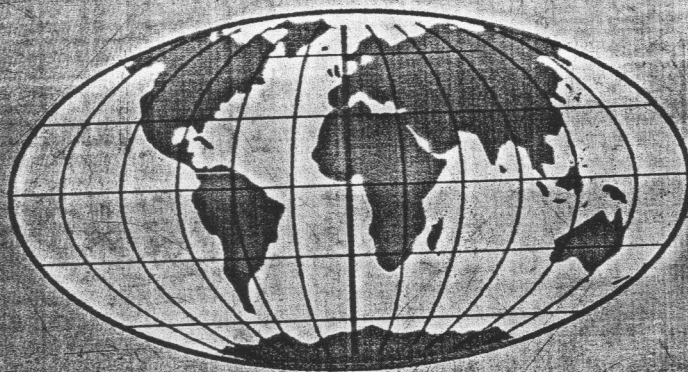


NIGERIA'S NATIONAL INTERESTS IN A GLOBALISING WORLD

*Further Reflections on Constructive and
Beneficial Concentricism*

VOLUME THREE

Nigeria's National Interests Beyond Nigeria



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CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN NIGERIA-UNITED STATES RELATIONS

by

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1. Background

Nigeria's relationship with the wider world is distinctively marked by her contact with the West which, following the collapse of the Soviet Empire as an ideological alternative at the close of the twentieth century, assumed a deeper and more compelling dimension. In this chapter, we focus on the United States, which is generally adjudged as a core state, and undoubtedly, the *primus inter pares* in the West. Both the United States and Nigeria could be justifiably described as 'core' states in their respective spheres. While the former has global responsibility as the only superpower, the latter enjoys some measure of sub-regional hegemony, and perhaps, regional respectability. Beyond their common strategic roles in their respective spheres of influence, both states share a great deal in common in terms of values and interests. A love for freedom, democracy, peace, security and prosperity is a passion coveted by the peoples of both states. Over the years, their relationship has been underpinned by these commonly shared values, beliefs and interests.

From inception, Nigeria's partnership with the United States has exhibited a peak-trough cycle which tends to suggest that it flourishes for some time and flounders at other times. Interestingly, in spite of the relative instability that has characterized the bilateral relationship, diplomatic relations have endured over time¹. Nigeria enjoyed unbroken relationship with the US, not only because of the shared values as observed earlier, but most fundamentally, because their respective ambitions and geo-political imperatives are neither irreconcilable, nor fatally threatening to either side². Nonetheless, it is incontrovertible that the enormous potentials and opportunities that abound in the relationship have often been frittered away for mostly inexplicable reasons. In this chapter, we attempt to explore the nature, pattern and trend in Nigeria-US bilateral relations. Effort is also made to examine

some of the crucial questions that yearn for answers. For instance, is American partnership necessarily important to Nigeria? Of what value, in strategic sense, could Nigeria be to the United States national interest? What does it take to partner with the United States? Or put differently, what does the US need from a partner? And finally, does Nigeria meet or satisfy such 'conditions'?

In the first place, American partnership is unquestionably necessary for any state that aspires to benefit maximally from the post-cold war global politico-economic structures erected strictly on Western doctrines, and in which the US is the *avant garde*. Apart from being the world's only superpower, a commanding control of key global institutions like the G.8, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), World Trade Organisation (WTO), the United Nations, IMF and World Bank, as well as NATO, enables the US to shape and determine most of global political and economic matters. To be sure, it is hardly conceivable that the US would move in one direction while the EU (another core of the West) moves in opposite direction in world affairs, save for some Franco-German media stunts that never go beyond mere rhetorics. No European state would be willing to do business with a state certified unfit by the US, the weaknesses in Atlantic unity notwithstanding³. Beyond these general facts, the US is the largest importer of Nigeria's oil while Nigeria provides the second largest market for US goods in sub-Saharan Africa⁴. It follows that American partnership, for Nigeria, is not only necessary but almost inevitable.

In terms of strategic value, Nigeria is equally relevant to the United States. A study by Gwendolyn Mikell and Princeton Lyman reveals that Nigeria is important to the US national interest in, at least, seven ways:

- i. With a population of over 120 million people, its economy dominates the entire West African region and

offers a formidably large market in Africa;

- ii. Nigeria has well over 25 billion barrels of proven oil reserves. It provides abundant and ever larger volumes of sweet light and environmentally-friendly crude oil to refineries on the eastern seaboard of the United States;
- iii. Nigeria is the largest emerging democracy in sub-Saharan Africa. A failure is likely to have a domino effect and may plunge the entire West African sub-region into chaos, instability and crisis. But, a successful Nigeria will provide stability, prosperity and peace to the region.
- iv. The magnitude of HIV/AIDS is alarming and the US cannot but get deeply engaged in Nigeria, if the global war on the pandemic is to succeed.
- v. Between half a million and a million Nigerians live in the US and about 200,000 are American citizens. Their talent, wealth and influence have formed part of America's life.
- vi. Nigerians figure prominently in transnational crimes such as drug-trafficking, money laundering and advance fee fraud ('419'). Between 35-40 per cent of heroin enters the US through Nigeria.
- vii. Nigeria is an activist middle power committed to leading developing nations coalitions that press for greater debt relief, favourable trade, UN Reform, etc⁵. These issues, *inter alia*, make Nigeria prominent in Washington's strategic calculus.

