

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Nigeria-European Union (EU) Relations: Strengthening Economic, Political, Security and Diplomatic Cooperation with Brexit's Departure

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Abstract

The paper examines the relationship between Nigeria and the European Union which has existed over six decades despite British's exit from the European union platform. It is to interrogate the economic, political, social, Security and diplomatic perspectives of the relationship. Nigeria has benefited immensely from the age long cooperation and partnership from the European Union which has brought growth, development to the Nigerian State, its People, its institution, and across Africa at large, while the European Union has paved it way for Nigerian's foreign policy and national interest to manifest in members' states conducts which have genuine and robust partnership on interdependence levels from both sides. This paper points to investigate the dimension of cooperation and regional economic organization in areas of strategic partnership agreement on bilateral and multilateral engagements for greater collaboration and integration like economic development, joint commission, foreign direct investment, trade security guarantee, educational scholarships, while contending issues such as drug and human trafficking from Nigerian to Europe diaspora matters, refugees, crisis from Africa/Nigeria to Europe, Corruption as some Nigerians looted money and saved them in European banks, reparation case, Climate change, human rights abuses on the part of the Nigerian government, and the crisis of the developed and the undeveloped axis on unequal exchange of goods and services and continuous support for sit tight administrations in Nigeria and in Africa which all remain unsolved. The paper seeks to proffer policy options mechanisms to strengthen Nigeria and the European Union relations through consolidation of democratic principles poverty reduction, achieving sustainable institutional reforms, tackle terrorism/kidnapping, social and economic development, leaderships skill in good governance, more investment drive and quality service delivery. The paper makes use of secondary method to collect data for analysis, while it adopts theory of interdependence and sustainable to midwife the study.

Keywords: Cooperation, Diplomacy, Economic Interdependence, European Union, Integration, National Interest, Nigeria, Regional Economic Organization, Strategic Partnership.

1. Introduction

Nigeria-European Union relations have been traced back to the early 1960s after Nigeria's independence from Britain which was a principal member of the European Economic Community (EEC) which later transformed to become the European Union (EU), though Britain has existed itself from the European Union, it remains one of the strongest countries in Europe. Nigeria led a group of Caribbean and Pacific-

European countries in negotiation with the European Economic Community (EEC) to what metamorphosed to the formation of the African Caribbean and Pacific Economic Community Lome convention in Togo in 1975 for institutional reform and solidarity platform between the axis of South and North through economic development, cooperation and leadership engagements (Bakare, 2019: 8; Ogunsanwo, 2005: 201). Regionalism and integration are part of the

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relations among other interactions in economic organizations and corporations (Oloruntoba, 2016:2).

The relations have been for the aim and purpose of promoting social, political and economic partnership between Nigeria and the European Union over the years (Eyinla, 2010:379) Nigeria's huge natural resources discovered in the 1970s assisted her in the oil boom with European Union in the investment drive spanning from mass communication, education and infrastructure, urbanisation transport and health services etc in the development index (EU, 2021:3). The European Union felt concerned that dealing with Nigeria politically, socially and economically might not be easy but ensured that its interest advocating for the promotion of clear ideas are obtainable through soft manner approach. Nigeria has a good economic potential with the European Union as it ranks among the fifth countries dealing with the European union in trade matters with huge transactions which translates that the EU places high interest and instrument in both material and ethical benefits to her relations with Nigeria even during various military rule in the country (Lorenz. 2011:23), while the relationship has gone beyond the sphere of humanitarian to interdependence and reliance (Friel, 2014: 3).

Its relations with the European union is a great importance to the country reason being that it has brought growth in market expansion, saving and investing in the growth and development (Ogunmokun, 2019: 4). The transformation of the organization of African Unity (OAU) to the African Union (AU) which led to the establishment of New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), the enlargement of the European union joint strategy paved way for the smooth running of the relations between Nigeria and the EU in recent times (Osita-Eze, 2010, 5). They have resolved to look for participation and cooperation in all manners appropriate to build the public and private sectors and other state actors areas as noted in the article 6, of the Cotonou Partnership agreement giving the essence of Nigeria's influence in west Africa and in the world at large (Martineli & Ilo, 2012:8).

