after signing up for the National Sports Policy (NSP) in 2009, Nigeria's progress in such competitions has been insufficient to uphold its image in the global sporting arena (Adenuga et al., 2019; Ugochukwu & Chidiobi, 2024).

Though the ministry has weakened since the 2002 World Cup, hosted by South Korea and Japan, Nigeria could not progress past the group stage. Based on a 28th December 2011 statement by Prime Time, the Nigerian Football team (Super Eagles) could not advance in the latest FIFA rankings; the Eagles are ranked 5th in Africa and 43rd globally. The most recent report capped a substandard period for Nigerian football, following its drop from 11th place in early 2011; it was evident that 2011 was Nigeria's worst year in football. Team Nigeria (the Eagles) was also unable to qualify for the 2012 African Cup of Nations, hosted by Equatorial Guinea/Gabon, which led to the sacking of their ex-coach, Samson Siasia. The Nigerian female team (Super Falcon), which had not previously been defeated in Africa, was unable to qualify for both the African Games and the Olympics, a moment that has never occurred since the inception of the female games in Nigeria (Okeke, 2022; Ojo, Olusegun, & Tikon, 2024).

Similarly, according to the Adewoye (2020) report, Nigeria was ranked 29th in the FIFA rankings on 10th November 2019. Nigeria was considered utterly substandard because the country's highest ranking was in 1994, when it rose to 5th place after winning the African Nations Cup. In addition, Nigeria could not advance past the group stage and did not qualify for the 2006 World Cup in Germany. Nigeria struggled to advance past the group stage at the 2010, 2014, and 2018 World Cups in South Africa, Brazil, and Russia (Aiyejina, 2016; Akinola, 2014; Ameh, 2018; Okpara, 2018). However, the current paper aims to review sports diplomacy and envisions Nigeria emulating strategies from other developed countries in its foreign policy thrust to pursue Nigerian National interests, resuscitate its enviable reputation, reclaim its regional and continental hegemony, and enhance the country's image in the international realm.

2. Methodology

This section provided a general overview of the research methodology. Over the past decades, several changes in research methodology relevant to literature reviews have emerged. As a result of these developments, review article writers must be familiar with contemporary publishing standards. In this regard, Creswell (2012) states that qualitative research investigates a problem and advances a profound understanding of that specific topic. The paper adopted a qualitative approach and conducted a narrative review of the literature, incorporating narratives identified through manual and online database searches, as well as explorations of reputable sources. This current paper provides a critical evaluation of the past studies on foreign relations pursuit through soft power approach, such as sports diplomacy, towards achieving national interest, as well as to grasp the Nigerian soft power approach in its foreign policy pursuit through sports diplomacy in its diplomatic rapport with the comity of countries in the international system.

3. Empirical Literature Review

There are numerous advantages that a country benefits from hosting or participating in international competitions. The notion is that countries that excelled in international Football and Olympic events should market their brands (Anholt, 2009, p. 24), whereby hosting mega-sporting competitions is a viable tool of public diplomacy (Nye, 2013; Chalip & Costa, 2005, p. 125). The so-called "Competed Nations" refers to participation in international sports because involvement in international sporting cooperation is considered vital to the state (Keys, 2010, p. 259; Livermore, 2004). The state's inability to compete in the global sports arena may be an internal problem for the government. The citizenry may condemn it as a disappointment over their nation's incapacity to compete and contest globally. Relatively, in exploring sports diplomacy, Trunkos & Heere (2017) review how sports can be used to enhance international relations, showing that modern-day diplomacy dates back to the fifth-century Italian city-states, when sports were adopted to consolidate representation and build channels of communication between the emperor and the city-states. Since then, communication networks have been structured by Western European languages, beginning with French and later English. Modern technologies now permit interpretation at global conferences. Once nation-states emerged as the world's leading political units, the concept of a Westphalian sovereign state (the fundamental principle in international law that autonomy rests with every nation-state) furthered the significance of diplomacy.

Nicholson (1964) described sovereignty as equality among nations, whereas diplomacy was employed to bind sovereign nations. In the same view, Watson (1991, p. xii) added that diplomacy means "the administration of international relations via negotiation, where diplomats and ambassadors adjust affairs; the art of work of an envoy." It can also be summarised as a vague conception of diplomatic 'state dialogue.' However, the previous narrative fails to identify the elements of diplomatic practice and omits the duty owed by non-

state entities. It is safe to assert that diplomacy is the primary instrument of national foreign policy execution, speaking in periods of peace and conflict through its main features (representation and communication), which have long been employed as a fundamental means of averting or resolving disputes. Bilateral negotiations and summits were the traditional systems for tackling global issues. However, advanced diplomatic channels emerged in the twentieth century, including cultural diplomacy (Arnd, 2005), public diplomacy (Cull, 2008), and electronic or cyber diplomacy (Potter, 2002). It was from this period occurred a paradigm shift in the way diplomats communicate their state's preferences at conventions or multilateral conferences; present-day diplomacy has shifted to function through advanced conduits and actors, the government does not have to partake in such exchanges, but instead, multilateral entities such as the UN, International Olympic Committee (IOC), international corporations such as Apple or Nike, and individuals such as celebrity actors, sportspeople, artist, or scientists can represent the interest of their countries at many events through cultural and sports diplomacy. As Pigman (2010) clarified, athletes are often not directly involved in negotiations; a sports venue is an excellent channel for a head of state and diplomats to meet and discuss their issues.