And finally, concerning what qualifies a state and whether Nigeria meets the 'conditions' for partnership with the United States, by tradition, the US is noted for gauging her relations

with other states on the basis of adherence (or non-adherence) to the best practices of good governance, transparency and democratic norms of freedoms and human rights⁶. Since the transition to democratic rule in 1999, Nigeria could be said to have, at least, in theory, met the basic condition for US engagement as a partner. Whether the relationship has been smooth all through from 1999 is, to be modest, unestablished. We shall return to this subject later. But first, let us examine the development of Nigeria-US relations with a view to exploring the nature, pattern and trend in their relationship. It is by so doing that we can have a better appreciation of the recent developments in their bilateral relations.

2. Evolution of Nigeria-US Relations

For analytical convenience, we shall take as our point of departure, Nigeria's independence date (1960), in the evolution of Nigeria-US relations. This is, however, without prejudice to the little merchandise trade and some aid which connected both states prior to 1960⁷. As at independence, British interest, as the ex-colonial power, was very active and dominant in all facets of Nigeria's infantile political economy. The US came third after Britain and Germany in the areas of trade, aid and technical assistance⁸. As a result of sustained American interest in the country, carefully executed through a series of activities anchored by USAID, and an injection of \$225 million⁹ aid in support of the First Nigeria's National Development Plan, the US began to carve a niche for herself in Nigeria, in just about a decade of the country's independence. As at 1966, the US had established herself as the largest single contributor of aid and technical assistance which amounted to 49.5 per cent and 52.2 per cent of total aid respectively¹⁰. But, the UK still held sway in the areas of private investment and trade with a contribution of 52 per cent and 37.3 per cent of total respectively¹¹.

One important event which marked a turning point, and an important defining movement in the development of Nigeria-US bilateral relations was the Nigerian civil war. Regrettably, the war which broke out in 1967, was to freeze the gradual but sustained growth that had characterized the relationship. On the one hand, domestic efforts, resources and attention were concentrated on the successful prosecution of the war. On the other, international commitment in support of the Nigerian Government from the West, in general, and US, in particular, was chilly. Quite surprisingly, there was benign sympathy for the Biafran cause in the United States. As noted by a former US envoy to Nigeria:

There was individual, private sympathy in many quarters with the Biafran cause. This produced strong pressure within the United States for US government action to relieve the suffering and to take no part in intensifying the conflict¹².

As a result of this non-challant attitude toward Nigeria in her hours of need, a strong feeling of distrust and suspicion of US motives began to develop in most Nigerian elites, as well as the populace. Three issues dramatically shaped the nature and form of Nigeria-US relations in the post-civil war era.

First, American (and indeed Western) indifference and reluctance to support the Nigerian Government during the war made Nigeria to revisit the age old principle that in international politics, there is no permanent friend or a permanent enemy, but a permanent interest. Hence, there was a strengthening of ties with Moscow and the entire Eastern bloc. It also led to a re-affirmation of, and a stronger attachment to, the principle of non-alignment in Nigeria's external relations.

Second, and indeed paradoxically, there was increasing US demand for Nigeria's oil which generated a trade surplus of over \$9 billion¹³ in favour of Nigeria. Hence, aid which had been central to their relationship was no longer necessary and

was therefore dispensed with. After all, Nigerian Government could then afford to pay for the technical services rendered by US firms. Third, Nigeria's growing sense of confidence and worth that arose from the huge foreign exchange earnings of the oil boom era, enabled her to pursue some radical domestic and foreign policies. At the domestic level, a policy of indigenization and nationalization of foreign (Western) companies was the popular norm¹⁴. At the external front, Nigeria supported, funded and actively pursued anti-Western (and anti-US) policies especially in the decolonization of Southern Africa¹⁵.

Despite the trade boom (particularly in oil), an unfriendly attitude and opinion against the US was being formed not only by the ruling elite, but equally by a cross-section of the Nigerian people as attested to by a number of ugly instances. In 1975, for example, the Nigerian Military occupied the United States Information Service (USIS) headquarters. Nigerian Government also refused to receive the US Secretary of State on three occasions in the same year; mass demonstrators attacked the US Embassy for alleged American complicity in the Angolan civil war¹⁶. All these, among several others, were a product of the distrust and suspicion that had crept into Nigeria-US bilateral relations since the civil war years.

