NATION BRANDING IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: THE CASE OF NIGERIA

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Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, new forms of public diplomacy have been invented, especially after the advent of mass communication. The use of *Nation Branding* in International Relations has increased, as a supplement to one of the functions of public diplomacy: that of image creation and state propaganda. This method can be considered a way of restructuring a country's business environment and projecting its international image, an image that is true to its national culture and history. Thus, its objective is to stimulate the reconstruction of foreign policy and international trade through the commercial refinement of a country. These are, hence, programs jointly led by state institutions and private enterprises.

There is a constant struggle by countries to expose their identities and images in a positive way (Dinnie 2008), as they can't be perceived by the International State System in accordance to their true cultural and political identity, essentially because these are subjective identities (Wendt 1992). Therefore, in order to understand this identity in an intersubjective way, an efficient system is necessary, such as *Nation Branding*. So, perceptions of identity must be collectively shared, otherwise there won't be an interaction based on common interest in the International State System (Wendt 1999).

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Nation Branding is thus used as Nigeria's main resource to break the colonial paradigm manipulated by the West.

In light of this, this article's main objective is to analyze the case of Nigeria's *Nation Branding* in order to report on the danger of a single story and its impact on the country's positioning internationally. Nigeria is a land of ancient kingdoms and multiple ethnic groups[3], which until present days suffer the consequences of the scramble for Africa. In this way, the image that the West projects of Nigeria is that of "corruption, abuse, tribalism, religious fanaticism and lack of the most basic aspects of daily life" (Nation Branding 2009).

The question guiding this article is: in which way has the construction of *Nation Branding* in Nigeria, from 2009 to 2019, impacted in the country's international insertion? We present the hypothesis that, from the use of *Nation Branding* for the creation of political, economic, and marketing programs, a national unity has developed in favor of Nigeria's success in the International State System. Thus, such programs have improved the business environment, even with security policies. By doing so, some sectors have become more attractive, especially through the creation of policies to promote technology and the education of Nigerian workers. Consequently, the enhancement of political and social harmony, and of the country's competitiveness, was achieved, generating a new international image. This analysis will be based on quantitative and qualitative data, especially through the *Trading Economics* and *CEIC Global* databases, as well as on Penresa[4] reports. Our objective is to show, in an explanatory way, the relation between Nigeria's development after the 2008 crisis and the applicability of *Nation Branding* programs, such as the YouWin! and the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan. The research's time frame from 2009 to 2019 is justified by the effects of the 2008 crisis on the Nigerian economy, and due to the fact that this was the period when the country's *Nation Branding* initiatives acquired greater political and institutional structure.

The applicability of *Nation Branding* finds correspondence in Wendt, whose theory suggests that the main factor in international politics is the dissemination of ideas in the International State System (Wendt 1999). However, these ideas, which dictate countries' positioning in the International State System, especially for developing countries, are imposed by the West,

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3   Nigeria's main ethnic groups are: the Yoruba, the Igbo, the Tiv, the Ijaw, the Kanuri, the Ibibio, the Ijaw, and the Hausa (Muslims) (CIA 2018).

4   Penresa is a multicultural team of *Nation Branding* in Africa, which aims to nurture a positive image of Africa's emerging countries (Penresa 2020).

which chooses those who have the power to build international norms and those who may or may not act politically. This research's main justification is the goal to combat the single, and discriminatory, narrative over Nigeria. In this sense, the research refers mainly to Nigerian authors. Nonetheless, it aims to contribute to a more complex discussion over the idea of *Nation Branding* in International Relations, which is commonly analyzed simply as a factor of cultural and touristic influence. We also intend to contribute to Constructivism by creating a new debate in International Relations and African Studies.

In the first part of this article, we will establish a dialogue between Wendt's constructivist theory and decolonial theory, in order to approach the danger of a single history and the coloniality of power. We will explain the need to remove the white masks that influence the perceptions of Africans about themselves, for the ideas that are currently narrated are eurocentric, xenophobic and dominated by the Great Powers of the West. This association of ideological factors has directly influenced Nigeria's current positioning, as stereotypes can often dominate the perceptions of nations (Wendt 1999). Consequently, the second part of this article aims to explain the concept of *Nation Branding* and show its main programs carried out by the Nigerian state during the time frame of 2009-2019. By doing so, this analysis seeks to comprehend how such factors relate to policies for an increased stability of the national currency; for the recovery of international credibility and investors' trust; and for the fortification of national feeling (Dinnie 2008).

The third part of the article shows the impacts of these programs for *rebranding* "a product, service or organization considered in association with its name, identity and reputation"[5] (Anholt 2007, 4), in terms of Nigeria's international presence. In this sense, we will report through quantitative data an increase in reliability and foreign direct investment, as well as the outcomes of such investment for Nigerian human capital and for the diversification of exports. This is the case of the technological surge through startups which reposition Nigeria as an innovative and attractive state for investment, especially since the creation of Abuja's scientific villa, which expects to be a new technologic hub. Additionally, the increase in commercial multilateralism is noteworthy, and it is accompanied by a political regionalism, due to African Renaissance and Nigeria's will to restore the Pan-Africanist ideal.

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5   Original version: "produto, serviço ou organização considerada em associação com o seu nome, identidade e reputação".

The power of ideas and the danger of a single story: a debate between Constructivism and Decoloniality

When trying to understand the role of ideas on Nigeria's foreign policy and how the construction of images could influence the way a country is seen in the international arena, it is important to use a theory which escapes rationalist analysis, that is, which doesn't open the state's black box. With this in mind, this section has the main objective of establishing a dialogue between Constructivism and Decoloniality, showing how both complement each other on a critical assessment of the power of creating ideas in the International State System.