According to Nye (2004), the soft power approach is the exercise of power through democratic standards, prospects, human rights, and other attractive values. He added that soft power is a persuasive element in shaping foreign policy goals and is a more viable option than force, including foreign policy, political culture, and values. He reiterated that for such reason, the sport could perfectly be adopted as a form of soft power in the modern interconnected and evolving global system, states are trying to make the most of their diplomatic resources, and sports can greatly impact this situation due to their international popularity and capability to function as a common ground between nations. It allows both hosts and guests to discuss their issues and can provide grounds for agreement or disagreement because of its unresponsiveness. In the same vein, Chalip (2006) added that the reputation of international-standard sporting events could pave the way for the initiation of multilateral diplomacy and also serve as a mechanism for exercising soft power in pursuit of foreign policy goals. Also, Pigman (2010) claimed that international sporting events continue to mediate animosity among citizens and governments by fostering cooperation and intercultural understanding. Using sports to enhance a nation's global image or strengthen ties among states has been a diplomatic tool since the Olympics in ancient Greece. Similarly, Shihabi (2001) added that Olympic events are viable because both the people (observers) and the governments (political elite) are accessible through their passion for sport, thereby strengthening bilateral and multilateral relations.

Furthermore, Korr & Close (2008) noted some examples of successful sports diplomacy, including the cricket diplomacy of 1987, when the Soviet Union conquered Afghanistan, then General Zia-ul-Haq, the former President of Pakistan, attended the pre-cricket game between India and Pakistan in Jaipur, and the move assisted in calming tension brought by Soviet pressure on India. Also, Heere (2012) noted that Seoul hosted the Summer Olympics to strengthen relations with the Soviet Union and other nations in the hemisphere. In relative

terms, Barcelona used the Summer Olympics to show that Franco's culture no longer dominated it and was an attractive tourist destination in Europe. Sports play a tremendous role in day-to-day life, as do other cultural phenomena like dance, folk food, and music; sports entail a universal dialogue spoken by all. As Nelson Mandela pointed out, "Sport has the power to shape the world, unite and inspire people in a manner nothing else can." However, this potential is not realised unless sporting administrators and politicians adapt sport to achieve their objectives appropriately.

According to Merkel (2016), on foreign policy and diplomatic tools; emphasized the term "Christmas truce" that occurred during World War I (1914-1918), popularising sports for calming both the opposing parties, albeit temporarily (Brown & Seaton, 1994; Jürigs, 2003; Weintraub, 2002). Markel also noted that this series of events is frequently cited as evidence of sports' power to promote peace, as exemplified by the following three instances that articulate the relations between global politics and sports: First, the popular table tennis diplomacy made a tremendous contribution at the beginning of 1970 in strengthening Sino-U.S ties. Second, he cited that a team of five US wrestlers and their officials in 1998 visited Iran to contest in the Takhti Cup global tournament, which is the first American official delegation to Iran prior to the Iranian revolution in Tehran, and the historical moment where the U.S flag was raised in Tehran since 1979 (Goldberg, 2000). Moreover, third, at the 2004 spring event, when the Indian cricket team visited Pakistan for the first time in over a decade, former Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf and former Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh, along with his Foreign Minister, both attended.

Also, Drezner (2006) emphasises the significance of sports diplomacy and the scenarios in which sports have been embraced and encouraged by prominent and high-profile politicians, sports directors, the media, and singers, including U2's frontman, Bono. Similarly, Anan (2010, p. 30) reiterated the same scenario where the United Nations Former Secretary-General Kofi Annan commended the influence of sport in bringing international peace and unification and suggested that organizing a massive sporting competition such as the FIFA World Cup and Olympics, unified the citizenry of various nations, and mend fractured relations, overcome challenges and borderline stereotype, resolving the most profound conflicts. Moreover, Carter and Sugden (2012) found that sport adaptation, as a foreign policy and diplomatic instrument, can be beneficial, provided that a broader strategy employs it in pursuit of the same political objective. They cited the instance of 1970s baseball diplomacy between America and Cuba. They added the example of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century politically divided Korean peninsula, whereby there were various sporting exchanges between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of Korea (ROK), in which the profound focus of the two nations' foreign policy agendas significantly impacted the political atmosphere in Korea.

According to Beach (2012: 3), all foreign policy analyses, including those on diplomatic channels, are meant to address three main areas: first, what policymakers want and prioritise;

second, the policy-making process; and third, the results it yields. Beach added that the absence of symbolic and practical collaboration during the 2008 Beijing Olympics and in the years that followed was a clear reflection of worsening inter-Korean relations stemming from the adoption of a more aggressive foreign policy agenda. This development clarifies the impact of sport as a diplomatic instrument, which depends entirely on the broader foreign policy rationale and framework for achieving international peace and unification. Similarly, Adenuga et al. (2019) examined the National Sports Policy and Nigeria's Foreign Policy by revisiting Nigeria's foreign policy objective under the administration of former President Yar'adua, which shaped the country's image regarding its core foreign policy goal. The administration formulated the National Sports Policy in 2009, aiming to showcase Nigeria's performance in hosting and participating in global sporting competitions, especially the FIFA World Cup finals and the Olympic Games, as a means of aspiring to and elevating its status in global society. They emphasised and assessed the implementation of the National Sports Policy and its ramifications for advancing Nigeria's foreign policy. They found that since the enactment of the National Sports Policy draft in 2009, Nigeria's performance in such events had not been particularly effective in improving its image in the international community.

Notably, Merkel (2016) revealed that during the independence, the aim of the foreign policy of Nigeria was numerous and lofty; it involved Nigerian sovereignty and territorial integrity protection; enhancing the economic and social well-being of the citizenry; uplifting Nigerian image globally; and enhancing unification as well as comprehensive political, economic, cultural, and social liberalization of Nigeria and entire Africa. He added that the administration of Umaru Yar'adua succeeded in assessing the objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy and formulating a set of policies that could better uplift the status of Nigeria and strengthen its relations with the international community via growth and goodwill; Pursuing closer and better ties with super and emerging powers; expediting fast and sustainable economic growth. He also added that the implementation of such a policy was hindered by limited awareness, which hindered progress in Nigerian foreign policy.

