

ANALYSIS OF TRENDS AND PATTERNS IN NIGERIA-U.S. RELATIONS, 1960-2015

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Abstract

This article will examine the trends and patterns in Nigeria-U.S. relations, while tracing the features of development of the relations between citizens of both countries, starting from the export of slaves in the previous centuries to the Nigerian students in the U.S. in the mid-1940s and 1950s up till the attainment of independence in 1960. The section will also x-rays the development of political relationship between the two countries, from independence in 1960 to the era of emerging economic alliances from 1960 to 1967; the era of Nigeria-Biafra war between 1967 and 1970; the era of the oil boom 1970 to the early 1980s; the era of the Structural Adjustment Programme and economic dependence of 1983 to 1993; the era of embargo on Nigerian oil, 1993 to 1999. It will go forward to surveying the importance of the period between 1999 and 2015, which was the era which attempted to deepen democratic institutions in Nigeria. Each of these periods in Nigeria-U.S. relations have shown to have a unique character in the behavioural pattern of policy makers in both countries as determined by the prevailing circumstances on ground during such periods. To this end therefore, the study has attempted to ascertain the extent of the challenges that have characterized the many years of relationship between the regional powers, and to achieve this, the research has adopted both the quantitative and qualitative approaches of research methodology. This will enable the interpretation of the data generated from both primary and secondary sources. Some of the findings and conclusions drawn from the study show that political, social, economic and security challenges responsible for the fluctuations that were observed in the bilateral relations between the two countries. The study therefore recommends that Nigeria should strengthen its foreign policy attention and resources in the bilateral relations with the US in areas that are potentially strategic to its national transformation and security.

Introduction

The emergence of Nigeria as an independent country on 1st October, 1960, and its induction into the cult of the United Nations Organisation (UNO) symbolised the beginning of the development of her foreign policy positions on critical matters of global interests. It is said that Nigeria-US relations kicked off in the era of Cold War. The two countries' relationship was thus predicated upon the pursuit of a containment policy of the United States which was geared towards preventing the growth and functionality of the Soviet expansionist policy especially in Africa. On the other hand, the policy of containment was used to limit or halt the spread of communism in the territories in which the U.S. prioritised her national interests. While it could be argued that communism did not gain any ground in Nigeria, even at the height of Soviet support for the federal government during the Nigerian civil war, the desires of both countries were for good and harmonious relationship.¹

The U.S. high level of development, technology and wealth, remain a source of aid to Nigeria. However, in the same manner, America has benefited and will continue to benefit from cordial relations with Nigeria, a country that is so much endowed with vast human and mineral resources, and the most populous country in Africa.

Unlike the European nations, the United States is said to have arrived late on the African political drama, even though America had established contacts with West Africa in the previous centuries in search of African slaves. America's interest in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular was limited until the 1950s. Neither the U.S. government nor the people had expressed any significant interest in Nigeria's development before 1960 (Nigeria's year of independence). The United States had allowed Britain to exercise reasonable authority in Nigeria probably because she did not have any official policy on the country. In fact, Nigeria was studied and understood by the U.S. through the instrumentality of the British. In other words, Nigeria was an area of secondary interest rather than primary interest to the United States. The only country in Africa the US had expressed some interest in its foreign policy was South Africa, as a result of the pressures coming from the blacks in the United States during President Kennedy's administration. With growing tendency of the sections of the black community to identify with African struggle against apartheid, the administration sometimes considered it wise to display sensitivity to complaints about the situation in South Africa.²

Nigeria-US relations have unwittingly gone a full circle, beginning with optimism, enthusiasm and great expectations to a period of chaos, confusion, uncertainty and hostility.³ For instance, by the early 1960s, the relationship between the two countries began to improve. In the fields of private investments and trade, there was a considerable

improvement. Moreover, there was an increase in the population of Nigerian students who gained admissions into American universities, and the development of programmes concerned with African studies in American universities. Nigerian students in the U.S like K.O..Mbadiwe, MbonuOjike, Akweke Abyssinia NwaforOrizu in 1942 had formed the Africa Students Association (ASA). NwaforOrizu went further to establish an organ of information called the “African Interpreter” which enlightened the American people and government on indigenous information about Africa and its peoples.⁴

There was also provision of funds for various aspects of development by such organisations as the Ford and the Rockefeller Foundations and the Carnegie Endowment.⁵ At the governmental level, the United States was largely motivated by its policy of containment aimed at isolating the Soviet Union from establishing a sphere of influence in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular, and the desire to secure the preservation of Western political ideas and institutions.