Interestingly, Nigeria's transition to democracy in 1979, coupled with the adoption of the American style of presidential and federal systems, revived America's interest in Nigeria and, by the same token, revitalized their relationship. One important point to note here is that, as at 1980, the foreign exchange earnings accruable to Nigeria had begun to decline as a result of the crash in the world market price of oil. With that decline, sadly, was an erosion of activist, anti-West foreign relations which eventually ran out of steam. Instead, Nigeria had to enter into negotiations with multilateral financial institutions, IMF and World Bank, as well as other creditors, for loans to finance

the shortfalls that arose from the huge trade and balance of payment deficits of the 1980s. In those negotiations, the Nigerian leadership needed and sought the support and cooperation of the United States.

The civilian regime of President Shehu Shagari did not last long. Another phase of military interregnum began with the Buhari/Idiagbon military administration which sought to revive the activist anti-Western posture in foreign relations. Consequently, Nigeria-US relations was, once again, strained until a palace coup that brought into power, yet another General in the Nigeria Army, Ibrahim Babangida. With a programme of transition to civil rule and an elaborate pro-Western economic policy embodied in the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), the Babangida regime enjoyed some measure of support from Washington¹⁷. In particular, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) and US Export-Import Bank, became extensively engaged in medium-term development projects in Nigeria.

Meanwhile, some prevarication on the part of the Babangida Administration in its execution and delivery of the transition programme, which was climaxed with the annulment of the June 12, 1993 Presidential Election, sparked off another round of confrontation and hostility between the United States and the Nigerian Government. After tremendous pressure from internal and external forces, General Babangida 'stepped aside'. But instead of handing over to the person widely believed to have won the June 12 elections, Chief M. K. O. Abiola, General Babangida instituted an Interim National Government, ING, which, as a 'child of necessity' was short-lived. General Sani Abacha came on board as the new Head of State.

Notably, the Abacha era marked the lowest point in Nigeria-US bilateral relations. The repressive regime was characterized by unbridled corruption, blatant violation of human rights and a generalized system of instability and state

violence. At that point, other numerous irritants had crept into Nigeria's relations not only with the United States, but indeed, with the Western world. Among them were failure to democratise, emasculation of the civil populace, human rights abuse, drug-trafficking, money laundering, 'area boy' diplomacy, *etcetera*. At the height of the imbroglio, the Abacha Government, sentenced to death by hanging, a poet and environmentalist, Ken Saro-Wiwa, and eight other Ogoni activists. Soon after, the US responded with a series of sanctions on Nigeria. These included:

- i. The invocation of Section 212 (f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act that refused entry into the US of senior government officials and their family, as well as others who formulated, implemented or benefited from policies obstructing Nigeria's transition to democracy.
- ii. Suspension of all military assistance.
- iii. A ban on sale/repair of military goods and refinery services to Nigeria.
- iv. Suspension of direct air links between the US and Nigeria.
- v. The US envoy was recalled for 'consultation' that lasted for four months¹⁸.

US-Nigeria bilateral ties were at the brink of total breakdown. Gradually, the tension that had become part of the relationship eased-off with General Abacha's death in 1998, and the enthronement of General Abdulsalami Abubakar. The latter's commitment to return Nigeria to democratic rule 'at the shortest possible time' elicited high-level interest in Washington. In May 1999, Nigeria was returned to civilian democratic rule. Consequently, Nigeria was designated as one of Washington's four global democratic transition priorities¹⁹.

High level official visits were exchanged between both States and by late 1999, the US-Nigeria Joint Economic Policy Council (JEPC) was launched in Washington as a framework to strengthen bilateral dialogue on economic reform, debt relief, investment and aid. In August 2000, the US President, William Jefferson (Bill) Clinton, paid a State visit to Nigeria in response to a request made by President Obasanjo when he earlier paid a similar visit to Washington. At the State Banquet in honour of the visiting US President, President Olusegun remarked that:

Nigerians will never forget the assistance that you, together with many of your fellow countrymen and women, gave us when you all so sturdily stood by us in some of the most perilous, uncertain and painful moments in our recent history...In the spirit of our friendship and prized values, you can always count on Nigerians as genuine and sincere partner²⁰.

Another high point in the evolution of Nigeria-US relations was the visit to Nigeria of another US President, George Walker Bush, who came to attend the Leon Sullivan Summit in 2003. All these high profile diplomatic exchanges were indications of closer ties, friendliness and a sort of personality endorsement and show of confidence in the vitality of their partnership.