Moreover, in the same vein, Baker et al. (2018) explored U.S. sports diplomacy in Latin America and the Caribbean: A program assessment focused on Sport for Development and Peace (SDP), termed the "Sports Visitors," which executed a corporation between George Mason University and the U.S. Department of State. They both emphasise the need to employ a sports-language universality that fosters individual interaction at the domestic stage, including the social institution's structural authority, thereby enabling it to influence broader cross-cultural interactions. On the same note, Coakley (2015) added that the United Nations acknowledged that sport symbolised a field of experiencing freedom, excellence, and a noble means of empowerment. Robertson (1995) added that Nelson Mandela reiterated that "Sport can adjust the occurrences of the world," and then added that "sport can inspire," "unite people," "generate hope," and "decrease barriers." The right to global play signifies that "the international adaptation of sports, physical activity, and play is to ensure actual peace and development objectives." (Brannagan & Giulianotti, 2015) claim that globalisation binds the

world by enhancing interconnectedness and exercising international awareness as a particular global entity, which is the architect of internationalisation, employing sport as a tactical partner.

Furthermore, Conniff et al. (2012) revealed that sports' reputation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is undeniable; sports conveyed by desperate drift, such as populism and imperialism, are rooted in the cultures of Latin America and the Caribbean. They added that populism had been shown to ignite political and cultural activity for more than a century. Relatedly, Guttmann (1994) added that the exposure of precise Western sports over the traditional and local symbolised cultural imperialism inherent in the sports world. In the same vein, Sheinin (2015) uncovered that, from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the present day, sports have served as a microcosm of domestic and national growth in Latin America and the Caribbean, revealing the role of political and cultural influences in the region. Also, Knight (1999) noted that Baseball is exceptionally popular in Latin American and Caribbean nations, such as Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, and Honduras. In contrast, cricket is the favoured game in Guyana and the West Indies.

According to Efebeh, V. E. (2021) study on Sport as an Instrument of Foreign Policy Pursuit: A case study of Nigeria, revealed that sport had globally been shaped over the years to incorporate people from various cultures as a unifying instrument to link culturally diverse people, promote the economic welfare of the state actors, giving that the funds in the sports sector are worth billions of U.S dollars. The broad opportunities in the modern-day sports sector are paramount to states' adoption of foreign policy instruments to promote their national interests. Efebeh also noted that international foreign relations hinged on various entities, as countries compete for recognition and persuasion through indisputable means to achieve an objective. As the objective of the United Nations is to sustain better international relations, security, and stability, nations are now adopting specific procedures, adopting policy methods, and preparing rational ways to legitimise their dominance peacefully, and employing sport as a means of foreign policy recreation by most nations. Also, Daniel (2014) added that, in light of this purpose, sport can be considered one of the most electrifying phenomena; it is highly recognised for its present-day display.

Moreover, Padhi (2011) explored Sports Diplomacy in South Africa and FIFA 2010, which noted that the concurrence of sports and politics dates back to the ninth century B.C., when the Armistice Corporation or Ekecheiria, was established in ancient Greece by authorising the international treaty by three kings – Cleisthenes of Pisa, Lycurgus of Sparta, and Iphitos of Elis. Based on this development, the rest of the Greek cities support the agreement to ensure lasting immunity or a sports sanctuary for people in Olympia. Padhi added that politics revived sport at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the Games of Olympia were revived in 1896, and that, in a short time, sport became a platform for national competition and political influence, inventing the Olympic Games as a form of sport used for diplomatic purposes. Similarly, Lapchik (1976) noted that other sports, such as soccer, cricket, and table tennis, are also competitive sports on the international stage; the sporting boycott of South Africa during

the era of apartheid largely affected South African society and contributed to the country's termination of international isolation. Also added that the existence of sport in twenty-first-century South Africa operated as a focal point of the apartheid era, striking its racial system in the country and installing the system internationally.

Furthermore, in the same vein, Olokoshi (1990) added that Interior Minister T. E. Donges confirmed that the government would assist Africans in competing in sports. However, that competitiveness must adapt to a policy of dispersed development, thereby certifying that racially-based sport is a state-enacted policy. He added that such a policy referred to a prohibition on racially diverse sports, limited funds for African-American athletes compared to those for whites, and narrowed opportunities for the African-American athletes to symbolise their nations on the global stage. Due to these inequalities, red flags were raised throughout the international sports offices, and the sports were referred to a protest channel by the anti-apartheid activist. As a result, key international entities moved to suspend, then terminate, South Africa. He also claimed that the 2010 World Cup had changed the perception in which they viewed South Africa and its diverse citizenry, as well as their view of each other; it portrayed the country as a window of attracting massive investment and transforming the nation into a greater development, turned South Africa into the winner of 2010 World Cup instead of Spain because it exploited the dividends of Sports diplomacy.

Similarly, Kobierecki (2019) emphasised that international sports organisations are the actors; the case of FIFA illustrates how they exert influence on states. According to Kobierecki, the progression of modern-day diplomacy through sports diplomacy into a diverse platform, including the International Sports Organisation (IOS) and other related organisations responsible for global sports competitions, such as the International Football Association, the International Federation of Association Football (French: *Fédération Internationale de Football Association*, FIFA). This global body regulates international football affairs and its influence on the nation-states. (Hocking, 2016) added that modern-day diplomacy differs from its past influence due to its consequences and evolution; broader network methods and techniques are replacing the forms and processes of categorised diplomacy incorporated with states. In some instances, traditional intergovernmental diplomacy remained significant, while in others, non-state entities gained prominence. In the same view, Adler-Nissen (2016, p. 93) revealed that the novel diplomatic actors are sub-state and regional establishments, celebrities, international and non-governmental organisations, as well as transnational cooperation.