However, by the late 1970s, the U.S. relations with Nigeria began to sour. This was caused by the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war which was said to have consumed a large chunk of human, material and financial resources in the crusade against the introduction of communism in that country. With respect to the Angolan issue in the mid-1970s, the Soviet-Cuban presence in Angola did not go down well with the U.S. As a result, this development was said to have spurred an intensification of the U.S.’s interest in Africa. The U.S perception that communism would likely gain ground in Africa at the time was said to have encouraged it to intensify effort to strengthen ties with African countries. In this regard, the Nigerian government of Murtala –Obasanjo did not take kindly to a letter President Gerald Ford wrote to General Murtala Mohammed denouncing the Soviet-Cuban interference in Angola.⁶ While Nigeria and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) supported the Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the US and South Africa (then considered a racist country) supported the National Union for Total Liberation of Angola (UNITA) led by Jonas Savimbi. On account of this, Nigeria saw the U.S as an ally of a racist regime and the reaction amongst Nigerians was in the negative.⁷

During the period mentioned in the foregoing paragraph, the American relations with Nigeria were described as flirtatious and ‘long romance’, but no marriage.⁸ Moreover, the U.S. was said to be so adamant to show any commitment to any lasting projects in Nigeria as she had done with friendly countries in Latin America, South East Asia and in the Middle East. Nonetheless, the Jimmy Carter Administration in 1976-1980 considered Nigeria-US relations as crucial and thereby began to strengthen same. The unease relationship between the two countries began to thus improve a few months after Jimmy Carter was sworn in as the US president. This was expressed by four round bilateral talks

held between former Vice Presidents Walter Mondale of the United States and Alex Ekwueme of Nigeria between July 22 and 23, 1980. Similarly, former President Shehu Shagari of Nigeria visited the then US president, Jimmy Carter in October, 1980, and a return visit to Nigeria was made by the US president.⁹

However, since the early 1980s, Nigeria-US relations seemed to have continued to grow in strength, even though they were too bitter during the Abacha's regime. This relationship would probably have been motivated by the fact that the two countries were faced with the regional and global security challenges. They were thus actively concerned with the global issues, political instability, economic development, control of nuclear weapons and more recently insurgency and terrorism. It should be noted that in the present international system, Nigeria and the US are known to share problems that are of common interest to each other; -interests that call for collaboration between the two sovereign countries.

However, analysis of trends and patterns in Nigeria-U.S. Relations, 1960-2015 is our main point of focus. The obvious question could be: Why does the study choose 1960 -2015? The choice of 1960 as a take-off point is unquestionable in view of its watershed importance to Nigeria's independence from Great Britain. Attainment of political independence, as it were, in 1960 would probably have provided a strong basis for the articulation of a viable foreign policy for an independent Nigeria, more so when such a foreign policy thrust had to do with a break with the old one of directional foreign relations with Great Britain to the warm embrace of other progressive countries like the U.S.A.

The choice of 2015 for the conclusion of the study is consistent with both countries because it marked the first time in the history of Nigeria when an elected president would be defeated by an opposition party as was made manifest between former President Goodluck Jonathan and President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015. It is important because most political analysts had thought that the defeat of President Jonathan would have truncated the country's democracy; but on the contrary, it turned out to contribute to the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. In other words, this period marked a vital period in the history of Nigerian democratic governance.

Therefore, to get the in-depth analysis of the situation, the study will be categorically discussed in these proceeding subtitles after the introduction: the first to be discussed is economic trends in Nigeria-U.S. Relations, followed First Era (1960-1967): the Era of Emerging Economic Alliance, Secondly, Era (1967-1970): The Nigeria-Biafra War Period, Thirdly, Era (1970-1983): The Period of Oil Boom, Fourthly, Era (1983-1993): The Period of the Structural Adjustment Policy/Dependence, and Fifth Era (1993-1999):

The Period of Embargo on Nigeria Oil. Subsequent sub-head will analyse, the social trends in Nigerian-U.S relations, it will step further to analyse a table showing the characteristics of the Nigeria Diaspora in the United States, 2009-2013, followed by another table to show the remittance inflows to Nigeria by sending country and the Nigeria Emigrant population, 2012, and finally Political and military trends in Nigeria-U.S foreign relations.