However, to assume that, with the enthronement of democratic rule in Nigeria, all is well with Nigeria-US relations, is, to say the least, simplistic. To many observers of Nigeria-US relations, it is rather surprising that between 1999 and 2004, the historic vicious cycle in their relationship was again re-enacted, though to a lesser degree. Following Nigeria's open condemnation of America's war in Iraq which was conducted without UN authorization, her relationship with the US began to weaken. The US Government responded through a series of actions which included suspension of the fledgling military cooperation²¹; and a brief and temporary closure of the US Embassy²³.

The question that arose then was, why the fluctuation in Nigeria-US relations? This question will be addressed in the course of this writing. However, it is important to stress that, in spite of the minor misunderstanding, Nigeria enjoyed a relatively warm relationship with the US in a constructive sense within the time under review. Bilateral assistance rose from a negligible \$6 million during the Abacha era to over \$107 million per annum,²⁴ covering a wide range of areas. Nevertheless, it is obvious that there are still several unused opportunities, unutilized potentials and intermittent hiccups in Nigeria-US bilateral ties. In the next section, some of these critical issues are examined in greater detail.

3. Challenges and Opportunities in Nigeria-US Relations 1999 – 2004

The foregoing analysis illustrates the vicissitudes in US-Nigeria bilateral ties, which basically, are a reflection of the complexity of modern inter-state relations. Contemporary inter-state relations have grown so complex that to distinctively distinguish between what is political from economic, or the economic from the cultural, is, to be modest, herculean. By the same token, it is equally difficult to clearly draw a line of demarcation between challenges and opportunities. Very often, challenges become opportunities and opportunities may turn out to be challenges. Therefore, rather than discreetly analyse each, we will examine them *pari passu* in the context of and in relation to the three broad elements that had characterized Nigeria-US relations over time – political issues, defence cooperation and economic matters.

(a) Political Issues

In the political aspect of the relationship between Nigeria and the United States, some issues remained highly contested while

developments in other areas are encouraging. Among the thorny issues that continued to feature prominently on the political agenda, even after the 1999 democratic transition in Nigeria, was human rights. Specifically, the military retaliatory attacks in Odi and Zaki-Biam in Bayelsa and Benue States respectively, were topical among the controversial issues that still dominate the political agenda. Similarly, the 2003 Human Rights Report of the US State Department observed that "there were eighteen confirmed killings of protestors by security forces"²⁵. These are just a few of the several cases which tend to suggest that Nigeria, even under democracy, was still way-off in the observance of the universal principles of human rights.

It is however, important to note that though cases of human rights abuses still persisted, what obtained under the democratic regime was nowhere near what was obtained in the military years. Specifically, the Obasanjo Government has taken some concrete steps to demonstrate its commitment to safeguarding and protecting human rights. The administration had set up the Human Rights Investigation Committee (popularly known as Oputa Panel) to examine cases of past human right abuses and recommend appropriate remedies where necessary. The Government has also strengthened the Human Rights Investigation Commission (HRIC) in addition to embarking on reforms in the judicial system and prisons. All these are geared towards entrenching a better regime of adherence to the basic tenets of human right.

More importantly, there has been closer inter-agency collaboration between the US and Nigeria in combating transnational crimes which include, drug trafficking, money laundering and advance fee fraud ('419'). These vices were as much damaging to US vital interests as they were to Nigeria's. It has done incalculable damage to Nigeria's external image with a resultant effect on capital flight and investment scare²⁶. Hence, from 1999, Nigerian Government has shown greater

commitment to working with relevant US agencies in jointly combating these crimes. Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the National Drug Law and Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) have been involved in partnership with US agencies.

Another important political issue is corruption. This has also given a bad image to Nigeria and an unfavourable perception not only by the US, but by the international community as a whole. Through the agencies mentioned above and others like the Bureau for Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit of the Presidency (also known as the Due Process), Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), the government has waged a frontal attack on the scourge of corruption²⁷. The Obasanjo administration has shown that, in the war against corruption, there would be no sacred cows.

What the US and other friends of Nigeria should do is to assist the government in the combat against corruption. First, the US could assist in recovering the loot stashed away in foreign banks by former rulers in order to serve as deterrent to corrupt officials. Such repatriated funds could be used for infrastructural development in Nigeria. The US could also help (and mobilize other Western states) to deny visa to public officials found to have corruptly enriched themselves.

Another topical matter in the political agenda is the tenuous ethnic relations which intermittently erupts into civil strife and threaten the vital interests of Nigeria and the US especially in the Niger-Delta. The government has embarked on several measures tailored towards reducing ethnic tension all over the country. We may not be able to highlight them here, for it is outside the scope of this work. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the National Conference on Political Reform has provided a unique opportunity for the various component units and interests to engage in constructive dialogue and consultation.

This will further help in bridging the communication gap and reduce the tension in ethnic relations within Nigeria.