According to Wendt's (1992) Constructivism, International Policy is socially constructed, and structures and cultural formation are characterized, mainly, by shared ideas, and not only by gross material forces or the maximization of power. Actors' identities and interests are constructed by such shared ideas, which create norms, as in the case when the author mentions that anarchy is what states make of it (Wendt 1999). Therefore, rules and ideas dictate institutions, agents, and interests in the International State System, which are created through adaptation. So, identity builds interests, promoting its bases. Consequently, the concept of identity works as a link between structures and interests (Jepperson, et al. 1996), especially because there is no way that the state can define its interests before it defines its identity. However, Wendt points out to the power of speech and discourse, and how they can be readapted and built in a way to reflect the interests of the propagators of such narratives. This issue can be observed from the discourse of revisionist states, due to their desire to conquer, whether territories or rules in the International State System (Wendt 1999).

Under this perspective, this article encompasses the need to analyze the use of discourse and myth construction to create a single story, generating a shared idea in the International State System. In this framework, we will establish a parallel between Wendt's Constructivism and Post-Colonial and Decolonial Theory, for according to post-colonial theory it is necessary to observe different forms of oppression and dominance of peoples. In a similar way, decolonial theory corresponds to a continuous struggle to overcome colonial structures, which operate in an economic, military, and political way, but also in a cultural and identitarian way (Colaço 2012).

Such colonial structures reflect the construction of the interests of the Great Powers. As noticed by Wendt, the structure and norms of the International State System are characterized by three main elements, which are

correlated: material conditions, interests, and ideas. Without the creation of ideas, there are no interests and without interests there is no need to possess material conditions, therefore, without these pillars there is no system (Wendt 1999). In light of this, shared knowledge that Nigeria is essentially "poor" creates a myth and a questioning over the country's capacity to participate in international affairs. Thus, a single story is built, in which Great Powers' projections dictate which countries should be a part of politics, and which shouldn't, and this is the danger of the single story (Adichie 2019). Each state has its particular interests and its peculiarities, additionally, anarchy builds its own structures, so these identity constructions cannot cancel the origin of the countries but constitute a set of all these identities and logics (Wendt 1999). Certainly, discourse is a speech act and power. Onuf (1998) argues that we make the world what it is, for speaking is making: to speak is the most important way of making the world what it is, speaking in a way that makes someone else act (Kubálková, et al. 1998). Common knowledge is nothing more than beliefs, treated as shared "mental models" which form the driving forces for a single setting, independently from aspects inherent to this belief (Wendt 1999). In this context, the power of ideas, of discourse and of identity construction are directly correlated to the post-colonial period, for a discourse is constructed from the point of view of the colonizer, so that the colonized constructs him or herself based on the discourse of the colonizer (Rosevics 2017). In order to change the perspective of international norms and interpretations constructed by the West, it is necessary to take the responsibility of building a new identity (Reis and Andrade 2018) to Nigeria, seeking to unite Nigerian society through patriotism, despite internal social differences.

There is a tendency in literature to presume that certain states are associated with the role of identity, with the construction of a universal identity (Wendt 1999). In Nigeria, it was unusual to access non-Western literary works; all stories had white characters and realities which were seen as universal (Adichie 2019). That was considered the genuine idea of a civilization. Adichie reports that she only realized the stereotype when she began to read books written by African writers, such as Chinua Achebe and Camara Laye, and began to recognize herself in those stories (Adichie 2019). Amid the combat of the pejorative view propagated by the single story, it is of uttermost importance to highlight African authors in the international arena. There is a search for representativeness, but also to have control over one's own story and to help construct a society which values its own identity, generating acceptance and national pride. When readers find only books which portray a stereotyped view, this reaches Africans by generating a feeling of coloniality.

Such construction of stereotypes generates what Frantz Fanon (1952) called "colonial alienation", which emerges from a hierarchy between white and Black, giving white people assent to subjugate Africans and Afro-Descendants, which resulted in the internalization of this propagated inferiority and of the myth of enchantment towards white people. Therefore, the ideas and identities have much more strength to dictate who can act in the global setting than forces kept through material resources (Wendt 1999). In light of this, Fanon states that colonialism is not only about the use of economic oppression or military force, but about the creation of the idea of racial difference, generating a complex of inferiority in Africans, due to the burial of their cultural originality (Fanon 1952). Quijano (2002) describes the colonial matrix of power[6] also as the control of knowledge and subjectivity. Consequently, this control is legitimated by the monopoly of knowledge shared at the decision-making table in the International State System (Wendt 1992). Thus, Eurocentrism can be seen as a hegemonic form of authority over the way knowledge is produced (Quijano 2002).

It is important to stand against any structures of power and oppression that silence someone (Miglievich-Ribeiro 2014, 66-80), especially because such structures hold the channels for transnational actors to access the political system, making it possible for domestic actors to influence political change. However, the more the area of interest is dominated by international rules, the more difficult it becomes to generate ideological change (Risse-Kappen 1995). Thus, a society whose culture is based on colonial beliefs is doomed to perpetuate the construction of feelings and policies that benefit the Great Powers and not their own national interest. Hence, the broadening of ideas should be encouraged in order to go beyond the stereotype created by the West.

In terms of the control over information channels, identities have a hierarchical structure (Wendt 1999), especially because the global perspective is dominated by the white man, responsible for the construction of racism and xenophobia (Adichie 2014). Adichie (2014, 38) highlights this line: "I am Nigerian because a white man created Nigeria and gave me that identity. I am black because the white man constructed black to be as different as possible from his white. But I was Igbo[7] before the white man came." This myth, propagated about Africa, can be seen in the case shown by Achebe (1977), in which Conrad (2007, 82) inferiorizes Africans, reporting that the

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6   The coloniality of power, that is, the idea of "race" as the basis for the universal pattern of essential social classification and social dominance (Quijano 2002, 1).