When Britain joined the European Economic Community in 1973, the Yaounde convention reviewed the platform where it accommodated the former British colonies for duty free exports of mineral products and agricultural items to the EU states basis, the use of the quota system increase aid and investment mechanism. The Cotonou agreement was

based on given primary concern to ending poverty with financial commitments which Nigeria inclusive in the negotiations (Onah, 2010:17; Adebayo, 2022:12).

Essentially, according to Genzi (2020) on the Bussan partnership for effective development and cooperation that:

The EU prioritizes strengthening key institutions and institutional capacities, aligning with donor's national priorities while using their systems making aid more effective and supporting donor ownership and calling upon partners to reaffirm their commitments to act accordingly...The EU gives special attention to strengthening democratic ownership and creating an environment in which civic society and development actors can build developments consensus. The documents of the Bussan outcome which also take note of persistent poverty and indentifies its eradication to the central to the development goals, while admitting that efforts so far have been to no avail. The documents also strongly encourages a result based approach to the development cooperation also emphasizing that development should focus on partner countries and context whatever they may be which defend broad guidelines of cooperation ownership of development priorities by developing countries focus on result inclusive development partnership, transparency, and accountability (Genzi 2020,19).

The EU-African Union (EU) eight thematic priorities that needed implementation can be experimented or domicile in Nigeria as such, which include the followings:

- i. Africa(Nigeria) EU partnership on peace and security;
- ii. Africa(Nigeria) EU partnership on the millennium development goals;
- iii. Africa(Nigeria) EU partnership on energy;
- iv. Africa(Nigeria) EU partnership on democratic governance and human rights;
- v. Africa(Nigeria) EU partnership on climate change;
- vi. Africa(Nigeria) EU partnership on trade regional integration and infrastructure;
- vii. Africa(Nigeria) EU partnership on migration, mobility and employment; and
- viii. Africa(Nigeria) EU partnership on service, information, society and space (Odock, 2010:367)

2. Areas of Cooperation and Strategic Partnership between Nigeria and the European Union

On bilateral levels both sides have cooperated, collaborated and harmonized ideas on several areas to strengthen their aged interaction and relationship for their strategic partnership agreements. These include the following sphere of inter-state relations

2.1 Economic Development

The EU has helped Nigeria grow in the economic sectors with increase in production and promotion of

renewable energy, public finance, competitiveness, diversification and import-export promotion drive. Many other incentive on economic development have been provided by the EU to Nigeria to cushion the effect of inflation on the economy, businesses, and provided debt cancellations of loans obtained by the industrial scale for capital developments (EU, 2021:6). Essentially, tangible results have been recorded due to cooperation and partnership with the creation and development of the small and medium scale enterprises which facilitated trade for effective business.

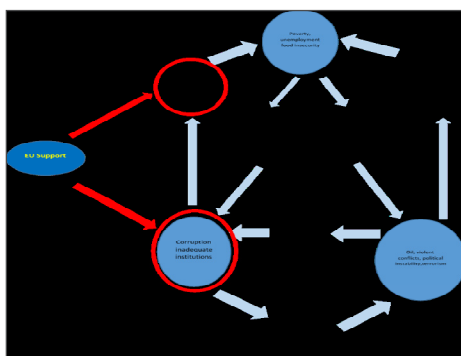


Figure 1. Source. Genzi, 2020:70

2.2 Foreign Direct Investments and Aid

The EU has been able to finance projects in Nigeria through foreign direct investment in capital structural development by either foreign investors or local investors in building huge enterprises and providing aid in form of money and investment for local investment. This trend has grown tremendously to the Nigerian economy over the years. The 6th EU-AU summits was held in Brussels on 17-18 February 2022 that brought together the EU and African Heads of states and governments including Nigeria on partnership, development and cooperation on many issues including aid, investments, and politics with security (Chukwulaka, 2022:3)

2.3 Trade and Investments

Significantly, the relation have brought enormous trade and investments to Nigeria's economy over the years. Nigeria remains one of the biggest trading allies to the EU on energy and oil. The strong benefit of its foreign direct investment to Nigeria has given much way for great industrialisation, diversification for market in Europe (Bakare, 2019:8). The EU's imports from Nigeria rose to record at 17.5 billion while its export was value at 11.2 billion between 2020 and 2022 (Olugbode, 2020:11; Echono, 2020:6). On energy and oil, with the war in Ukraine, the EU has turned away from Russian's gas and energy consumption. Nigeria

is now one of the newest countries to supply the EU and its member states, gas, oil and energy for their consumption as this was quickly possible because of the cordial relationship that had already existed between them from the past.