From the foregoing analysis, the politically contentious issues in Nigeria-US relations are not absolutely insurmountable. What is required is understanding, patience and greater support for Nigeria to navigate through the relatively turbulent transitional phase in its evolution to a more prosperous, free and democratic society. It may be necessary to come up with a regular framework for consultation like an annual Nigeria-America Dialogue to be held alternately between Washington and Abuja. This will offer opportunity to nip in the bud, any potential area of confrontation before it bursts. Such a preventive or pre-emptive diplomacy is likely to be less costly than the remedial and reactionary measures which had characterized their bilateral relations right from inception.

(b) *Defence and Strategic Issues*

America's policy towards Africa, especially after September 11 terrorist attack, should be understood in the context of the emerging global strategic calculus and changing security needs. It would appear that the US now requires 'new' credible partners in Africa that would provide the anchor for US security and strategic interests²⁸ against any threat if and where they occur. The peculiar nature of African conflicts which make them not easily amenable to direct American intervention as shown by the unfortunate Somali debacle is another justification for the 'search' for credible partners in Africa.

In addition, established terrorist threats in Africa coupled with reports on very active cells²⁹ make the continent another priority agenda in Washington's defence establishments. When these threats are juxtaposed with statistics from studies which indicate that Africa (especially West Africa) will supply 30 per cent of US oil imports in the near future³⁰, the new US focus on Africa would be placed in proper perspective.

The question then is, which African country possesses the

capacity to effectively partner with the United States? The answer to this question is not far-fetched. Although Egypt, South Africa and some states around the Horn, for various reasons, may compete with Nigeria in an emerging partnership arrangement with the US, Nigeria is head and shoulder above them. With the largest population in Africa, the largest potential market for US products and investments, enormous oil resources and a demonstrated capacity to engender stability through peace-keeping and diplomatic trouble-shooting around the continent, no other state in Africa could match Nigeria's overwhelmingly impeccable credentials as the likely formidable partner.

Perhaps, in realization of these facts, the military cooperation (as against a pact) agreement was revived in 1999. The military cooperation has the following declared objectives:

- i. to train and re-train the Nigerian military for peace-keeping operation;
- ii. to professionalise the Nigerian military; and
- iii. to provide patrol vessels for the Nigerian military to effectively police oil installations³¹.

Specifically, the training component began in earnest and was code-named Operation Focus Relief (OFR). At the training camp in Serti, the US Ambassador to Nigeria, Howard Jeter, remarked that:

Operation Focus Relief is unprecedented in Africa. And it really speaks to the importance the United States places on its relationship with Nigeria both as a partner for peace, and force for stability in Africa³².

Another US military aid package worth \$1 billion subsequently followed. It also has various components and was basically designed to sustain civilian control of the military in

order to protect the nascent democracy. A US defence consortium, MPRI (Military Professional Resources Initiative), was engaged on the civil-military relations project³³. With these remarkable developments, observers of Nigeria-US relations were getting optimistic that the evolving military cooperation could metamorphose into greater joint collaboration on defence and strategic matters.

Unfortunately, and in line with the cyclical nature of the relationship, the fledgling military cooperation ran into a ditch before it even took a definite form. First, the Nigerian Army, rejected some aspects of the technical assistance for its alleged elementary curriculum, and its implication on the sovereignty of the Nigerian state. Among the vociferous critics of the arrangement was the Chief of Army Staff himself, Lt. Gen. Victor Malu. According to him:

MPRI came into the country to help re-professionalise the nation's armed forces. When they drew out their programmes, we objected to some because they bothered on the security of the country. We are a sovereign nation, so, we owe it a duty to defend our nation. We don't need them to teach us strategy³⁴.

Soon after, other sections of the Nigerian society joined the chorus in the criticism of the extant defence cooperation. Some even alleged that it was indeed, a secret pact³⁵.

Expectedly, the emergent military cooperation collapsed in 2003 and the US has ruled out any of such in the future³⁶. It is rather disturbing that Nigeria's attachment to the outmoded Westphalian conception of the doctrine of sovereignty stood on the way of a historic, promising and mutually beneficial strategic partnership with the world's only super power. At the same time, one may not completely disagree with the critics of the 'pact'. U.S. antecedents, as shrewd realists, would naturally demand some cautions on the part of the Nigerian Government

in future negotiation with the U.S. on defence related issues. In the real sense, it is doubtful if Nigeria has anything to lose from a military partnership (even if it is a pact) with the United States. If anything at all, it would enable Nigeria to operate as a regional power from a position of strength. The Cold War perception of defence pact is unfit for the 21st century world. Above all, it is important to stress that a pact between the US and Nigeria will certainly not be as threatening to Nigeria's national interest (whatever it is) as a pact between the US and any other state in sub-Saharan Africa.