Also, findings by Eisenberg (2005, p. 386) disclosed that there are several methods by which ISOs, such as FIFA, could persuade states for numerous reasons, because of their political neutrality, which, regarding FIFA, is part of its standard. States often decide to initiate policies based on the expectations of actors such as FIFA, out of a desperation to achieve public policy objectives, with global sport as a suitable medium. Incidents that proved this claim are the South African Apartheid saga, the People's Republic of China, and the Republic of China (Taiwan), which will represent the country in the FIFA competition. Eisenberg added that the

prerequisite for member organisations to remain politically autonomous and, in some cases, neutral is one of the key reasons FIFA can exert influence over the nation-state. In a nutshell, it suspended the work of these National Societies on various events due to external pressure, mostly government intervention, such as the national federations of Azerbaijan FIFA, 2003, 4th April. Guatemala (FIFA, 2004, 9th January), Kenya (FIFA, 2004, 2nd June), Macau (2005, 15th February), Yemen (FIFA, 2005, 12th August), Greece (FIFA, 2006, 3rd June), Iran (FIFA, 2006, 23rd November), Cameroon (FIFA, 2013, 4th July), and Nigeria (FIFA, 2014, 9th July) as the conclusion by the study of (Kobierecki, 2019) revealed, that the governing entities of global sports such as FIFA are to persuade the government of sovereign nations to adjust their previous policies and orientation in line with their interest. Even though not all of FIFA's efforts to induce states succeeded, in most cases, they resulted in rapid changes in national policies, clearly demonstrating that global governing entities are diplomatic actors capable of influencing states. In some cases, FIFA conversed with states indirectly through its member entities, which, notably, nations often comply with because competing in global sports is essential for countries to achieve their external and internal objectives, precisely those aligned with their national image.

Furthermore, Tago (2017) explored public diplomacy and foreign policy, as Nicholas (1960) and Cull (2008) emphasised, revealing that public diplomacy is an influential global effort to implement foreign policy through engagement with foreign audiences. He added that it is a way of conversing between one state and another, as a reference to the propaganda wars conducted by the U.S. and the Soviet Union during the Cold War are basic forms of interstate information transfer, carried out to influence the perspective of the foreign nations, related to their country (Positive), while related to other nations (negative). According to Cull's scrutiny, public diplomacy comprises five vital mechanisms during the Cold War. A top-down procedure mainly characterized in which the government dispersed information to foreign spectators through capital-intensive processes such as libraries, radio, and galleries, in the same view Gregory (2011, p. 353) claimed that public diplomacy is an "instrument employed by states, state associations, some sub-state, and non-state actors to recognized attitudes, behaviour, and culture; improve and manage a relationship; persuade ideas and organize actions to promote their interest and value. Gregory added that the fresh perception emerged after the public diplomacy paradigm shifted to a horizontal structure, in which people recognised the need to communicate with one another across global networks using new technologies. The claim arose from a concept that emerged between the traditional school, as Cull named the traditional perspective on government-to-citizenry contact, and the new school, which emphasised the work of non-state actors in public diplomacy.

Moreover, Defrance & Chamot (2008) conducted a study to explore the voice of sport by examining a foreign policy activity: Sport in French foreign policy after the Second World War. From their perspective, the sportsperson's involvement in diplomacy is not a viable possibility. Sporting activities feats of champions, clusters representation via sports, tremendous attributes of enormous sporting events to megacities or states, and accomplishing

political functions, although engaging in a political role does not necessarily mean intentionally partaking in political intent in the context of foreign policy. They added that when the political aspect of the sport is removed, it usually does not display political behaviour with diplomatic value. Meanwhile, there tends to be a form of political non-involvement and "nonpolitical" approaches among sports groups; this can be overt or covert, but it certainly influences disinterest among sportspeople and diplomatic actions. Also, Picq (1994) discovered that the philosophies of diplomacy and sport are diverse areas in the cultural scope; persons deal with words in the former, while in the latter, they display themselves thru their bodies; though acting with preference goes with the former, the latter manifests itself; 'rise of adrenalin' amongst sportspersons differs from the calm gesture of diplomats, the activity of the stadium is the contrary of the peaceful atmosphere of an embassy. The participation of sportspeople in diplomatic action yields numerous benefits.

Furthermore, Riordan, & Kruger (1999) added that diplomacy is autonomous, and it tends to engage in diplomatic practices only in exceptional conditions, which transform the usual sporting activities and overturn its sporting implications; such as the instances whereby political permanence of power become prejudiced again, individuals that portray the dominance of fascism, and the Second World War era, or West-East relations during the Cold War. They added that the apparent example is the Chinese ping-pong players who hosted the US team in 1971 and encouraged them to win as a gesture indicating the equality of relations between their countries; in this context, it loses its sporting implications but gains prominence as a diplomatic gesture. The more sportspeople explore their abilities in relation to athletes' performances, the more significantly their political culture declines. They also added that, in the context of diplomacy with the sports milieu, diplomacy was comfortably accommodating both kinds of relations with the social world and the practicalities of international relations, because the world of sport does not speak with a single voice. Some promote field autonomy in the circle of inter-sports connections, while others uplift sports at the expense of "superior" objectives (peace movement, public health, national defence, and others).