7   Nigerian ethnic group which constitutes 15.2% of the population (CIA 2019).

people were nothing but black shadows of disease and hunger, that they were cannibals who inhabited unpleasant environments. This was a story of inferiority manipulated so that the atrocities done by the West in the African continent were justifiable, as Africans needed help to reach civility.

When giving an interview for *The Economist* in 2019, Chimamanda Adichie states that identity is a very fluid factor, prone to adaptation, and has multiple forms. Depending on which place a person is at, some aspect of identity can be highlighted (Wendt 1999), leading to an identity that propagates interests present at the moment, in a particular context. These identities are adaptable to foreign policy interests, as international rules are interpreted through social construction (Wendt 1999). Storytelling is rarely done impartially, and there will always be issues of power and interests in the creation of such narratives, especially due to the lack of access to other important voices in the story. So, discourses are limited to a reductionist and colonialist story. According to Soyinka (2012, 57): "The darkness that was so readily attributed to the 'Dark Continent' may yet prove to be nothing but the willful cataract on the eye of the beholder." This intentional xenophobia legitimates the norms which only reflect exclusion and selective authority in the International State System.

An example of such intentional xenophobia is reported by Adichie (2019, 2) when she moved to the United States to study and, according to the author, her roommate looked at her with a "well-intended arrogance", a feeling of mercy. This woman knew a single story about Africa, a story of catastrophe, to which the only possible reaction was pity; there was no possibility of connection as equal human beings. These people have only absorbed the information that was selected to be propagated, due to control over who tells the story and which parts of the story are told, so that the story of reality becomes a story built in its own reality (Adichie 2019). In that way, interests are constructed in the form of ideas and are easily propagated. During an interview for *Channel 4 news*, in 2016, Soyinka stated that, being Nigerian, he didn't have a positive view of Winston Churchill, neither as a person nor as prime-minister, for he was one of the most incisive and brutal colonizers, costing countless African lives. However, only the narrative that shows Churchill as a hero is told, generating the adoration of many, for they only know his image as was shared by those who dominate the International State System's discussion environment.

When a story is told from different points of view, this leads to an alternative scenario, as many different perceptions of reality are generated. Everyone should have access to these stories and cultures in order to form

their own perception of the world, not simply reproducing an idea shared and dominated by Great Western Powers. In Wendt's (1999) point of view, common and shared knowledge reflects actors' beliefs regarding the construction of some aspects of other states, for example: rationality, strategy, preferences and beliefs and their position in the outside world. However, such beliefs don't necessarily need to be true, they only need to be accepted as true (Wendt 1999). "Sometimes people follow norms not because they think it will serve some exogenously given end but because they think the norms are legitimate and therefore want to follow them" (Wendt 1999, 272).

The practice of Nation Branding in Nigeria (2009-2019)

Guided by Constructivism, the use of *Nation Branding* helps construct a new identity for Nigeria. New ideas, including principles, beliefs, knowledge, and new identities generate narratives able to impact and to be incorporated into norms, consensual knowledge and collective identities (Risse-Kappen 1999). This section aims to explain Nigeria's new way of participating in the global scenario, as the country paid and continues to pay the price for the Western fiction (Soyinka 2012). This change in Nigeria's international position through *Nation Branding* means that a change in beliefs, in members of the International State System or in power, generates new norms and cultural perspectives (Wendt 1999). That is, *Nation Branding* is a political tool which seeks to strengthen a country's economic position, in order to compete commercially, militarily and economically with superpowers (Volcic and Andrejevic 2011).

The concept of Nation Branding

Through *Nation Branding*, the state positions itself as an enterprise in search for clients, so as to influence the market. However, in terms of sovereign states, such clients are the different peoples of different cultures; the products are the *Nation Branding* programs; the market is the international arena; and the goal is to become more attractive and competitive on a global level. Thus, it can be stated that *Nation Branding* is based on three P's: *People*, *Place* and *Product* (Kayode 2018). Besides, in terms of the International State System, these strategies go beyond the creation of design and logos, they constitute government and private programs focused on external relations (Oliveira 2017, 1-15). As argued by Wendt (1999,225), the sum of personal and corporate identities is what generates all other identities, including state

identity. So, *Nation Branding* seeks to share knowledge and a new view of a country's history and culture, dominating the ideas intended to narrate. Once, according to Constructivism, those who dominate ideas and their media, construct the norms of the International State System (Wendt 1999).

In order to improve the domestic environment, it is necessary to improve the foreign environment, and vice versa, so *rebranding* helps enhance the international identity being propagated. According to Dinnie (2008), *Nation Branding* is a component of national politics, and not a campaign of entrepreneurial or electoral nature, as it shouldn't separate the creation of identities from the areas of governmental planning or economic development. In terms of a good identity, the first requirement is to conquer the domestic audience. From this, a narrative which demystifies colonial feeling itself is created, generating national pride.

Figure 1: The main pillars of *Nation Branding*

Pilares do Nation Branding

Source: Authors' from data collected in Dinnie (2008).

It is important to highlight that, according to Gilmore (2002), it is important to propagate a new true image while constructing *Nation Branding*, for a widening of currently existent national cultural values is necessary. Under this point of view, in order for the state to implement *Nation Branding* policies in a critical way, it is necessary to comprehend its wishes and what it is trying to represent for the global arena. Nigeria needed to make an agreement with its past. Only this allowed it to establish a relationship of honesty and mutual respect with the world scene, inaugurating a new era of interaction. There should be conquering through values of the past, demonstrating pride for ancestrality, thus exploring the potential and creativity of African culture. By doing so, praising its riches and particularities, and not through adapting to what is expected by other states in the International State System (Soyinka 2012).