The challenge here is that, if Nigeria fails to put its acts together and grab the opportunity offered by the US, the latter may be forced to explore other options which obviously would not be in Nigeria's interest. Other States like South Africa, Egypt or even Ghana may be considered and this will have serious implications for Nigeria's leadership claims in Africa, and indeed, her quest for a permanent seat in an enlarged UN Security Council. It, therefore, beholds on the Nigerian Government to mobilize the National Assembly, Nigerian Military, States and Local Governments, and the general populace, to change their unfavourable perception of a deeper military partnership with the United States.

Already, as a result of the apparent lack of political will by Nigeria to partner with the US in strategic affairs, the US has begun to ensure, by other means though, that her vital interests in Africa (especially in the Gulf of Guinea) are protected with (out) Nigeria's cooperation. Sao Tome is already being considered as an ideal site for one of Pentagon's Forward Operating Locations (FOL). As part of the strategic plan, the Fleet Response Plan (FRP) comprising naval Carrier Strike Group (CSG) were to be deployed to the Gulf of Guinea, a few kilometers away from Nigeria's shores. The operation is code-named African Coastal Security Programme (ACSP)³⁷.

A Carrier Strike Group typically includes an aircraft carrier,

a guided missile cruiser, two guided missile destroyers, an attack submarine and a supply ship. The role of the Group includes, the protection of economic/or military shipping; protection of marine amphibious force while *en route* to, and upon arrival in, an amphibious objective area; and establishing naval presence in support of US national interest³⁸. All these go to show that the US cannot and will not hesitate to protect her interest in an area expected to supply 30 per cent of her oil import in the next ten years³⁹ even without Nigeria's cooperation. America's security presence in the Gulf of Guinea is a question not of whether, but of how much and of what kind. Strategic thinkers in Nigeria's foreign policy and defence establishments will have to come to terms with this grim reality. In the interim, the moribund defence cooperation agreement will have to be revived most probably at Nigeria's instance. The US may need to lend a hand to the Nigerian Government through stronger participation, support, engagement and understanding in the nation's transformation to a more stable, democratic and prosperous society. It is that Nigeria, stable and prosperous, that could equally enhance the realization of US interest in Africa.

(c) *Economic Issues*

The area of primary concern in US-Nigeria economic ties is trade. In terms of trade, available data reveal that Nigeria is the second largest market for US products in sub-Saharan Africa and Nigeria is the fifth largest supplier of petroleum to the US, accounting for 9 per cent of total consumption⁴⁰. The low-sulphur light crude is exported to the East Coast where it constitutes 20 per cent of total imports. In 2001, Nigeria exported goods worth US\$73 billion to the US and imported items worth US\$703.8 million⁴¹. The trade balance in Nigeria's favour amounted to US\$6.73 billion. In 2000, Nigeria's export to the US was worth US\$7.93 billion while import amounted

to \$514.5 million worth of goods indicating a favourable trade balance of US\$7.42 billion. In the years 2001 and 2002, and in terms of aggregate African export to the US, Nigeria accounted for the largest share of US\$7.3 billion out of a total of US\$17 billion, followed by South Africa and Kenya⁴².

In order to further boost trade with Africa and thereby stimulate growth and reduce poverty, the US Government promulgated the Trade Development Act 2000 which has two broad components – African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act (CBTPA). Specifically, AGOA, which covers 34 sub-Saharan African countries⁴³, is a concessionary arrangement designed to enable the listed states enjoy the benefits of Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). Under the arrangement, the benefiting countries are to enjoy duty-free market access for textiles and apparels. Subject to a cap ranging from 1.5 to 3.5 per cent of the multi-billion dollar US apparent import market over the initial eight years, African states are expected to turn their challenges to opportunities with a huge inflow of foreign exchange through the AGOA initiative⁴⁴.

Some African countries have taken advantage of the opportunities offered by AGOA. Lesotho, for example, has become the second largest exporter of manufactured products to the US from sub-Saharan Africa⁴⁵, and has created over 25,000 jobs there in. Surprisingly, Nigeria, has not benefited much from the AGOA initiative⁴⁶ the first phase of which is expected to lapse in less than three years (2008). For structural and attitudinal reasons, the Nigerian economy has failed to take full advantage of the benefits of AGOA because the industrial sector in Nigeria operates far below capacity. It has not even met the domestic demand not to mention that of the awesomely large American market. The attitudinal factor has to do with the damage advance fee fraud (419) had done to the external image of Nigeria abroad. To distinguish a genuine Nigerian

Businessman from a fraudster is usually difficult. Hence, this creates some consular and related bottlenecks which have hindered the efforts of genuine Nigerian industrialists from taking advantage of AGOA.