2.4 Security Guarantee from the EU to Nigeria's Internal Challenges

This is because Nigeria has been faced with terrorism banditry and kidnapping challenges in recent times which have slow the rate of flow of trade, investment and foreign aid into the country. The strategic partnership from both sides has led to success in the battle to end the above mentioned challenges via the supply of logistics, weapons intelligence gathering, training and retraining of Nigerians personnel in this regards. Recently, Nigeria can claim to be winning the battle against terrorism and insurgency in the north-East to a great extent through the joint collaboration between it and the European Union (Friel, 2014:7; Haastrup, Duggan & Mah, 2021: 554). In 2011 the EU established through it foreign affairs policy the strategy for security and development in the Sahel, developed effective security initiatives with regional organizations the Economic Community of West African states (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) in the fight against security challenges terrorism and other related cases (Bakare 2019,10)

2.5 Educational and Social Partnership

Both relations on education and social cooperation have grown tremendously over the years. The recent launch of joint ministerial road map and 7 year multiannual indicative programme seeks to strengthen gains as well as to emphasis the long term support with shared priorities, interests and value between the EU and Nigeria. Many Nigerians citizens have enjoyed scholarship from the dividends of EU educational institutions as either schooling in Europe or being sponsored from there for career attainments..

2.6 Partnership to Stop Drugs Trafficking

The EU funding and support from the United Nations office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) which led to the National Drug Control master plan 2021-2025 have been able to check the inflow of drugs to Europe with coordinated planning to supply authorised drugs and equally make checks to illicit drugs use in trafficking organized groups specialize in fake drug and trafficking (Ariyo 2021: 6).

2.7 EU- Nigeria Democratic Governace Relations

The relations has been deeply rooted in the shared

Table 1. *EU's Interests on Governance*

Table 3 - EU Interests				
Democracy	Values	Economy	Security	Development Aid
Democratic Principles	Shared values and interests	Nigeria's economic influence	Nigeria's important political, regional and international role	Poverty reduction
Civilian democratic rule	Rule of Law	Shared interests	Regional Integration/ Crisis management in West Africa	Institutional capacity building (constitution, elections, budget, military)
Democratic Process	Commitment to Human Rights	Mutually beneficial relations	Energy	Water and sanitation
Democratic quality and accountability	Good governance	Economic and trade cooperation	Peace and security	Immunisation
Political reform	Involvement of civil society	Consolidation of economic growth		Development Cooperation
Free and fair elections	Peace	Economic reform		
Strengthening electoral process	Regional Integration in West Africa	EU energy supply		
		Trade		

Source: Lorenzi 2011, P. 19

2.8 EU-Nigeria Relations on Migration

North-south divide with respect to developed and developing status of countries in the world have placed countries in the EU as developed and Nigeria as developing with the tendency for its citizen migrating to Europe, America and Canada as diaspora, migrants and refugees as the case may be. Under this context, the brain drain effect is easily observed despite many measures put in place. As such, the EU and Nigeria have become partners on this strands which has been

interests and values as noted in the strategic partnership as Nigeria, being the biggest economy and most populous nation in Africa . In 2008 both sides agreed to have a joint way forward to strengthen their democratic consolidation of the Nigerian democracy through dialogue and cooperation on the wider platform of the EU relations with the African Carribean and Pacific (ACP) states. It covers regional integration, human rights, security, election matters, good governance, trade. Nigerian's ability to promote and make progress for the continental African integration and internal affairs with greater challenges like corruption kidnapping, human rights abuse for collaboration (Ilo 2012, 4,lorenz, 2011;19). Also, through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), EU has been able to project and pilot governance in Africa especially in to re-focus Nigeria partnership and cooperation EU has been sponsoring democracy and election observers to election and advocate of popular political participation by the citizen (Farrell,2010:8; Taylor. 2010. 58; EU-SDGN;2022;5; Martinelli &Ilo 201. 3; Adetula,2006, 12).

on the political situation in the country and other associated issues to the fragility of the states and its economy in addition to security challenges. This has increased the propensity of the Nigerian citizen to just leave the country for Europe. Essentially, EU-Nigeria cooperation area in those aspects has been able to create migration centers in the North-Africa especially the unregulated migration as this move will certainly reduce migration drive to Europe (Ezemenaka,2018;6; Obi-Ani Obi Ani & Isiani 2020;23)

