

# **Nigerian Film Industry and the Promotion of Nigeria's Cultural Diplomacy and National Security**

**Gloria Eneh OMALE**

Department of Information and Media Technology  
School of Information and Communication Technology  
Federal University of Technology, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria  
e.[gloria@futminna.edu.ng](mailto:gloria@futminna.edu.ng) +2347030673913

&

**Sunday Akpobo EKERIKEVWE, PhD**

Department of Theatre Arts and Mass Communication  
Faculty of Arts  
University of Benin, Edo State, Nigeria  
[sekerikevwe@gmail.com](mailto:sekerikevwe@gmail.com) +2348036299788

## **Abstract**

*For more than two decades, national security has become a source of concern for all stakeholders in Africa, especially with the uprising of insurgency in different parts of Africa, including Nigeria. Against this backdrop, this paper examines how the mass media can help in repositioning the Nigerian film Industry for the promotion of Nigeria's cultural diplomacy and national security. The paper argues that, the Nigerian film industry is not only a veritable tool for the promotion of Nigeria's cultural diplomacy, but also, a social catalyst that can reposition the industry for the same purpose due to its functional disposition in the society. It posits that the film industry as a reflection of Nigeria's rich cultural heritage, and can perform its role better through adequate coverage and agenda setting of the mass media. The film industry could also be used to reposition the industry for the promotion of Nigeria's collective national security which is vital for national development.*

**Keywords: The Mass Media, National Security, Insurgency, Cultural Diplomacy, Nigerian Film Industry**

## **Introduction**

There is no doubt that the mass media in any society have great influence on the activities of members of that society. Generally speaking, the mass media performs the role of education, entertainment and information dissemination in any society. It could also serve as an agent of socialization, mobilization, sensitization, persuasion and the transmission of cultural heritage from one generation to the other (Okunna and Omenugha, Ebeze, and Harcup 2012). The mass media therefore, have wide impact than any other form of communication. (Rodman,2006).

The mass media role of the transmission of cultural heritage makes the transmission of cultural diplomacy easier across national borders. On the other hand, cultural diplomacy, if well harnessed along other variables and factors in the society can result to the desired level of national security required for national development

Cultural diplomacy as an aspect of public diplomacy can be practiced by the public sector, the private sector or the civil society. The Nigerian film industry which has been in the fore front of promoting Nigeria's cultural heritage through performance, arts and movies can project the ideals, values, aspirations and the Nigeria's culture to the world through deliberate efforts of conscious exchange. This

exchange which could be within the country and outside the country would go a long way in promoting peace and stability required for national security.

According to Ronit Appel, Assaf Irony, Steven Schmerz & Ayela Ziv (2008. p.21), a classic case in which cultural diplomacy played a key role in creating peaceful relations between two enemy countries is the example of France and Germany. Though today France and Germany enjoy good relations, their pasts have been rife with conflict, bloodshed, and war.

In the light of this, there is no gainsaying that mass media have served as vehicle through which the wheel of globalization and cultural imperialism has thrived in the last few decades. The world has been reduced to a globe sub units which constantly interacts with each other. The world has also become one unifying force irrespective of different cultural affiliations, views, values, and political idiosyncrasies, through instant information dissemination. The paper will therefore explore how the mass media could reposition the Nigerian film industry to promote Nigerian indigenous cultures for the purpose of achieving effective cultural diplomacy and national security. This paper examines how the Nigerian Film Industry can serve as a veritable tool to reposition the industry for Nigeria's cultural diplomacy and national security.

### **Conceptual clarification**

Scholars in the field of political science, international relations, international public relations and cultural diplomacy see cultural diplomacy as an exchange of a country's cultural artifacts with the rest of the world for the purpose of achieving mutual understanding and support. According to the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy (ICD, 2015), cultural diplomacy can be described as a course of actions which are based on and utilize the exchange of ideas, values, traditions and other aspects of culture or identity, whether to strengthen relationships, enhance socio-cultural cooperation or promote national interest. This view is supported by Cummings (2003, pp 8) when he defined cultural diplomacy as:

*The exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their people in order to foster mutual understanding which can also be more of a one way street than a two way exchange, as when one nation concentrates its efforts on promoting the national language, explaining its policies and point of view, or telling its story to the rest of the world.*

Mark (2015) explained that Cultural diplomacy is the deployment of a State's culture in support of its foreign policy, goals or diplomacy. Finn (2015) however posits that it is an "effort to improve cultural understanding. These definitions imply that, as an aspect of public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy is a deliberate and conscious effort towards exchange between people of different cultures.