Nation Branding Programs in Nigeria

Political and economic change in Nigeria arose before the institutionalization of *Nation Branding* as a form of strengthening recent Nigerian democracy. A great propagator of this change was President Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007), who created policies for the retreat of the military from power, when they still had political decision power in Nigeria. Furthermore, especially since the 1990s, Nigeria was seen as a pariah in the International State System, when its government was declared illegal and unconstitutional in the Lagos Supreme Court (1993) due to the abandonment of measures required by the Structural Adjustment Plans (Oliveira 2014).

Obasanjo recovered Nigeria's influence worldwide and regionally as Africa's giant (Penresa 2019), which resulted in the signing of an agreement with the Paris Club in 2006. In October 2005, the financial institution pardoned two thirds of Nigeria's external debt (Millet and Toussaint 2006), which helped recover its position of economic highlight in the continent and the state's relation with the IMF. This debt had been acquired due to unsuccessful nationalist measures in 1994, which generated a sudden fall of non-oil exports, currency devaluation and an interest rate much higher than the value established by the government (Oliveira 2014). Furthermore, in order to build a strategy to recover international credibility and lower poverty and unemployment indexes promoted by Nigerian military dictatorship, Obasanjo and his administration created the *National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy* (NEEDS) (Awojobi 2015).

In that moment, a new image of Nigeria was cultivated, an image which reflected democracy and the aspiration of participating in the interna-

tional community, as the interdependence between the domestic and international fields became clear, due to the international isolation affecting the country's internal crises. The country's participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions is also an element of this international image restructuring. One of the main points for the recovery of Nigeria's image was presidential diplomacy and frequent visits to supportive and non-supportive countries made by both Obasanjo and Yar'Adua (Oliveira 2014), with the objective of recovering relations with the countries that had been most critical towards Nigeria in former years. These trips were effective to recover Nigeria's image, as in Obasanjo's swearing in, in 1999, leaders such as Nelson Mandela, prince Charles, as well as African heads of state and an American delegation were present. Notwithstanding, in 2005 Obasanjo took the presidency of the African Union, of NEPAD's Heads of State Committee, and of the *Commonwealth*. This contributed to the establishment of relations with non-Western countries, fostering partnerships especially with Asian enterprises, which started investing in Nigerian infrastructure.

Currently, as a consequence of this process, it is impossible to ignore Nigerian potential. More than 16% of Africa's population lives in Nigeria, which has a consumer market of approximately 190 million people (Penresa 2019). Nigeria is currently the 10th country with most oil reserves in the world. However, as in most regions rich in resources, there are disputes over the control of such natural riches, for example the Niger Delta, an area in conflict since 2003. Worried about Nigeria's international image, constantly linked to corruption, the Nigerian government started investing, since 2016, in financial technology, trying to prevent illegal transactions (Penresa 2019). An example of this was the incentive to the *Economic and Financial Crimes Commission* (EFCC)[8], in 2017, a government body investigating Nigerian corruption (Senado Federal 2018). EFCC became necessary, as domestic policies such as investment in security and in the economy also constituted a part of *Nation Branding*. Above all, through financial, infrastructure and urbanizing programs (Anholt 2007). Furthermore, in order for a country to become attractive internationally, its domestic environment must be willing to receive this target audience.

Another example is the amnesty plan, created by Yar'Adua in 2009, a project which encompassed a raise in oil profits for the Niger Delta region, combating *Boko Haram*, as well as investment projects to build infrastructure (Ghosh 2013). Therefore, it is the role of *Nation Branding* to take care of all sectors which influence in the state's reputation for international trade, from

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8   Economic and Financial crimes commission.

defense policies to public policies, as the context in which this propaganda is sent is important, that is, the country's political context at a given moment (Anholt 2005, 116-121).

Nigeria has been trying to break free from economic dependency on oil[9] and gas. From 2009, as a form of responding to the 2008 crisis and to a decline in 13% of its GDP, Nigeria started using *Nation Branding* as a way of implementing bolder economic policies, resulting in a dynamic reform of the state's international trade. These policies encompassed areas such as: technology, telecommunication and services, reform policies in agriculture, industrial associations, and national policies (Dinnie 2008, 37). Thus, the campaign "Transformative Agenda for Nigerians" was created afterwards, focused on generating jobs in an organic way, on changing the logic of production and trade, reducing poverty, promoting education, healthcare, energy, and security (Awojobi 2015). Within that framework, a new international image of Nigeria was cultivated, an image which reflected democracy and the aspiration of participating in the international community, while the interdependence between domestic and external fields became clear, as happened during the international isolation of the 1980-1990[10], which affected the country's internal crises (Oliveira 2014).

In 2011, Goodluck Jonathan created programs such as "Graduate Internship Scheme" and "Community Service Scheme", granting young students opportunities to work in big companies and to improve the country's infrastructure. Especially because through investing in education, young entrepreneurs are more effectively reached, and Nigerians' professional abilities are developed (Penresa 2020). Another important program was YouWin! (*Youth Enterprise With Innovation in Nigeria*)[11], which favoured the insertion of new companies in the national and international arenas (Awojobi 2015). Thus, while exploring new technologies, these rebranding programs raised Nigeria's economic complexity and competitive power in the international market, resulting in a more active and innovative image. Similarly, to Goodluck Jonathan's policies, according to Penresa (2019), in 2017, under the administration of current president Muhammadu Buhari, Nigeria was able to

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9   Oil responds to 93% of the country's exports (Observatory of Economic Complexity 2018).

10   From the beginning of the 1980s to the end of the 1990s, Nigeria kept away from the international arena, due to the fall in oil prices during the 1980s, an issue that encouraged the finding of new energy sources and consequently lowered the demand and production of Nigerian oil. Hence, it caused discontent among the Nigerian population, due to an increase in inflation of more than 50%, resulting in the military takeover of power (Oliveira 2014).