Relatively, Tago (2017) claimed that the mastery of diplomatic steps no longer regulates the unity in the diplomacy and sports milieu, but, contrarily, through the skill of the sports field. Also added that the unanimous approach of sportspersons and diplomats was adopted to support the Paris bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) agreed on the rhythm of events that led to the organisation of an interstate competition; sports strategies envisaged the manner, timing, and locations where the competition would take place. Similarly, De Rendinger (*Jeux Perdus*, 2005) claimed that the sports field has sufficient sovereignty and power to shape the political manner in which "de-politicisation" operates, in which the right-wing President Jacques Chirac became a partner of the left-wing Mayor of Paris, Bertrand Delanoë, on the policy-making board. However, it is not predictable when the diplomatic action period will occur, since it is the occasion that orders diplomatic mobilisations. The complex period of the event between competing cities lasted from 2003 to 2005. The divergence between countries supporting and opposing the Iraq War split the bids

between London and Paris. In the same vein, Mie'ge (2008) added that French diplomacy in the early twenty-first century grew in two directions; bilaterally, it was embedded in the embassies, where the sport is employed as a diplomatic instrument; multilaterally, the sport was adopted as an instrument of negotiations in the international realm, emphasizing that it is also employed as a current policy goal. Similarly, Defrance and Chamot (2008) added that in international relations, sports had been regarded as a way of encrypting a political tie, since the diplomats approve its meaning, whose authority is not well-proven; though politics and law invest in controlling sports, which signifies a redundancy in its capability to self-operate and a loss of autonomy.

Furthermore, Akara (2014) scrutinised sports marketing in Nigeria, government finance, and sports development recommendations, revealing that, over the years, Nigeria has pursued well-defined policies for each of its purpose-built programs to attain precise objectives. Also, Aibueku (2002) added that despite such policies, the first Nigerian government official to guide policy for the sports sub-sector was only drafted in 1989; he believes that the Sports Development Policies of 1989, 2000, and 2009 functioned as roadmaps for sporting progress in Nigeria. As such, Pfeffer (1992) claimed that the National Sports Policy of 2009 stresses the necessity for public-private partnership (PPP) as a way of ensuring the advancement of the sport, more especially based on the government's inability to finance sport and the need for the private sector to come into the picture and promote sports via marketing schemes. Despite these contemptuous policies, the extent of implementation and results-oriented impacts remains a mirage. Perhaps this is the reason why Pfeffer explained that failure to employ carefully designed notions and concepts is increasingly prevalent in public and private institutions. The 1997 Federal Republic of Nigeria report on the 2010 vision of the National Sports Policy (2009) acknowledged that the administration and practice of sport in Nigeria had adopted a model, thus becoming a highly lucrative enterprise and a major employer of labour. However, in 1962, the government of Nigeria renamed the National Sports Commission, which is responsible for regulating, promoting, and developing sport in Nigeria (National Sports Policy 2000, 2009; Federal Republic of Nigeria 1997; Vision 2010). To this end, Kienka (1990) and Akarah (2007) have shown that, while the financial obligations of the Nigerian government in the organisation and regulation of sports are increasing, the returns to the government in terms of profits have not been equal.

Similarly, Nwanolue et al. (2010) conducted a post-mortem analysis of Nigerian foreign policy under the Yar'adua administration, revealing that foreign policy had been transformed into an element of state relations. Generally, it is safe to acknowledge that each nation's foreign policy turns the wheel of that nation's totality of actions, influences, and strategies, thereby unleashing its internal resolutions on the world stage. In this regard, Chibundu (2003: 1) certainly discloses that foreign policy is "a nation's response to the realm beyond or outside its borders, such response may be friendly or hostile, intense or episodic, complex or straightforward, but it is always present." Also, Nwanolue et al. (2010) added that the mentioned 'response' that hugely requires a viable and precise method of delivery has a vital quality, which is why it is widely

acknowledged both in theory and practice to relate with one another, nations must dynamically trail their national interest and strive to secure them at all costs. In addition, there is no doubt that a country's foreign policy is a political instrument or procedural framework for external policy through which it seeks to advance its domestic interests. To attest to this, Morgenthau (1973) emphasised that "no country in the world can have a real navigation to what it should do in its foreign policy without adopting the national interest as the primary guide."

In the context of Nigeria, Nwanolue et al. (2010) stressed that public attention should centre on the norms of Nigerian fundamental values that form the essential elements of its foreign policy. As such, Tafawa (1960:3) added that it is relevant to wonder that does the Nigerian leaders put the country's national interest first in pursuit of their foreign policy thrust; in this concern, it should be noted that the foreign policy of the Nigerian first republic was Afrocentric in position, as the first Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa stated in the Federal House of Assembly on 20th August 1960, that, "the use of practical and vibrant policies concerning Africa would be our aim to assist any notion in developing remedies for its confrontations." Likewise, Al-Hassan (2008: 7) added that the regime of General Ironsi at the Lagos Conference of Ambassadors in June of 1966 to brush up on the premises and thrust of Nigeria's foreign policy supported the idea that the government, in every aspect of its policies, attributes great importance to our African policy." Similarly, former President Obasanjo, for instance, is hugely concerned about the Nigerian dire economic situation and, more so, about the triviality of the Nigerian purse for such flamboyant and philanthropic role of the "giant of Africa," which slowly brought about change and made an overwhelming advance in the country's external interest. In this development, Ogwu (2005: 25) affirms that this foreign policy plan is based on 'economic diplomacy,' in other words, the foreign policy plank of this administration has turned to shuttle diplomacy. In contrast, it revealed that the Obasanjo administration has either devoted or wasted political energy in seeking to entice foreign partners to invest in Nigeria's economic development. In fact, it was a personal agenda that Obasanjo would embrace, only to seek out or steer Western nations, either to implore world leaders for help or to motivate them to invest in Nigeria.