2.9 Nigeria –EU Health Care System Relations

The relations between Nigeria and EU have extended to the horizon of health care system. The EU has partnered with Nigeria in the provision of drugs, vaccination, personnel, training, and facilities for the eradication and treatment of deadly and contagious diseases across the country. EU provided the construction of pipe borne water scheme access to drugs, and medical equipments to hospitals and maternity centers with affordable access to treatments and consultations. It is essential that the support of EU on Nigeria health care system has deepened the relations between both partners greatly whereby reducing death rate, children delivery casualties, accidents cares and general medical treatments. During the last Covid-19 epidemic, millions of vaccines were given to Nigeria by the EU freely for Nigerians to administer in the prevention and cure of the disease (Aborede, 2022:4).

2.10 Theoretical Framework

The paper adopted the theory of interdependence to analyze the study. It means relations between states and actors in multilateral engagements and interactions. It leads to impacts and implication in a very serious manner on the outcome and respond on the other states(s) or actors(s) (Roger-Conte, Jeffery & Elliot Grower 2015:23) To Keohane and Nye (1977) interdependence affects world politics and the behaviour of states/actors.

Government actions and influence patterns of interdependence by creating or accepting procedure rules or institution for certain kinds of activities and control transnational and interstate relations with multiple channels, agenda and linkage strategies, while stone (2009) noted that the world is a complex of primarily political, economic and socio-cultural relations of mutual dependence among the states and actors (Stone, 2009:6).

The important explanation (link) in interdependence postulation has been global integration where the formation of cooperative transnational linkages for dealing with technical issues could manifest in a learning method that yield behaviours about partnership and cooperation. Interdependence theory is a vital element more robustly for analyzing the nature and role of transnational relations in world politics. It reflected on the premise of dependence of relations and interrelationship as the linkage narrates the collaboration, differences and cooperation between

the European Union and (EU) and Nigeria which have correspondence effects on both sides. Theorist, Proponents and writers of the theory include Robert Keohane Joseph Nye Rogerson, Karl W, Deutsch Karl Kolsti among many others that provided more insights for inter-state relations.

The linkage of the theory to the study lies on the fact that the EU and Nigeria maintain the cord of interdependence of collaboration despite the EU being on the side heavily supporting and sponsoring most of what Nigeria needs, while it depends on the EU for most things that will aid her development and progress as a nation.

3. Methodology

The study made use of the descriptive method and adopted secondary source in exploring the information relevant through use of textbooks, Journal materials and Governments' data were employed for the study.

3.1 Contending Issues or Areas of Disagreement Associated with the European Union and Nigeria Relations

Cooperation, Partnership and Collaborations have not been totally cordial despite the high level of strategic relations between them which though could not strange the relations but could make it a fragile ties having built strong and formidable relations for decade These include the following thematic areas:

3.1.1 Drugs Trafficking

Despite the EU's intervention and measures to control drugs trafficking from the West Africa (Nigeria) to Europe has proved to have not brought it under success or control as every moments, drugs are still being trafficked to Europe. This menace caused by poverty, unemployment and economic crisis while many have profited from this illicit business. This has manifested in women/human trafficking for sales' sex, addictions in drugs and huge crimes committed to Europe as a result of these acts. As such, EU has not achieved its target for the elimination of drug trafficking in this regard (Molobe & Odunkoya, 2021:6).

3.1.2 Refugees and Migration

The EU policies has changed the pattern and structures of the refugee and migration in Europe from Nigeria. It has however unable to resolve it completely as a result of the following :

- i. Different Interpretation of Immigration bodies in executing laws while the struggling of the

migrants have resulted into restrictive action with negative effects on the movement of people within the country.

- ii. The arbitrary arrest of circular or seasonal migrants for irregular entry and overstay have been noted with contempt.
- iii. Returnees and re-admissions of migrants have amounted to unemployment and poverty.
- iv. Using development, investments and loan relief to address migration and refugees issues have not been totally effective because the remote causes of migration and refugees crisis have not been addressed in the first place.
- v. Securitization and militarization of migrants at cross borders have turned to criminalize migration at the end of it.
- vi. The movements of people across the world is critical and important for human socio-economic development as against EU policies on the prevention of people's movements countries which are against the universal declaration of human right (Bisong, 2021:5; Guarascio & Baczynska,2016.4).