11   Young Innovative Companies in Nigeria.

position itself more successfully in the international market[12]. The Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (2017-2020) was created with the objective of generating credibility in the external and domestic fields through the dignity of work, social justice, religious tolerance, self-confidence, and patriotism. The main priorities of the plan are: to stabilize the macroeconomic environment, to reduce inflation, to achieve stable currency exchange rates and to harmonize trade and public budget balances. In a similar way, through the improvement in tax and customs administration, there was the goal to promote non-oil sectors, and of taxing luxury products (Penresa 2017), a necessary step since Nigeria charges low taxes and most of its budget comes from oil revenue (Oliveira 2014). As previously stated, one of these programs' greatest promises is the incentive to agriculture, essentially in order to generate more jobs and cut expenses with food imports.

Hence, the Nigerian government has been investing in new information and communication technologies (ICTs), especially by creating technology villages and special economic zones, such as Abuja Technology Village Science and Technology Park (STP), as well as the Yabacon Valley (Penresa 2019). It should also be highlighted that there is a search for greater emphasis on security, defense, and technology. In 2006, in a partnership between the National Space Research and Development Agency and *Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd*, Nigeria promoted its space program. This contributed directly to an increase in national pride among Nigerians, building an interest in studies in this area (Penresa 2020).

Similarly, in 2016 Nigeria's government started to promote a campaign called "*Change begins with me*" and "*Made in Nigeria*", trying to demonstrate its new image of technologic and productive diversity through *Nation Branding*, thus enhancing its position in international trade (Penresa 2017). In order to increase its *world wide*, there was the implementation of the National Industrial Revolution Plan, associated with the Special Economic Zones, fomenting exports and at least 1.5 million jobs up until 2020. An important demonstration of how Nigeria emphasizes "*Made in Nigeria*" can be observed through the creation of OyaNow Logistics in 2017, a Nigerian app which works similarly to the app Rappi (Penresa 2019). Other examples are the company Jumia, also known as "Africa's Amazon" and IRokoTV, also known as "Africa's Netflix". When we hear the phrase "*Made in...*", we automatically think of Western countries or China. With this in mind, Nigeria created this campaign in order to support national brands position themselves in the international arena, linking organic growth to artistic inheritance.

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12   A GDP raise of 5% from 2017 to 2018, according to Data World Bank.

In light of this, Lagos has been the host of countless events, such as *Lagos Fashion Week* (Penresa 2019). These improvement measures are made through the political program called *T.H.EM.E.S*[13], focused on making Lagos a 21st century economy. Still in this context, from 2006 the Nigerian government has adopted tax incentives to cinema in the form of laws. The Nollywood term was soon created as a way of criticizing Western movie industry and the way it exercises its power of creating ideas and interests through films, looking for nothing other than profit. Nollywood is thus a satire, reconstructing a westernized term and enhancing it by taking into consideration Nigerian culture, aiming for a new history and national pride, something that has also been fomented through the musical genre *afrobeat*. Nollywood is one of the greatest movie industries in the world (Uechi 2020).

The impact of *Nation Branding* policies in Nigeria's international participation

Since before the 2008 crisis, Nigeria had a very fragile economy, essentially dependent on *commodity* exports and with low economic complexity, with oil responding for 95% of exports at the time (Oliveira 2014). Thus, it can be said that during the boom of oil exports in the 1980s, Nigeria (as all other states) wasn't prepared to face the free market changes imposed by Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) (Chang 2010), and was going through Dutch disease[14]. So, when the manufacturing sector was depreciated, there was an increase in unemployment and a lowering of the trade growth rate for manufactured goods, reducing even further the country's economic complexity and the industrialization of new sectors, such as that of technology (Gala 2018).

Due to this economic dependency linked to a commercially unstable natural resource, Nigeria's economy, in the 1980s, was surpassed by South Africa's and the country became internationally isolated (Oliveira 2014). The discovery of new oil reserves in the 1980-2003 period culminated in an international dispute for the control over Nigerian oil. Countless international *offshore* companies started exploring Nigerian land in a brutal way, in what

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13 Acronym for Traffic Management and Transportation; Health and Environment; Education and Technology; Making Lagos a 21st Century state; Security and Governance (Penresa 2019).

14 Dutch disease is a market flaw known as the curse of natural resources, in which the gains in currency exchange rate resulting from the discovery of a new natural resource make the economy concentrate in just one sector. This was the case when Nigeria discovered new oil reserves in 1979, and oil responded for 90% of its exports (Gala 2020).

became known as "new imperialism" guided by oil companies (Alvarenga 2020, 1-12). Furthermore, such companies contributed to Nigerian production becoming undifferentiated and uneven, increasing social inequality and internal conflicts. Hence, Nigerian economy and sovereignty were once more weakened by Western actions, at the same time that there was a feeling that without such international companies there would be no economic growth (Quijano 2002). In other words, the emergence of neoliberal capitalism was based on obtaining profits while perpetuating underdevelopment.

With the 2008 crisis[15], there was a stagnation in the diversification of goods and an economic decline due to an oil-focused export agenda, for in the beginning of 2008 the oil barrel was sold for US$140 and in 2009 it cost only US$40 (Fernandes 2012, 20). Soon, in countries like Nigeria, these factors would cause a decline in revenue, in socioeconomic indexes and an increase in public debt. The sudden fall of Nigeria's economy (2008-2009) can be related to the 2008 crisis, especially because, with financial powers in crisis, there was less foreign direct investment, a smaller flow of private capital and a decline in the value of *commodities* (Fernandes 2012, 20). From then on, Nigerian international positioning began to focus on the search to sophisticate Nigerian production, as well as on the use of oil not only as a guarantee of energetic security, but also as raw material for high quality products. In short, there was a strategic assessment of how oil could be used to boost the country's technological capacity (Oliveira 2015), especially through the inflow of foreign reserves which could enable the purchase of more sophisticated equipment (Chang 2010). The need for economic diversification and for enhancing the use of natural resources also became clear after the 2014 crisis, which slowed down the economy and resulted in a recession until 2016 (Senado Federal 2018).