Relatively, Nwanolue et al. (2010) added that the ex-President Yar'adua government had taken a radical and positive approach towards something slightly different and exclusive – citizen diplomacy, and this foreign policy direction has been centred on the Nigerian citizen's grit globally. The nation has not significantly benefited from its interactions with other nations; in this diplomatic account, President Yar'adua's foreign policy orientation has shifted substantially from the blind practice of economic diplomacy to citizenship diplomacy, which is transparently grounded in the protection and welfare of citizens. It has been called "Track Two Diplomacy," which implies that, rather than relying entirely on Track One diplomacy (i.e., the work of specific diplomats in embassies), it involves a broader approach. Also, Omenma (2009:261) added that the Yar'adua administration had involved a strategy of intercultural relations, technical exchange, and international sporting occasions to complement official diplomacy. Similarly, Ogele and Okutalukwe (2020) explored the changing nature of Nigerian

foreign policy, revealing that it is the driving force behind international relations worldwide. In the same vein, Osondu-Oti and Tolu (2016, pp. 71, 72) reiterated that the Nigerian president is the pivot of the country's foreign policy thrust and is vested with the administrative authority to regulate the nation's day-to-day activities, as they added that the president handles the matters of the country, both internal and external affairs. A study by Gambari (1989, p. 21) reaffirmed that the concentric circles prioritise Nigeria first, then the West African subregion, and the rest of Africa. He affirms that "the inner circle refers to Nigeria's sovereignty, security, and affluence; it centres around its immediate neighbours such as Benin, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad; the second sphere depends on Nigeria's ties with African allies; the third loop centres on issues of peace, democracy, and growth on the African continent; and the last circle includes Nigerian ties with organization, institutions, and nations beyond the continent of Africa "the direction of Nigeria's foreign policy relations promotes and maintains the national interest; supports African incorporation and uplift the unification of Africa; influence mutual respect, global firmness and respect for international accords.

Moreover, there is a paradigm shift concerning Nigerian citizen diplomacy, Davis and Kaufman (2002, p. 2) termed citizen diplomacy as "gathering professionals, ideal leaders or other potential influential and a prominent individual from conflicting societies without an official representative position, to advance a better understanding of the subtleties underlying disputes or hostilities, and how to encourage a shift from potential disputes to a collaborative loop of sustainable development and active peace." They added that it brings new strategies and fresh perspectives to the official path, helps humanise enemies, reduces escalating tensions, enhances capacity development in civil society, promotes conciliation, builds public support, and builds political wherewithal to ensure peace and long-term structural advancement that speaks to the needs of all involved. Similarly, Wogu et al. (2015) conducted a critical assessment of Nigeria's foreign policy at 53, arguing that any nation's foreign policy comprises self-interested strategies aimed at protecting its national interests and attaining its objectives in international relations. The total national interest of the country results from the collaboration of internal and external forces, as viewed by the decision-makers in foreign policy, whereby the procedures were employed to collaborate with other countries — added that as a result of the in-depth level of transnational and globalization activities, it is recognized that interaction and relations exist between nation and non-national actors in the global political arena — adding that such ties had convinced many foreign policies between nation-states. Studies such as Aluko (1981); Macridis (1985: xiii) viewed Nigerian foreign policy since its inception from a different perspective; Anyaele (2005) amongst them revealed that Nigerian foreign policy is "chameleon in nature" and is often on the verge of flowing due to the internal and external interaction in any given system, even though some writers stress that irrespective of often changes, from 1960 regime of Tafawa Balewa to the 2003 era of Obasanjo; also from the administration of late President Yar'adua to the incumbent government of President Buhari; such various governments include military regimes that had led the country proclaimed to have pursued unchanged national interest with regards to Nigerian foreign policy.

Furthermore, Ogo and Emakpo (2005) revealed that the historical advancement of Nigerian foreign policy can be divided into two distinct regimes: the pre-independence and the post-independence periods. From 1914 to some point in 1960, the British agenda was the spiritual interest of the Nigerian state, revealing that "the interest of England Her Majesty's Government was the agenda of the entity of Nigeria." The post-independence era embodied the realisation of Nigeria's sincerely indigenous foreign policy, which is rightly called the "Nigerian Foreign Policy." On this view, Olusanya (1986), Oga (1987), and Alli-Balogun (1986) reaffirmed that those policies had been maintained, with some adjustments, to bring about local, global, political, and economic changes. Relatively, Aluko (1981) disclosed that in 1960, these methods were the typical respect for the sovereign equality of other states, non-interference in the domestic issues of the nations, and a commitment to cooperate in ways that promote African unity. Added that Section 19 of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1979 and 1999 Constitutions strive more to describe the Nigerian foreign policy goals, which comprises of promoting and securing the national interest; influencing African integration; and preserving African harmony; firming global collaboration to ensure world peace and cordial respect among all nations and disregard all its contradicts; respect for treaties, global law, and commitments as well as pursue the disbursement of global conflicts through concession, resolution, mediation, litigation, and settlement; and to endorse a just global economic order. Such a policy stance as emphasised by Akinboye (2013), and Anyaele (2005) is stated in the Nigerian 1979 and 1999 Constitutions that "securing our national interest has been the continued focus of the foreign policy of Nigeria, approaches for such protection varied from one administration/government to another." This statement indicates that many administrations since Nigeria's inception have pursued similar aims and objectives in Nigeria's foreign policy, but with dissimilar approaches.

Additionally, Dubinsky (2019) concretised that the capacity to influence other references and persuade them to comply with your wishes without the use of payments or physical force is referred to as "Soft Power." Culture, political ideals, and foreign policy are the three core sources of soft power. The practice of using culture for public diplomacy and soft power is known as cultural diplomacy. Sports have been employed by nations, towns, and communities for public diplomacy and branding to advance social, political, and economic objectives and enhance the nation's reputation. Sports are a viable instrument for nations to employ soft power to advance their public diplomacy and achieve international objectives, owing to their global reach, cultural emphasis, and the peaceful principles they uphold. The study's objective is to analyse the theoretical and conceptual synergies among soft power, public diplomacy, and sport, particularly in the context of enhancing a nation's perceptions to advance foreign policy objectives.