As an aspect of diplomacy, Mark (2015) asserts that when understood, cultural diplomacy has the potential to become a powerful tool for improving a country's image and relations with other countries. This is why, perhaps, the report of the U.S Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy, view it as "the most potent weapon in the United States armory, yet its importance has been consistently downplayed in favor of dramatic displays of military might". No wonder, Kieldanowicz (2015) refers to it as a form of international communication

Cultural exchange can take place in fields such as arts, science, music, education, literature, sports, business, movie etc. Through the interaction of people there is exchange of language, religion, ideas, arts and societal structures which can improve relationship between different groups of people. The industry as a medium of interactions with the world could be used to sell Nigeria's cultural heritage in particular and promote Nigeria's cultural diplomacy in general. This has become necessary with the advocate by some scholars of soft power instead of hard power. Soft power according to Nye (2004) is the ability to persuade through culture, values and ideas, as opposed to hard power, which conquers or coerces through military might. The ultimate goal of cultural diplomacy according to Norman (2013) is the promotion of peace and stability through intercultural relations.

National security, on the other hand, is a concept that a government, along with its parliament(s) should protect the state and its citizens against all kinds of national crises through a variety of power projections such as political power, diplomacy, economic power, military might etc.

In a nut shell, National security is a philosophy that promotes the protection of members of the State from all forms of crisis. This crisis could be economical, political, social, cultural and religion, psychological, as well as physiological. This is why, Iredia (2009) in his article 'What is National Security?' remarks that national security is more than just providing military security. It involves economic empowerment, infrastructural development etc.

The mass media entails all the medium of mass communication which could be used to send messages to a large heterogeneous, anonymous and diversified audience simultaneously. The mass media is made up of the television, newspaper, magazine, radio and the social media.

The Nigeria's' film industry is in the forefront of showcasing the norms, values, customs, traditions, aspirations and world view of Nigerians to the outside world. One of the major roles which the film industry has played, perhaps, is the transmission of Nigeria's cultural heritage, its music, arts, and dance etc to the rest of the world.

### **Nexus between Cultural Diplomacy and National Security**

There is a relationship that exists between cultural diplomacy and national security. This link is embedded in the fact that effective cultural diplomacy can result to national security. Cultural diplomacy

as Waller (2009) puts it, demonstrates national power because it shows every aspects of a nation's wealth, scientific and technological advances, sports, culture etc to foreign audience. Furthermore, cultural diplomacy, when harnessed, along with other economic, political, social, and technological variables can lead to sustainable national security which will result to national development.

According to the report of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy of the U.S Department of States 2005, cultural diplomacy can enhance national security in subtle, wide-ranging and sustainable ways. Part of the report says 'perhaps this time we can create enduring structures within which to practice effective cultural diplomacy and articulate a sustaining vision of the role that culture can play in enhancing the security of this country'. The report also reveals that 'if we can relate to each other on a cultural basis, we can transcend political differences'. We can reach foreigners through arts and cultures.

The Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy of the United States of America 2005 outlined the following as the roles which cultural diplomacy can perform in the United States. These roles can also be adapted to the Nigeria situation. These are to;

- Help create a "foundation of trust" with other people, which policy makers can build on to reach political, economic and military agreements.
- Encourages other peoples to give the United States benefit of the doubt on specific policy issues or requests for collaboration, since there is a presumption of shared interests.
- Demonstrates our values and our interest in values and combats the popular notion that Americans are shallow, violent and godless.
- Affirms that we have such values as family, faith and the desire for education in common with others.
- Creates relationship with peoples which endure beyond changes in government.
- Can reach influential members of foreign societies, who cannot be reached through traditional embassy functions.
- Provide a positive agenda for cooperate in spite of policy differences.
- Create a neural platform for people-to-people contact.
- Serves as a flexible, universally acceptable vehicle for countries where diplomatic relations have been strained or are absent.