In view of these circumstances, there was an improvement in Nigerian human capital through the *Nation Branding* programs, due to investments in education, proper working environment and professional training on administration and entrepreneurship. Subsequently, there was the promotion of structural change in the assistance policies for the most vulnerable

15 Crisis caused by the lack of regulation in financial speculation attached to *subprime* investments, in which mortgages were offered in an unbalanced way for low purchasing power clients. This economic incentive generated an economic overheating, but the fake success soon collapsed. Buyers couldn't pay the mortgages, especially because due to high demand in the real estate market, houses' values rose more than expected. Thus, there was an economic recession and banks started accumulating debt, which were later sold to international banks in the form of titles as "safe investment". Therefore, when the American financial market collapsed, this collapse was already affecting other countries (Bresser-Pereira 2010).

communities (Penresa 2019). From 2009 to 2014 it is clear that there was an increase of approximately 95% in Nigerian GDP (World Bank 2020). Notwithstanding, according to a report by US News, from 2017 to 2019, Nigeria went from 77th to 74th in the global ranking of commercial dynamism, from 69th to 67th in the global ranking of entrepreneurship, and from 71st to 63rd in the global ranking of cultural influence (Penresa 2019).

The decade of Nigerian production sophistication

As stated by Muhammadu Buhari, companies have invested in Nigeria for more than 40 years, for Nigeria's riches are not only oil, but its people's ability, intelligence, and energy (Penresa 2018). Since 2006, Gates has started expanding his programs in Nigeria, with an investment of over US$1.6 billion in education, healthcare, and digital financial services (Gates Foundation 2018). That said, these investments, along with previously cited *Nation Branding* projects have generated an increase in human capital. Besides, Nigeria has risen from 225th to 157th in the human development index (Country Economy 2017). In other words, it is clear how the discourse of a tribal Nigeria, without urban life, is a single story built by the West, with the objective of subjugating Africans and maintaining the concept of Western primacy.

From the goal of becoming a great market of complex products, Nigeria started investing primarily in technology and communication sectors. In 2018, the number of Nigerian startups grew exponentially, and technological companies collected around U$306 million in investment funds (Penresa 2019). Furthermore, there was an increase in foreign direct investment between 2017 and 2019. In 2017, this type of investment corresponded to US$808,564 million and in 2019 it amounted to US$1,266,824 billion (CEIC 2020). The outcome of the investments by such foreign funds can be observed in data about confidence in Nigeria's private sector, which in 2017 corresponded to -2.6 and in 2018 reached 34.7 (Trading Economics 2020a). Such change in Nigeria's commercial perspective happens mainly due to investment in infrastructure and to safety in the commercial environment.

In view of this, in 2016 Nigeria hosted another 23 new technological centers, which promoted the success and professional growth of Nigerian youth in *startups* (Penresa 2019). As examples of this boost, there are now more young Nigerians in companies such as Google, Microsoft and Booking, due to opportunities created in Lagos (Penresa 2019). Notwithstanding, during the same year the American company General Electric (GE) funded Lagos Garage, aiming at forming a generation of entrepreneurs, through education focused on innovation, advanced manufacturing, and strategic

development (GE 2018), including courses on 3D printing, finance, *branding, marketing* and innovation. Besides, with the same objective the Nigerian cement company Dangote created a teaching institute, in order to enhance its employees' knowledge and abilities (Augusto and Gala 2020).

When talking about Nigeria's national *startups*, Interswitch, OPay, Andela, Palmpay (EMI 2020) and Mobihealth International must be cited. In 2019 such companies collected around US$663.24 million from Africa's investment fund (Wee Tracker 2019). So, currently Nigeria has the largest information technology and communication sector in the African continent, responding to more than 82% of Africa's telecommunications market (ITA 2020). In this sense, it directly influences the country's internal production in relation to its GDP, as in 2019 the IT sector was responsible for 14% of Nigerian GDP (ITA 2020). This promotion of industrialization and of technological sectors is evident in terms of Nigeria's industrial production. In 2010, the percentage of industrialization was stagnant at 0, in terms of growth, but in the period from August 2019 to January 2020, it reached a growth rate of 25.1% of total Nigerian production (Trading Economics 2020b). Furthermore, from 2002 to 2018 domestic production increased from 3 million to 45 million, in which 95% use local raw material. There was a significant decline in imports, which in 2002 represented 76.5% of national consumption and in 2018 amounted to only 3.5% (Augusto and Gala 2020).

In parallel, through global positioning in terms of sustainable development, the country started equally attracting investment for renewable energy. The World Bank approved US$3 billion in loans for the expansion of Nigeria's renewable energy system (Yakubu and Idowu 2019). Microsoft, via its initiative 4Afrika, has also initiated a partnership with *ICE Commercial Power*, a Nigerian company focused in renewable energy, especially solar energy for small and medium enterprises (Laba 2019).