In the same vein, Oluwatoyin & Olanrewaju (2021) conducted a study to determine whether sports infrastructure, finance, and policy are significantly related to the projection of sustainable sports advancement in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study employed a Descriptive survey research method. 127 sports managers and coaches made up the study's population. Purposive sampling was utilised. 112 participants made up the study's sample. Three experts

validated a self-formed questionnaire that was employed as the data-gathering tool. The reliability retest method was used, in which 20 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to sports executives in Oyo State twice, at two-week intervals. The findings of the two were linked using PPMC, yielding $r = 0.77$. Multiple linear regression and PPMC were utilised in the data analysis, with an alpha level of 0.05. The study's findings show that the sports index significantly influences Kwara State's position in Nigeria's sports development. The conclusion is that finance, infrastructure, and individual resources are crucial components for the long-term success of sports.

In the same vein, Muller, M., Gogishvili, & Wolfe (2022) revealed that the football World Cup is among the most expensive projects in the world. There is no extensive empirical study on whether costs exceed revenues, even though theoretical reasons suggest that revenues from mega-events are exaggerated and costs are underestimated. This study analyses the revenues and costs of the World Cups and Olympic Games from 1964 to 2018 ($N=43$), which together totalled about 120 billion USD in expenses and 70 billion USD in earnings. Most Olympics and World Cups posted deficits, with more than four out of five events finding that costs surpassed income. With mean costs of USD 2.8 billion exceeding mean receipts of USD 1.7 billion per event, the average return on investment was negative (-38 per cent). The largest absolute deficits were recorded at the Summer Olympics in Montreal in 1979, the Winter Olympics in Sochi in 2014, and the World Cup in Japan/South Korea in 2002. A select few recorded a surplus, including the Summer Olympics in Los Angeles in 1984, the Winter Olympics in Vancouver in 2010, and the World Cup in Russia in 2018. The study concludes that the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup have structural deficiencies and would not be possible without external funding. The findings necessitate a re-evaluation of such events as financially unsustainable loss-making endeavours.

In particular, Cotîrleţ (2020) argues that the significance of sport in fostering and deepening connections among governments has long been overlooked in the theory of international relations, drawing criticism from experts such as Trevor Taylor. Additionally, Peter Beck emphasised the need for research into how advances in sports have shaped international relations, claiming that the field's theory has remained a significant distance from sport. The study aimed to bridge the information gap by drawing on a variety of unprocessed primary materials, many of which may be found in the Balkans. Sports succeeded in overcoming the barriers posed by leisure-based behaviours and social processes by engaging in politics and becoming a “player” in international affairs.

Similarly, Arnold (2021) corroborates that the most extravagant adulation of the nation often occurs at sporting events; the relationship between nationalism and sport seems both clear and manifest. Although there is a sizable corpus of academic literature on the relationship between the ideas, it is overlapping and unorganised. The study examines the current state of the field and classifies key works by the roles they play within the subfield. It focuses particularly on sport as a tool for the growth and development of nationalists, sport at sporting mega-events

(SMEs) in the context of globalisation, and the relationship between sport and the discrepancy between civic and ethnic descriptions of nationality.

Moreover, Webb and Richelieu (2022) conducted a study to better understand how the International Agency for Development uses events to foster collaboration. The study shows how the contemporary social environment, as proposed in Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, makes it easier to employ a tactic known as "seeing-is-believing." By utilising society's passion for events, Special Olympics can engage partners. As such, a conceptual model is offered that compares and contrasts the objectives of sporting events designed to promote development with those of commercial spectator sports. The model shows that events are ideal settings for fostering partnerships because they provide an opportunity to achieve the mission effectively. These changes take advantage of our familiarity with the occasions and the unimposing passivity of watching. Nevertheless, events give people an excuse to get over their nervousness when interacting with athletes who identify as having an intellectual disability. The notions that enable the success of the "seeing is believing" method have also been discussed in terms of their theoretical and practical ramifications.

In a related study, Søyland and Moriconi (2022) examined Qatar's use of sports to attract attention and build soft power, drawing on official documents and empirical evidence. Through a strategy centred on the involvement of domestic and international players and organisations, the study demonstrates how the country has effectively leveraged sport as a means of transformation, diplomacy, and soft power. Although Qatar's sports diplomacy has been exceedingly ambitious, the country's domestic policy is increasingly under scrutiny amid increased international attention. This has led to intense criticism over claims of corruption and numerous accounts of labour violations against the nation's migrant expatriates. As a result, detractors point to Qatar as an example of sports washing, defined as the intentional use of sports soft power to try to restore a damaged reputation. The study argued that the Qatari method, which incorporates elements of both, may be used to create a favourable environment for social development and to outline how the nation has worked with foreign players and institutions to quell external criticism. Successful sports diplomacy tactics and external, evidence-based criticisms may have created a setting conducive to significant political and cultural change, respect for human rights, and the enjoyment of personal liberties. In this regard, Western nations, sporting organisations, and external players pave the way (or not) for a legitimate role in this framework. As soon as finances.

In a similar vein, Blom et al. (2020) corroborate that the U.S. State Department's International Sports Programming Initiative financed two coach-to-coach sports-diplomacy exchange programs in Jordan and Tajikistan between 2012 and 2015, using soccer to advance grassroots diplomacy. Such programs emphasised leadership, broad-mindedness, diversity, and citizenship. They trained coaches to create sports-for-peace and development initiatives in their local environs while deepening understanding of various cultures and fostering partnerships. These two case studies show how grassroots diplomacy initiatives have sought to foster

relationships between individuals, equip young people and their mentors to act as local agents of social change, and lay the foundations for social cohesion.

