

Mass Media Role in the Promotion of Nigeria's Cultural Diplomacy and National Security

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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 group in different parts of Africa including Nigeria. Against this backdrop, this paper examines the role which the mass media can play in repositioning Nollywood for the promotion of Nigeria's cultural diplomacy and national security. The paper argues that, the mass media is not only a veritable tool for the promotion of Nigeria's cultural diplomacy but also, a social catalyst that can reposition Nollywood for the same purpose due to its functional disposition in the society. It posits that Nollywood 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 mass media could also be used to reposition Nollywood for the promotion of Nigeria's collective national security which is vital for national development

Keywords: *The Mass Media, National Security, Cultural Diplomacy, Nollywood, Nigeria*

Introduction

There is no doubt that the mass media in any society has a 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 (26) Ebeze (274) Harcup (3). The mass media therefore have wide impact than any other form of communication .Rodman (8). The mass media role of the transmission of cultural heritage makes the transmission of cultural diplomacy easier across national borders. On the o 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 either the public sector, the private sector or the civil society (Wikipedia). Nollywood as a film industry in Nigeria 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. This paper will therefore, examine how the mass media can serve as a veritable tool to reposition Nollywood for Nigeria's cultural diplomacy and national security.

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 in respective of different cultural affiliations, views, values, and political idiosyncrasies, through instant information dissemination. The paper will therefore explores how the mass media could reposition the Nigerian Nollywood industry to promote Nigerian indigenous cultures for the purpose of achieving effective cultural diplomacy and national security

Conceptual clarification

Scholars in the field of political science, international relations, international public relations and cultural diplomacy saw 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), 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 (1) 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 (32) explained that Cultural diplomacy is the deployment of a state's culture in support of its foreign policy, goals or diplomacy. Finn (43) however posits that it is an "efforts to improve cultural understanding. These definitions implies that, as an aspect of public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy is a deliberate and a conscious efforts toward exchange between people of different cultures

As an aspect of diplomacy, Mark (30) 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 favour of dramatic displays of military might". No wonder, Ryniejska (1) 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. Nollywood 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 Professor Joseph Nye (3) 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 Norrman (74) 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 (Wikipedia).

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 (27) 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.

Nollywood is Nigeria's movie industry. It has been in the forefront of showcasing the norms, value, customs, traditions, aspirations and world view of Nigerians to the outside world. One of the major roles which Nollywood has play, perhaps, is the transmission of Nigeria's cultural heritage-its music, arts, dance etc to the rest of the world.

Relationship 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(15)puts it, demonstrates national power

because it shows every aspects of a nation's wealth, scientific and technological advances, sports, 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, 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 outline 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 swallow, 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.
- Provides a positive agenda for cooperate in spite of policy differences.
- Create a neural flat form for people-to-people contact.
- Serves as a flexible, universally acceptable vehicle for re-approachment with countries where diplomatic relations have been strained or are absent.
- Is uniquely able to reach out to young people, to non-elites, to with a much reduced language barrier.
- Fosters the growth of civil society
- Educates 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 (19) suggested, diplomacy is like gardening- you get the needs 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 cultural diplomacy is necessary due to the battered image of the nation abroad. In recent times, Nigerians have been branded with different kinds of vices such as prostitution, drug trafficking, corruption e.t.c.

The perception of Nigeria by foreigners is also unbecoming. They see Nigerians as people who cannot manage their affairs 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 Nollywood industry to rise to the challenge of unifying and setting the country's political, economic and social differences through the performing arts. Nollywood 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.

The Mass Media, Nollywood, Cultural diplomacy and National Security in Nigeria.

The question is, what can the mass media do to reposition the Nigerian's film industry- Nollywood for the promotion of Nigeria's cultural diplomacy that can lead to national security in Nigeria? As earlier stated, the mass media is a veritable 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 Nollywood for cultural diplomacy, the mass media must ensure the following:

- a. Re-engineering the cultural role of Nollywood 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. This constant debate and discussion will create a public awareness about the importance of cultural diplomacy in Nigeria. This may influence stakeholders in the Nollywood industry to create films that would sell our rich cultural values and heritage to the world.

- d. Creation of awareness and stimulation of all stakeholders in the Nollywood industry.
- e. Through the mobilization, sensitization and persuasion of stakeholders in the Nollywood 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 Nollywood 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 Nollywood to promote Nigeria cultural diplomacy. which can result to national security in a long term. This can be archived via the roles which the mass media and Nollywood play in the transmission of cultural heritage from one generation to the next.

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