Economic Trends in Nigeria-U.S. Relations

Nigeria and the United States have a strong economic bond which showcases in mutual exchange of goods and services, investments and transfer of technology. Nigeria's economic reciprocity with the United States can be explained in terms of oil and non-oil trade. For example, the United States is known to be the largest importer of Nigerian crude oil. Nigeria's importance to the U.S.A. was demonstrated during the 1973 Arab oil embargo, after the Yom Kippur war. During the Arab-Israeli war, Arab members of the Organisation for Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) of which Nigeria is a member, imposed an oil embargo against the U.S for its decision to re-supply the Israeli military and to gain leverage in the post-war peace negotiations.¹⁰ Arab OPEC members also extended the embargo to other countries that supported Israel including the Netherlands, Portugal and South Africa. The embargo also banned petroleum exports to the targeted nations and introduced cuts in oil production. During this embargo, Nigeria became one of the major suppliers of crude oil to the U.S. This act enhanced Nigeria-U.S relations at that time.¹¹

Also, during the Shehu Shagari administration of 1979 to 1983, Nigeria imported goods valued at N780.4 million in 1979, while exports for the same year stood at N81.6 million, showing an excess of N707.8 million in favour of the USA. In addition, in 1980, US export to Nigeria reduced to N64.8 million, recording an excess of N970.5 million still in U.S. favour. In 1981, the same pattern was recorded. Nigeria's import from the United States stood at N22.2 million in favour of the United States.¹²

In her trade with the United States in the early 1980s, Nigeria consistently imported manufactured goods such as food stuffs, feeds, grains, agricultural inputs, chemicals, technological equipment, aircrafts, among others. Her exports to the United States, on the other hand, were raw materials. However, addressing the *Daily Times Newspaper* of 12th August, 1983, the then United States Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Thomas R. Pickering, stated that the US was Nigeria's trading partner with a towering trade of over N6.7 billion and the US was Nigeria's third largest supplier of goods and services. He added that US exports to Nigeria helped to support the Shagari administration as top priority.¹³

Furthermore, the U.S. key interest in relation to Nigeria is said to have been oil. As a voracious consumer of the Nigerian petroleum products, the United States recognises Nigeria's worth as the largest oil producer in Africa and the fifth largest in the OPEC community. Since 1974, Nigeria has been one of the largest exporters of crude oil to the United States. For instance, one of the things that pre-occupied the interest of Vice President George Bush when he visited Nigeria in 1982 was how to secure Nigeria's oil supply. At the time, big American investors such as Exxon Mobil, Chevron, Harliburton, among others, had substantial capitals in the lucrative Nigerian oil industry which, along with other Western oil corporations, they dominated.¹⁴ Nigeria seemed to be well ready: it produced a form of oil (north sea Brent crude) ideal for the United States, had huge reserves, and had increased its production to 2.8 million barrels of crude oil a day, which a large chunk of it was exported to the US alone.¹⁵ Moreover, in 1991, Nigeria's export, valued to the USA was estimated at N31, 403 million and these exports were basically raw materials.¹⁶

Besides, the bilateral trade between the United States and Nigeria had increased reasonably over time. To consolidate their trade relations, Nigeria signed trade and investment framework agreement with the US on 16th February, 2000.¹⁷ This trade and investment treaty was aimed at opening an avenue for interactions on trade and investment between the two countries. More importantly, these agreements were signed to strengthen the spirit of cooperation between the economic operators of Nigeria and the U.S. In order to benefit from the agreement, the Nigeria-US Council on Trade and Investment was set up and inaugurated on June 26, 2000, for the purpose of encouraging the two countries to expand and diversify their trade and investments.¹⁸

Apart from bilateral trade relations, Nigeria is said to have made giant strides to attract direct capital investment of enormous degree and significance from the United States. To this end, private and public investments of the U.S. in Nigeria constituted the highest U.S. direct investment in sub-Saharan Africa. These U.S. direct investments, among others, included the Oso Condensate Project Agreement signed between the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), the World Bank, and the Bank of America in April 1991. This was the most significant U.S. investment in the Nigerian economy as at the time of this research, with a total value of about US\$1 billion.¹⁹

Other major investments were the agreements by Conoco Philips (an American oil giant) for a joint venture with four Nigerian companies for oil exploration, the building of a concentrate plant by the Coca-Cola Company and the arrangement by General Motors with the United African Company (UAC) of Nigeria for the production of trucks. More important was the agreement that was reached between the United States and Nigeria for

the U.S. to purchase one and half billion cubic metres of gas from the Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) industry.²⁰

Nigeria is also known to have received American support in its negotiation with the Paris and London Clubs of Creditors and some multilateral financial institutions. The U.S.A, on her own, cancelled Nigeria's Official Development Assistance (ODA) and Economic Support Fund (ESF) debts of Nigeria, amounting to N64.2 million in 1991.²¹

First Era, 1960-1967: The Period of Emerging Economic Alliance

Upon the attainment of independence in 1960, the Balewa administration in Nigeria pursued a relative open-door policy towards capitalist countries, while almost totally neglecting the communist bloc in the search for aid, investment and economic development.²² Moreover, 1961 was a landmark for the development of Nigeria-US economic relations. On December 12, 1961, for instance, President John F. Kennedy of the U.S.A pledged a long-term aid package of \$222 million for Nigeria. The aid offer was in support of Nigeria's first post-independence National Development Plan (1962-1968).²³ The economic purpose of this act had a particular significance. This was probably exemplified in the investment in the sub-sector in 1965 with about 90 American firms doing business in Nigeria with a good portion of the investment in the petroleum sector and textile industry.²⁴ Such miniscule bilateral trade relations between Nigeria and the US were the foundation block upon which a formidable trading relationship was built, which would later displace Britain.