It is also important to point out that AGOA is merely an incentive and was not designed to lead the Nigerian private sector through the intricacies of doing business with the United States. For Nigeria to turn the challenges to opportunities, the organized private sector must be further educated on the nitty gritty of the AGOA project. They must be prepared to:

- i. identify a market in the US for their products;
- ii. identify buyer(s) for their products;
- iii. meet the expectations of the buyer(s) in terms of quality, quantity and price; and
- iv. ensure that the products are delivered on schedule⁴⁷

Again, the US could lend a hand to Nigeria by ensuring access to sovereign credit ratings which (like Ghana, Botswana, South Africa, Mauritius and Senegal) would enable the country participate in key financial markets, obtain funds from organizations (standard and poor), as well as indicate her readiness to participate in the global economy. Favourable credit rating is one of the factors that potential investors take into account when deciding where to invest. In addition, the Millennium Challenge Account should accord priority to Nigeria. OPIC and Export-Import Bank should equally strengthen their engagement in the Nigerian economy in order to stimulate and expand the country's productive capacity and enable her to take optimum advantage of AGOA.

If the AGOA initiative has been problematic, the thornier problem in US-Nigeria economic relations, is oil. The US is the World's largest consumer of energy while Nigeria is Africa's

largest supplier of oil. Because of the seemingly intractable Middle East Crisis, attention in Washington is gradually shifting from 'cost of supply' to 'security of supply'. In a recent white paper submitted to the US Government by the African Oil Policy Initiative Group (AOPIG), it was noted that the US is currently under the growing fear of insecurity posed by the continued reliance on supply of crude and from the troubled Persian Gulf⁴⁸. The report further stressed that:

energy producers that fit the profile of heightened political stability, multi-sector economic development and responsible regional security player, will reap significant dividends from an American political and corporate establishment that is eager to effect long-term commitments with friendly energy producers so as to sustain an American oil and natural gas market that will grow by over 30 per cent and 60 per cent respectively⁴⁹.

According to the AOPIG Report, Nigeria fits into the proposed energy producer. Hence, Nigeria is expected to increase her supply to the US from 900,000 barrels per day (bpd) to around 1.8 million bpd over the next five years. If Nigeria honours American request, the *quid pro quo*, as stated by the leader of AOPIG, Dr. Paul Michael Wihbey, will be irresistible. They include:

- i. Increased (and consolidated) oil and gas share of American market;
- ii. US capital and technology for additional Nigerian refining capacity;
- iii. North American capital and technology participation in marginal fields;
- iv. Congressionally-driven negotiations for debt relief;
- v. US private and institutional capital to move to potential Nigerian-based projects in transportation,

communications, mining/hydrological and agro-business;

- vi. AGOA-based US/Nigeria trade agreements; and
- vii. Validation of Nigeria's status as a continental great power at the international level⁵⁰.

A cursory look at these potential opportunities may obscure one to the controversial and emotional issue of Nigeria's membership of OPEC. America's oil requirement cannot be accommodated as long as Nigeria remains a member of OPEC. For instance, the 1.8 million bpd that the US requested from Nigeria is more than the total OPEC quota allotted to Nigeria (precisely 1.787 million, bpd). The question then is: should Nigeria pull-out of OPEC (like Gabon and Ecuador did) in order to meet the US needs and reap the potential benefits?

This question is as highly contentious as it is technical. It boils down to the highly controversial concept in international relations – national interest. It is noteworthy that OPEC has been able to stabilize oil prices and by implication, ensured that Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings do not fluctuate substantially. Again, what logical sense will it make for Nigeria to produce either 5 million bpd at \$10 or \$15 per barrel or 2 million bpd at \$30 or \$40 per barrel? By simple statistical analysis, 2 million bpd at \$30 per barrel is equivalent to 4 million bpd at \$15 per barrel. If any difference at all, it simply is that producing 2 million bpd at \$30 per barrel will make reserve last for 35 years while 4 million bpd at \$15 per barrel would exhaust reserve in 15 years.

In short, Nigeria and US interests, as far as oil diplomacy goes, is inversely related. A lower price of oil serves America's interests but jeopardizes Nigeria's. How well these interests are reconciled for the mutual benefits of both states would depend on the dexterity of strategic thinkers on both sides. In

the long run, the compelling natural urge for stronger and deeper ties between them would ultimately blunt the rough edges and invariably put an end to the vicious cycle that had often characterized the relationship.

4. Conclusion

In this chapter, attempt has been made to explore the basic foundations of Nigeria-US relations which, for the most part, had experienced much of instability. Nigeria's transition to democracy in 1999 marked another beginning in the evolution of their bilateral relations. Even then, some elements of irritations are yet to be removed, while the usual inclination towards reluctant partnership were evident. Obviously, there are abundant opportunities in Nigeria's relations with the United States but the seemingly intractable challenges continued to impede their utilization.