The enlargement of commercial and political multilateralism in Nigeria's agenda

It is noteworthy that through *Nation Branding* incentives Nigeria has managed to overcome last decade's economic crises. The country has regained its aspiration of aligning with Pan-Africanism, with the goal of building a more diplomatic relationship with other African countries. This process started in Olusegun Obasanjo's (1999-2007) government and was enhanced during Goodluck Jonathan's (2010-2015) administration, for during the 1980s and 1990s Nigeria had focused on protectionism and isolationism (Oliveira 2014). Some examples of actions taken to improve Nigeria's

regional relations are: the countless diplomatic trips aimed at demonstrating friendliness (Senado Federal 2018), as well as the admission, in 2019, to the Africa Continental Free Trade Area[16] (Penresa 2019). In this scenario, this rapprochement occurs due to African renaissance[17], which has as its main focus the reduction of economic and political dependency of African countries towards the West. The goal of integration intensifies cultural links through an integration led by African companies. Thus, interdependence increases between African countries, generating greater stability in the balance of trade due to gains in scale (Diallo 2016, 243-263). The agreement guarantees the protection of some national products which are necessary for the country's subsidies, that is, it guarantees a healthy trade aimed at commercial stability. Hence, there is a reduction in dependency to the Great Power's incisive free trade. Furthermore, in the Africa Continental Free Trade Area, Nigeria has the greatest competitive power in terms of its industrialized products. Indeed, it has intensified its exports to South Africa, which increased by 126% from 2017 to 2018 (OEC 2018). This can be observed in the leadership role taken by the country in the Economic Community of West African States (1975), through which Nigeria granted financial support to other African countries, enlarging its consumer market (Diallo 2015). Besides, Nigeria has been a political leader in combatting racist regimes linked to neocolonialism[18] (Oliveira 2014).

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16 One of the greatest regional agreements since the African Union (2002). This agreement's goal is to create a single market of goods and services, as a consequence of the easing of the circulation of people. It seeks to integrate Africa economically and culturally through Pan-Africanism. Its specific objective is to gradually eliminate tariff and non-tariff barriers, promote investment, intellectual property, a competition policy, among others (União Africana 2018).

17 The African Renaissance has four main phases, having started after decolonization due to an anti-West feeling. The African continent is united under a single objective: to reduce external dependency and to advocate for African trade and culture. In terms of its phases, we can highlight the following: the first one during independence, in 1960, then during the creation of the Organisation of African Unity in 1963, at the end of the apartheid regime in 1990 and the last one during the creation of the African Union in 2002 (Diallo 2011, 93). It is important to point out that even though African independence is something new, African integration is considered one of the oldest projects of this type, as from its origins its objectives were the resistance to slavery, imperialism and Western colonial dominance. In the 1990s, another objective was added, that of economic, political and cultural development in times of globalization (Diallo 2016, 243-263).

18 Neocolonialism occurred in the 19th century after decolonization of former colonies. An imperialist cycle began, with former colonies, along with Europe, occupying mainly African and Asian territories, with the objective of exploring raw materials, looking for new consumer markets, cheap labour and political, economic and cultural dominance. This happened especially due to a moment of industrial revolution (Sauerbronn, et al. 2017).

In an extra-regional setting, due to Nigeria's growth, the country reached the position of 26th largest economy in the world, and Africa's greatest economy. During Goodluck Jonathan's (2010-2015) government, the Nigerian economy grew approximately 7% in terms of GDP (Oliveira 2014). It is important to highlight that in the international arena, then, Nigeria was able to recover its trustworthiness. Previously, from 2009 to 2011, due to a weakening of its ties to the United States because of the financial crisis, there had been a greater relationship with Eastern and Southeast Asian countries, as well as BRIC countries. In particular, with China and India, through imports[19] and exports, as Chinese interaction goes beyond *commodities*, encompassing the communication and infrastructure sectors as well. As with India, the relationship is especially intense due to energetic dependency (Brites, et al. 2012, 95-116). The country has expanded its competitiveness, in 2014, when it made new commercial partners in order to become a *Global Trader*, in contrast to the situation in 2008, when Nigeria depended significantly on a few commercial partners and couldn't expand its economic partners due to low industrialization.

Figure 2: Nigeria's main commercial partners (2008/2014/2018)

Parceiros comerciais: Nigéria

2008	2014	2018
Brasil, Índia, Espanha, EUA e França	Brasil, Índia, Espanha, EUA, França, Camarões, África do Sul, Portugal, Reino Unido, Itália, Alemanha, Turquia, Suécia, Países baixos, Costa do Marfim, China, Japão, Coreia do Norte, Indonésia, Rússia e Austrália	Brasil, Índia, Espanha, EUA, França, Camarões, África do Sul, Reino Unido, Itália, Alemanha, Turquia, Suécia, Países baixos, Costa do Marfim, China, Japão, Coreia do Norte, Indonésia, Rússia e Tailândia

Source: Author's, with data taken from Resource Trade Earth (2018).

19 Chinese imports in Nigeria correspond to 27.5% of all imports (OEC 2018).

In terms of Nigerian participation in international organizations, it is currently a member of the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organization, and an observer in the Organization of American States, apart from its participation in the African Union. As seen above, the *Nation Branding* strategy, apart from its cultural feature, also enabled a reduction in Nigerian coloniality and dependence towards the West. Through the use of *Nation Branding* policies, Nigeria affirmed its sovereignty over its own history, and proved its economic and political potential. Subsequently, its commercial trustworthiness, industrial growth and attraction of foreign direct investment were restored, paving the way for tackling Dutch disease. This change in Nigerian politicians' mindset was directed to a rise in the number of technological *startups* headquartered in the country, with the objective of obtaining sophisticated production and taking *Made in Nigeria* to international trade. In short, Nigeria is on the path to strategic and sovereign repositioning in terms of its international decisions, especially through the African Renaissance and actions to combat the coloniality of power and stereotypes created by the West.