- Is uniquely able to reach out to young people, to non-elites, with a much reduced language barrier.
- Foster the growth of civil society.
- Educate Americans on the values and sensitivities of other societies to avoid gaffes and missteps.
- Counterbalances misunderstanding, hatred and terrorism.
- Can leave foreign internal cultural debates on the side of openness and tolerance. Effective cultural diplomacy requires a long term commitment to winning the hearts and minds of reasonable people everywhere.

As Shultz (1997) suggested, diplomacy is like gardening, you get the weeds out when they are small. You also build confidence and understanding. Then, when a crisis arises, you have a solid base to resolve the crisis.

### **Cultural Diplomacy in Practice**

This is the practice or applied cultural diplomacy. It is the application and implementation of the theory of cultural diplomacy, including all models that have been practiced throughout history by individuals, community, State or institutional actors in order to facilitate and improve relations and collaboration between disparate cultures. Cultural diplomacy is essential because it promotes global public opinion and ideology of individuals, communities, cultures or nations by accelerating the realization of the principles of respect and recognition of cultural diversities and heritage global intercultural dialogue, justice and equity and the protection of international human rights and global peace and stability.

The promotion of Nigeria's cultural diplomacy is necessary due to the battered image of the nation across the globe. In recent times, Nigerians have been branded with different kinds of vices such as terrorism, herdsmen's killings, money laundering, unauthorized cyber hackers, prostitution, drug trafficking, corruption etc.

The perception of Nigeria by foreigners is also unbecoming. They see Nigerians as people who cannot manage their affairs and resources effectively. The internal crisis in Nigeria also calls for serious concerns by all Nigerians. The rise of insurgency groups in Nigeria particularly in the Northern part of Nigeria has gotten to a level where the use of cultural diplomacy is highly necessary.

The paper therefore urges the film industry to rise to the challenge of unifying and setting the country's political, economic and social differences through the performing arts. The industry should also engage in effective cultural diplomacy which must be deliberate, consistent, persistent and continuous. This is a sure way to achieving national security in Nigeria.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The agenda setting theory and soft power theory formed the theoretical basis for this study. Agenda setting theory was developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972. The agenda setting theory has an important function in the media as it helps to shape public opinion and perceptions towards various issues. It posits that media indirectly have become a mould to the public mind and the public perceive the news based on what the media provide them. Therefore, setting the agenda for the public is important in order to sway public apprehension and awareness regarding those issues. Apart from influencing public apprehension and awareness, agenda setting also affects personal behaviors and actions (McCombs, 2002; McCombs & Reynolds, 2005; Wu & Coleman, 2009, cited in Ghazali & Azmi, (2013).

As media are the tools for the public to gain access to the news in local context and international context, the public tends to rely and depend on the media to help them get updated with majority of the events around them. In this context, media not only provide the public with the news and reports about local and world events, but the media also play a role to lay emphasis on which news and events are important and should be the centre of attention. This can be adopted through vivid illustrations and explanations in news media about issues that are important at a given time, such as Nigeria's cultural diplomacy and national security.

The second theory which is the soft power theory by Nye (2004) is hinged on the ability to persuade through culture, values and ideas. It is the capacity of persuasion and attraction that allows the state to construct hegemony without using coercive methods. The mass media and the Nigerian film industry can be used to cheaply achieve this by transmitting our rich cultural heritage, values and ideas globally.

The theory is relevant to the paper in the sense that it lays emphasis on people relying on the mass media so as to be acquainted with the happenings within and outside the nation. The media should be properly harnessed in such a way that it portrays a good image about Nigeria's cultural diplomacy which will lead to development and enhance national security.

The role of newspapers in shaping public opinion and influencing their action cannot be over-emphasised. McCombs (2002), cited in Ghazali & Azmi (2013) argues that the pictures in people's minds about the outside world are significantly influenced by the mass media, both what those pictures are about and what those pictures are. As public does not have a direct access to the events which occur locally and internationally, they rely on the mass media, including the newspapers to bring the story to them and make them understand the events. Therefore, the contribution of mass media and the Nigerian film industry in shaping and influencing public opinion and action is significant.