Moreover, Kayode and Tunrayo (2022) conducted a study examining how the Kwara State Sports Council manages its funds to maintain sports facilities. A descriptive research approach was employed for this investigation. All 110 officials of the Kwara Sports Council comprised the study's sample. Multistage sampling strategies were employed for this study. The departments in the research region were categorised using a stratified sampling approach. Purposive sampling was used to select each of the 110 respondents. A questionnaire designed by the study's researcher served as its main component. Three professors from the University of Ilorin's Department of Human Kinetics Education authorised the instrument, and the test-retest procedure, using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC), was used to assess its reliability. It was determined that the correlation coefficient was 0.65. The device was administered by the researchers and three qualified research assistants. Using chi-square inferential statistics at an alpha level of 0.05, the collected data were analysed. According to the result, administrative procedures, zero-based budgeting, and bottom-up budgeting all significantly affect the upkeep of sporting facilities. To optimise sports facility upkeep, the study suggests that no bureaucratic procedures be used in allocating the sports budget. Furthermore, to advance the efficient management of sports infrastructure, sports budgeting should be based on zero-budget principles.

Furthermore, Garba (2022) reevaluated Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy initiative. The purpose of the study is to identify problems with the policy direction and to suggest a diverse framework for the nation's foreign policy. Secondary data were gathered from diverse documentary sources and analysed using the documentary analysis approach under the Afrocentric foreign policy thrust. It was discovered that despite its numerous domestic issues, Nigeria has invested significant time and resources to demonstrate that Africa is its top priority. The Afrocentric policy framework also faces several difficulties, including conservatism, inconsistencies, strained relations with the West, a lack of reciprocity from other African nations, internal challenges, and few benefits for Nigeria and its people. It was determined that Nigeria needed a foreign policy thrust that would prioritise its immediate national interests over a greater focus on the outside world to address its numerous domestic issues. In this regard, it is advised that Nigeria re-strategise and adopt a concentric foreign policy circle approach, positioning Nigeria's national interests at the centre of its international activities as the way forward.

4. Discussions and findings

Previous or past studies investigated, claimed, assessed, scrutinized, evaluated, and counter-claims issues such as sports and public diplomacy (Arndt, 2005; Cull, 2008; Potter, 2002; Dubinsky, 2019; Morozov, 2022; Lo, 2023; Dubinsky, 2023; Pack, 2024; Al-Muhannadi, 2024; Matviyenko, & Gryshuk, 2024), foreign policy (Nye, 2004; Kobierecki, 2019; Dubinsky,

2023; Banda et al., & Miseroy, 2024), and national interest, among others, which can be summarized into three. The first set explored the full integration of sports into a nation's political affairs in pursuing its state's agenda (Keys, 2010, p. 259; Livermore, 2004, p. 21; Trunkos & Heere, 2017; Postlethwaite et al., 2022; Grix & Brannagan, 2024), and resuscitating its status in the international realm (Chalip, 2006; Pigman, 2010; Shihabi, 2001; Abdi, Fullerton, Deheshti, Kavand, Monibi, & Talebpour, 2022). The second group emphasized that the underdevelopment of Nigerian sports is a lack of privatization and public partnerships in the country's sports engine (PPP) (Akara, 2014; Aibueku, 2002; Pfeffer, 1992; Oluwatoyin, Olanrewaju et al., 2021; Kayode, and Tunrayo, 2022; Muller, Gogishvili, & Wolfe, 2022), and the paradigm shift of the Nigerian foreign policy thrust (Nwanolue et al., 2010; Gambari, 1989; Anyaele, 2005; Kienka, 1990; Akarah, 2007; Yahaya, 2019; Efebeh, 2021; Ogele, and Okutalukwe, 2020; Garba, 2022; Agyemang et al., 2024). The final category of the past literature stressed that pervasive corruption, poor infrastructure, and ineptitude toward Nigerian sports activities inhibit its triumph in the global arena (Aiyejina, 2016; Akinola, 2014; Ameh, 2018; Okpara, 2018; Oluwatoyin et al., 2021; Kayode & Tunrayo, 2022; Ugochukwu & Chidiobi, 2024; Ojo, Olusegun et al., 2024). It is pertinent to note that the past works of literature angled sporting prowess from the standpoint of its impacts and power to restore peace, and create (or resolve) tense relations and conflicts between nations (Korr & Close, 2008; Heer, 2012; Goldberg, 2000; Brown & Seaton, 1994; Jurgs, 2003; Weintraub, 2002; Cotîrleţ, 2020; Penić et al., 2021), enhance global integration, and attract foreign investment prospects (Nicholson, 1964; Watson, 1991; Chalip, 2006; Pigman, 2010; Shihabi, 2001; Adenuga et al., 2019; Webb & Richelieu, 2022; Blom et al., 2020; Søyland, & Moriconi, 2022).

In summary, various issues hinder the development of Nigerian sports and its adoption as a diplomatic instrument in the pursuit of Nigeria's national interests, economic growth, and the strengthening of Nigeria's bilateral and multilateral relations. The above works of literature showcased the impact and influence of sports as a political and diplomatic tool in the international realm. The present study suggested that Nigeria should emulate the policies of more advanced countries on sports utilization for attaining national goals and interests, whereas if adopted adequately by Nigeria and other developing countries, will pave the way in playing a vital role in terms of mending soured or ruined relations between nations, creating external opportunities for a host country such as trade, educational exchange's, foreign investments, tourism, and uplifting national reputation or status among others in the international arena.

5. Conclusion

The study reviewed sports diplomacy as a foreign policy instrument of national interest pursuit to grasp the prowess of sports diplomacy phenomenon in Nigerian foreign policy thrust to deliver it national interest, achieving a prospective outcome, avert detrimental policies that have hampered the country's victory in world sporting events, as well as unravelling the fact that Nigerian government cannot solely manage sports sector, its services, and infrastructure without installation of private and foreign investors and public partnership, adopting to saving

what is remains of a backward economy chocked with pervasive corruption, incompetence, and deceptions. It also explored the available literature on the influence of sporting prowess on one country's supremacy over another in the international sphere. Nations that have achieved success in international Football and Olympic tournaments are expected to advertise their brands, mend soured relations, and resolve hostilities among nations to foster national cohesion and prosperity within the international community.

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