Conclusion

In summary, currently a great number of states which invest in *Nation Branding* are the ones that had previously opted for a more restrictive and oppressive policy, and are remembered for it, as are the cases of Nigeria and Germany. However, it is important to understand that such incisive policies were perpetuated by central powers in international relations, who were favoured by other countries' underdevelopment, thus gaining control over them. Therefore, *Nation Branding* is used as a form of *Soft Power*, in order to influence universal perception over Nigeria's image. Furthermore, a reconstruction of the International State System is fundamental, in order to give more space to African countries. In view of this, Nigeria created a propaganda about the country's magnitude, and restructured its business environment so that *rebranding* would be a consequence of its industrialization programs, since the industrial sector is the economy's productive school (Gala 2020). These changes generated results in Nigeria's commercial insertion due to an improvement in its economic competitiveness, its consumer market's purchasing power and its environment for business.

That said, *Nation Branding* helped Nigeria's unification, through a decrease in ethnic-cultural disagreements between North and South[20], which had been active since the Biafra War. Hence, it enabled the Pan-African discourse to resume. Unity is a primordial part of identity reconstruction, as better domestic conditions reflect on international decisions. Furthermore, stakeholders acquire a more active voice after recognizing that they have a common goal, that of repositioning Nigeria in the International State System. Lastly, a more unified domestic structure results in the country's strengthening and in the recovery of its own essence. Besides, it helps modify the construction of ideas in the International State System, due to the fact that ideas construct images projected in the world, which will finally affect decisions and political results (Wendt 1999). As Nigerian representation in the decision-making process is clear now, with the Nigerian Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala running for the position of WTO leader, as she could be the first woman and the first African to preside over the WTO. Ngozi has been breaking epistemological barriers for many years, as she was the first woman to be a Minister of Finance and Foreign Relations in Nigeria, was director of operations for the World Bank for 25 years and a member of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (Migliacci 2020).

Furthermore, Nigeria recognized in *Nation Branding* the opportunity to strengthen its industrial sector, national human capital, and production diversification. In view of this, the country regains power over its own natural riches, as the year 2020 was seen as the year of growth in natural gas production in Nigeria (Penresa 2020). Moreover, it is important to highlight that *Nation Branding* allows for policies that go beyond cultural and mediatic limits. One of the main factors for the failure of the "*The Heart of Africa*" program was its shallow vision in terms of concept, as the *branding* policies were considered only in terms of the country's cultural and geographic appraisal. There is the necessity to understand *Nation Branding* as a set of policies aimed at areas such as: economic and financial programs; technological innovation; cultural appraisal; infrastructure and safety in the commercial environment. So, the result of this set of actions has created a favorable and attractive

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20 This can be observed currently, in October 2020, in the union of all different peoples of Nigeria towards the same goal, the end of political violence by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). There is a request for a military reform and for the end of SARS, as well as a written law about the political agreement between Northern and Southern regions of the country, in order to obtain an inclusive government for all tribes and with 50% of the government occupied by young people, aiming at structural change (Ogunyinka 2020). Finally, through a unified domestic structure, president Buhari has signed a New Police Act, in September 2020, reviewing laws and police brutality as well as demanding for the immediate dissolution of SARS (Olaniyi 2020).

environment for business, a genuine image of the country and not simply a manipulated propaganda of a product, which doesn't correspond to reality. In each day, Nigeria frees itself further and further from the ties imposed by the Great Powers and proves the country's technological advancement. In economic settings with a high level of violence, investors prefer to keep their investment, or prefer to invest in programs that have a short cycle and can be easily undone (Wafure and Nurudeen 2010). However, with public investment in infrastructure due to *Nation Branding* (ports, energy, roads, and aviation) (Penresa 2020) there is a strengthening of logistics, production and distribution, so as to create an attractive environment for private investment (Wafure and Nurudeen 2010).

Lastly, in 2020, with the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in the role of technology in the globalized world. Consequently, it is possible to predict the indispensability of productive diversification in any country. Hence, investment in *Nation Branding* has put Nigeria in a good position for a digital revolution, having prepared it to survive and compete in the international market when many countries have lost their competitiveness. Nigeria has the possibility of showing the potential of *Made in Nigeria* and its *startups*. This, along with the programs mentioned in the second section, has helped people obtain the means to safely prevent COVID-19, as Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, has had 60.834 cases and 1.116 deaths, very small numbers if compared to other populous countries (NCDC 2020). In conclusion, it is necessary to cease being based just on Eurocentric authors, who obfuscate Africa's protagonism as a propagator of knowledge on education, culture, and innovation. There are people and authors who live in a kind of Plato's allegory of the cave. Especially because the constructions of norms form the political system and norms are interpreted in an epistemic way (Adler 1999), in an environment where epistemicide[21] of African voices prevails.

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21 Trying to silence non-hegemonic knowledge of subjugated peoples. "Epistemicide wounds to death the subjugated person's rationality, or kidnaps it, maiming its capacity to learn" (Carneiro 2005, 97).

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze how Nigeria has been using *Nation Branding* in order to reconstruct its image and reorient its policies, especially in the aftermath of 2008 and in terms of its participation in the international commercial market. The analysis takes an explanatory focus through a critical historic perspective, using Wendt's Constructivism and the theory about power and the creation of ideas. In a complementary way, we propose a dialog between Constructivism and Decolonial Theory, as norms and ideas constructed by the great powers perpetuate a colonial structure of power. That said, the question that guides the article is: in which way does the use of *Nation Branding* in Nigeria, from 2009 to 2019, impact the country's international position? Our hypothesis is that, through the implementation of *Nation Branding*, with policies beyond tourism, there has been consequently an improvement in human capital and in the country's economic independence, as well as a digital revolution boosted by Nigerian *startups*. Finally, the article uses quantitative and qualitative research made by Nigerian authors in order to show an African perspective of history, as well as to contribute to overcoming stereotypes deeply rooted in our society.