## **Empirical Review**

Bhagya Senaratne in 2015 carried out a study on the importance of Mass Media and Communication for Diplomacy in Ensuring Sri Lanka's National Security. He noted amongst others that,

this decade is very crucial to Sri Lanka's National Security as there are many international pressures upon the country. Some of these pressures he identified are legal whilst others are military. But the common nature of all these pressures is that it threatens Sri Lanka's national security and obstructs the development of the country.

Furthermore, the study stressed that it is imperative that Sri Lanka conducts itself in a manner that safeguards the country's national security. In this context, this researcher highlights the importance played by mass media and communication in safeguarding Sri Lanka's national security and interests. The study provided an analysis of mass media in reporting international pressures on Sri Lanka. It also analyses the media relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs against these international pressures. The study employed the use of secondary data such as newspaper articles, press releases, feature articles from reputed websites and reports from social media etc for the study. However, the study wasn't built on any framework.

Findings from the study show that there is a communication gap and that mass media is not being utilized appropriately by the relevant authorities in presenting and projecting the image of Sri Lanka. In conclusion, the research provides a communication tool for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to follow when interacting with media both local and international in order to safeguard Sri Lanka's national security. It also highlights the importance of social media and its uses in the future and finally provides a link to the interconnectedness of national security and mass media as they both together assist with the development of the country.

Both studies are similar in terms method and subject matter, with few differences. While the empirical review wasn't built on any framework, this study was built on the agenda setting and soft power theory. Another difference is that the study was centered on Sri Lanka's experience; this study looks at the subject matter from the Nigerian perspective.

According to the reviewed study, Sri Lanka is faced with lots of international pressures which affects its national security and obstructs the development of the country. Similarly, Nigeria is also faced with lots of international pressures as a result of political crisis, economic and worst of all insurgency with lots of killings across the nation which is a pointer to threats of insecurity. This paper posits that the Nigerian mass media should be utilized appropriately by the relevant authorities in presenting and projecting the image of country.

In another study by Ronit Appel et al. (2008) titled Cultural diplomacy: an important but neglected tool in promoting Israel's public image. The crux of the study was centered on the fact that Israel faces serious security threats is not a reason to neglect cultural diplomacy programs. To them, cultural diplomacy can help ease those challenges and give Israel a more positive light to audiences around the world than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The study posit that the more world support Israel has, the stronger a country it will be. They maintained that, cultural diplomacy programs which expose people to Israel's society, people, and traditions can succeed in portraying Israel in a better light.

They maintained that, Israel is one of the most developed societies in the world in the field of high-tech, business and culture. Its people are humane, law-abiding and affable. But all these aspects of Israel are lost in the media portrayal of Israel, but can be exposed through cultural diplomacy initiative. The study illustrated that cultural diplomacy has the power and potential to change world public opinion about Israel, but that the level of governmental support for these programs in Israel is minimal, insufficient and not fully appreciated nor substantially funded by the Government of Israel.



In light of their findings, the study recommended that the Government of Israel rethink the value of diplomatic efforts, and in particular, cultural diplomacy. The budget for cultural diplomacy should be significantly increased to satisfy the growing need for the employment of cultural diplomacy as a means to promote a more positive public image of Israel around the world. They recommend that the Israeli government initiate its own cultural diplomacy programs, expand its cultural diplomacy programs with its neighboring Arab countries, but do so with caution.

They further recommended that transmission of vulgar and immoral pop-culture to conservative countries, for instance, will assuredly have the opposite effect the Israeli Government is trying to achieve, as the governments of these countries will reject and take offense in all such cultural content

## **Discussion**

In the light of the position of this paper as regards the Mass Media, Nigerian Film Industry, Cultural Diplomacy and National Security in Nigeria. The question is, what can the mass media do to reposition the Nigerian's film industry for the promotion of Nigeria's cultural diplomacy that can lead to national security in Nigeria? As earlier stated, the mass media is an indispensable tool for the promotion of cultural heritage. This shows that the Nigerian mass media is already performing the crucial national role of transmitting Nigerian's rich cultural heritage across national frontiers.