3.1.3 Real Politics not Governance

Despite EU's intervention and inventions for democracy and good governance to flourish in Nigeria, it has not been enough and consolidated like the European type As such the promotion of democracy is just about the preservation of national interests of the EU and its Europeans member states and the core benefits they intend to gain from Nigeria if the country is peaceful and stable It is for the real diplomacy and for the EU to continue to appropriate from the vast natural resources of Nigeria than the real growth of the country. The EU's policy on good governance, human rights, notwithstanding, still supports sit-tight regimes and repressive governments, overtook the magnitude of corruption, crime rates, insecurity, Kidnapping and other vices that are affecting Nigeria's growth (Khakee, 2007:6)

3.1.4 Corruption and Recovery of Stolen Nigerian's Money Aboard

Some Nigerians have successfully bank Nigerian Money Stolen and kept in Europe in recent times running into billions of euro. Despite the EU's measures to prevent corrupt people in Nigeria Saving in European banks, those ones already saved there

have not been release significantly back to the government banks. If such aggressive method is taken, it will totally prevent and eradicate money laundering in Europe. The EU has not been able to do just that because of their banking rules given concession into looters somehow.

Other aspects that have raised reservations and concern are climate change crisis of Developments and Underdevelopment, Human rights abuses and unequal exchange of the value goods and services between both sides.

3.2 Policy Options for the European Union and Nigeria Relations

- i. **Poverty Eradication:-** The relations through strategic partnership should strengthen and deeper policies that will eradicate extreme poverty in Nigeria The gap has to be close so that it will prevent migration and refugee challenges which could have spiral effects on EU/Europe. The Crisis of Migration/refugee is caused remotely by joblessness poverty and high economic inflation in Nigeria for now.
- ii. **Development and Investments** need to be doubled to focus on industrial capacity and structural growth for mid and long term projects. EU has to review its aid and investment policies for upward donations and resistance.
- iii. **Debt Cancellation and Relief:** - Loans and loan politics have become big burdens to Nigeria from the EU with the enormous intervention and donation given to Nigeria which need to be relieved and even be cancelled outrightly because it debt repayment prevent growth and development in any society.
- iv. **Consolidating Democratic Principles:-** EU has to partner greatly with Nigeria in ensuring that sustainable platforms are put in place for democracy to grow, thrive and sustain in Nigeria through robust engagements with actors and drivers of Nigeria electoral managers, politicians, academics civil liberty organizations, market women, trade unions and professionals in the economic, industrial and civil sectors.
- v. **Sustaining Institutional reforms.** EU has to engage Nigeria to implement reforms on economic, social, security, political and religious that will promote cohesion, stability recovery from stagnation, lawlessness and initiatives that will chat the path

of collective wellbeing, development, progress, peace and harmonious relationship.

- vi. Providing more attention to rescue the security challenges:- EU needs to do more in this regards as to assume that Nigeria is in Europe with rigorous efforts to tackle all these challenges including terrorism, kidnapping, banditry pre and post election crises This requires knowledge transfer, intelligence sharing, providing hardware and communication network facilities which in turn will enable investors to invest in Nigeria and trade in any part of the country without any hindrance to threats to life.
- vii. Social and Political Engineering of the country's leadership for good governance Political will to be accountable transparent and exhibit just human rights implementation. Also, the European Union should engage Nigerian leaders against authoritarianism, repressive, disposition to the people and ensure equal and full political participation by the citizens without fear and threat to their lives

EU should endeavour to partner with Nigeria as a sovereign and independent country for more economic and political interdependence benefits and collaboration to be collective advantages of both sides, but not as a colonized nation under the European Union's Sphere of influence and domination. This will facilitate cooperation, trust and progress.

4. Conclusion

The Study has been able to x-ray the deep dimension of the relations between the European Union and Nigeria for trade and development, Security and stability health care system, elimination of drugs and human trafficking, scholarship and exchange programmes, strengthening democratic principles, preventing or limiting migration, partnership to reduce poverty, corruption and employ human rights observance .The collaboration has yielded results, but still need to improve more on the grey areas as well The relations have brought developments and growth to Nigeria, democratic stability, security guarantee, loan cancellation and investments drive relatively.

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