In order to transform challenges to opportunities and to ensure that the potentials are optimally utilized, there has to be a greater political will and commitment on both sides. In particular, the Nigerian Government would have to mobilize the various segments of the society toward developing a favourable perception of the United States. In the new international system, America's pre-eminence is unrivalled and this is unlikely to change for the next half a century. Beyond this, the Nigerian Government would equally have to sustain its reform agenda to make the economy more competitive and attractive to foreign engagements while at the same time maintaining a reasonable level of domestic stability, peace and security.

Above all, the US Government would also have to strengthen its support for the fledgling democratic government, especially in the area of easing the debt burden. One striking development on the debt issue is the unanimity of views that the debts have become unsustainable. It is difficult not to be

20. President Olusegun Obasanjo, "Nigeria-USA: Partnership and Friendship", being a speech delivered at the State Banquet in honour of President Bill Clinton of the United States, Abuja 26th August, 2000. See Ad'Obe Obe (ed) *A New Dawn: A Collection of Speeches of President Olusegun Obasanjo*, vol. II (Ibadan: Spectrum Books), pp. 64 - 73.
21. Aja Akpuru-Aja, "The State and the Military: Perspectives on Nigeria-USA Military Cooperation", *Strategic Analysis*, April - June 2003, vol. XXVII, No.2.
22. See *New Nigerian*, 15th August, 2002 p. 8; *The Champion* (Nigeria), 19th August, 2002, p.10.
23. *The Guardian* (Nigeria), 22nd March, 2003, p.1.
24. U.S. Department of State Reports on Nigeria, *op cit*.
25. *Daily Trust*, 14th April, 2004 p. 35; see also U.S. Department of State Reports on Nigeria in 2001, 2002 and 2003.
26. *Ibid*.
27. The Obasanjo administration, more than any government before it, has demonstrated stronger commitment in waging war against official corruption. For instance, three former Ministers of Internal Affairs are standing trial over the National Identity card scandal; some Naval Officers were tried and dismissed over corrupt practices; and so many other cases.
28. Aremu F.A. and Ademola Azeez, "American Foreign Policy and the Challenges of the 21st Century: In Search of 'New' Strategic Partners", paper presented to the 11th Annual National Conference of the American Studies Association of Nigeria (ASAN), University of Ibadan Hotels, Ibadan. 14th - 16th September 2004 .
29. Princeton N. Lyman and J. Stephen Morrison, "The Terrorist Threat in Africa", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 83, No.1 Jan/Feb 2004, pp. 75-86; see also Charles R. Snyder US-African

- Partnership of the 21st Century", Remarks to the Pacific Council on International Policy, Los Angeles, CA 17th November, 2003.
30. *The Guardian* (Nigeria) 11th June, 2004, p.1.
31. Aja, Akpuru-Aja, "The State and the Military..." *op. cit*.
32. *New Nigerian*, 25th December, 2001, p.11.
33. *Nigerian Tribune* (Editorial), 7th April, 2000, p.10.
34. See *Daily Times* (Nigeria), 19th January, 2001 p.32.
35. Omo Omoruyi, "Nigeria/US Defence Pact: In Whose Interest?", *THISDAY*, 22nd July 2001 p.18.
36. See "US rules out military assistance to Nigeria", *The Punch* 13th July, 2004 p.5.
37. *ThisDay*, 20th June, 2004 p. 24.
38. *Ibid*. see also *The Guardian* (Nigeria) 11th June, 2004, p.1
39. *Ibid*.
40. <http://www.nigeriangalleria.com/trade/usnigec.him>
41. *ThisDay*, 8th February, 2002 p.54.
42. *Ibid*.
43. The 34 sub-Saharan African States include: Benin, Botswana, Cape-Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.
44. Oghogho Obayunyana, "Unutilized Treasures in US-Nigeria Trade", *The Guardian* (Nigeria), 9th July, 2003, p.13.

45. *Ibid.* see also Charles R. Snyder, "US-African Partnership..." *op. cit.*
46. "Unutilized Treasures..." *op. cit.*; *The Guardian* 11th July, 2003, p. 23.
47. Lorenzo Bellamy, "Nigeria and the American Trade and Development Act", *The Comet* 29th November, 2000, p. 35.
48. "Nigeria-US Alliance: What Oil has joined together" *ThisDay*, 16th July, 2002, p. 23.
49. *Ibid.*
50. *Ibid.*
51. Atiku Abubakar, "Emerging Democracies in a New World Order" a lecture delivered at the University of California, Los Angeles, United States.
52. For further details on President Obasanjo's numerous comments and appeals on the debt issue, see Ad'Obe Obe (ed.) *A New Dawn...*, *op. cit.*

NIGERIA'S RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND JAPAN: THE DYNAMICS OF RAPPROCHEMENT

by

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