However, there is need for the mass media especially the broadcast stations in Nigeria to adhere strictly to the code of ethics of the National Broadcasting Commission of the transmission of thirty percent foreign programmes and seventy percent of local programmes. Moreover, to be able to effectively reposition the Nigerian film industry for cultural diplomacy, the mass media must ensure the following:

- a. By re-engineering the cultural role of film in Nigeria. This can be done by stimulating Nollywood stakeholders on the need to revamp Nigeria's rich cultural heritage and values. Features and editorials should be written on this subject.
- b. By setting a national cultural diplomacy agenda through constant reportage of cultural activities.
- c. Through constant debates and discussions on radio and television stations across the nation as well as through online blogs and social media. This constant debate and discussion will create public awareness about the importance of cultural diplomacy in Nigeria. This may influence stakeholders in the industry to create films that would sell our rich cultural values and heritage to the world.
- d. Through the mobilization, sensitization and persuasion of stakeholders in the industry.
- f. Media award should be organized by notable media outfits for producers, directors and script writers that promote Nigeria's cultural diplomacy across national frontier.
- g. The mass media should integrate all stakeholders in the cultural and tourism industry so that they can form a common front in the promotion of Nigeria cultural diplomacy through the instrumentation of the Nigerian film industry.

## **Conclusion**

The mass media when properly harnessed, can effectively serve as a tool of cultural diplomacy in Nigeria, as well as provide a good framework and avenue for the promotion of Nigeria's cultural diplomacy which can result to national security in a long term. This can be archived via the roles which the mass media and the industry play in the transmission of cultural heritage from one generation to the next.

## References

- Bhagya S (2015) importance of Mass Media and Communication for Diplomacy in Ensuring Sri Lanka's National Security.. International Postgraduate Research Conference: *Department of Strategic Studies, Faculty of Defence and Strategic Studies, General Sir John Katelawala Defence University, Ratmalana* .
- Cummings, C. M (2003) *Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government: A Survey*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Arts and Culture,
- Ebeze, V.U. (2002) "Mass Media and Society" in Okunna, S.C. (ed.) *Teaching Mass Communication: A Multi-Dimensional Approach*. Enugu: New Generation Books,
- Finn, H K. (2015) The Case for Cultural Diplomacy: Engaging Foreign Audience in Foreign Affairs. Retrieved from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com>,
- Iredia, T. (2015) "What is National Security?" *Vanguard*, Monday, June, 20<sup>th</sup> 2015. .
- Kieldanowicz, M R. (2015). "Cultural Diplomacy as a form of International Communication". Retrieved from [www.instituteforpr.org](http://www.instituteforpr.org). on 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2015
- Mark, S (2015). Discussion papers in Diplomacy: A Greater Role for Cultural Diplomacy. *Netherlands Institute of International Relations*. Retrieved from [www.chagendae.nl/sites/default/files](http://www.chagendae.nl/sites/default/files), retrieved on 29<sup>th</sup> of June, 2015.
- Norrman, K .E (2013), Definitions, Ideas, Visions and Challenges for Cultural Diplomacy in *E-International Relations* Retrieved from [www.e-ir.info](http://www.e-ir.info) 2013/01/03
- Nye, J S. (2004), *Soft Power: The means to success in world politics*. New York: Public Affairs,
- Okunna, S.C. and Omenugha, K.A.(2012) *Introduction to Mass Communication*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Enugu: New Generation Books,
- Ronit A., Assaf I., Steven S. & Ayela Z. (2008) Cultural diplomacy: An important but neglected tool in Promoting Israel's public image. The Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy Argov Fellows Program in Leadership and Diplomacy.
- Rodman, G (2006). *Mass Media in a Changing World*, New York: McGraw Hill.
- Waller, M J. (2009), *Cultural Diplomacy Political Influence and Integrated Strategy in Strategic Influence: Public Diplomacy, Counter Propaganda, and political warfare*. Washington D.C.: Institute of World Politics, Press,

Cultural Diplomacy: The Lunchpin of Public Diplomacy. Report of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy, U.S. Department of State, September 2005.