In 1966, the US investment in Nigeria was worth about \$250-350 million, and also with foreign aid from the U.S. of about 80 million pounds (between 1962 and 1965) more than double that of Britain which was 30.19 million pounds in the same period, although Britain somewhat maintained its leading position in terms of investment this period.²⁵

The implementation of the aid offers, which proceeded somewhat, unevenly until the outbreak of the civil war in Nigeria in 1967, laid the foundation for the later expansion in Nigeria-U.S. economic relations. According to B. Ate,²⁶ the economic relation between Nigeria and the U.S. were catalysed by USAID projects in Nigeria, in the framework of the six-year development plan. The project, while serving as a momentum for increased trade ties, also provided the avenue for the great influx of American technical assistance personnel into Nigeria, as well as stimulating the interest of American companies concerning investment prospects in the country.

The pioneering and pivotal role of USAID and consequently of foreign aid in the development of the foundation of Nigeria-U.S. economic ties in the period accentuated

Nigeria-U.S. economic relations. By implication, by 1966, the U.S. had established an impressive and dominating presence in the Nigerian economic development, even when compared to Britain with its colonial advantage. Such visible and impressive economic presence was probably as a result of underlying ideological preference and prejudice in the Nigerian foreign policy which was pro-western, as well as capital and technical assistance.²⁷

Second Era, 1967-1970: The Nigerian-Biafran War Period

Regional antagonism and political jostling between northern and southern Nigeria plunged Nigeria into an acrimonious civil war which altered the social-political cum economic structure of the country, the outbreak of a civil war (1967-1970) which has since characterised the political history of Nigeria as well as constituted an early interface in the development of Nigeria-U.S. relations, generally.

Relations between Nigeria and the U.S. were said to have deteriorated during the period of the war. In economic sphere, particularly, the war interrupted what might have been a steady growth in the bilateral ties between the two countries. The breakdown of the relations was as a result of the U.S. refusal to honour General Yakubu Gowon's request for arms procurement from the country. The refusal probably might have been because the super-power (the U.S.) was not sure of how the war would progress and end, hoping to see the oil-rich Biafra prevail so as to advance her national interest in the region. Consequently, the attention of the Nigerian government was later turned to the Soviet Union for arms procurement and conversely, the United States, instead of obliging to Gowon's request was said to have given humanitarian assistance to Biafra. Thus, from 1966 to the 1970s, the United States was said to have provided more than \$100 million financial aid to provide relief materials to Biafra, in an attempt to eradicate small pox and control measles in Biafra,²⁸ even though the U.S. claimed to maintain neutrality in the war.

The stand of the U.S. in the war had some implications for Nigeria-U.S. relations in the post-civil era. According to M. Saidi,²⁹ it has been said that the American claim of neutrality in the war was to rekindle in Nigerian leaders the need to re-visit the age-old dictum that in the realm of Real Politik, "there is no permanent friend or a permanent enemy, but a permanent interest". So, at the end of the war in 1970, Nigeria was to diversify and normalise her spheres of influence, especially with the erstwhile Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, following what she had considered a betrayal from the US. This move also resulted in a re-affirmation of stronger attachment to the principles of non-

interference in the internal affairs of states, as well as non-alignment in Nigeria's external affairs.³⁰

Consequently, there was an abrupt decline in the economic ties between Nigeria and the United States in foreign trade, foreign investment and capital aid. According to Ate, the US total imports dropped from 16.2 per cent to 12.8 per cent in the first quarter of 1968. There were no new investments by American companies during the civil war period and the work of USAID virtually came to a standstill, yet sales of oil blossomed.³¹ However, while the political relations were becoming weaker, there was an increase in the U.S. demand for Nigeria's oil which generated over USS 9 billion in favour of Nigeria. Thus, aid which had been central to their relations was no longer necessary and was, therefore, dispensed with petrodollar.³²

Third Era, 1970-1983: The Period of Oil Boom

With the end of the Nigeria-Biafra war in 1970, Nigeria-U.S. relations soon returned to the pre-war status, as U.S. President Richard Nixon and State Department officials sent congratulatory message to General YakubuGowon for his magnanimity and peaceable approach to reconciliation and rehabilitation. Gowon's approach was said to have been likened to that of President Abraham Lincoln's at the end of the U.S. civil war.³³ The Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction was Lincoln's plan to re-integrate the Confederate states into the Union, granting presidential pardons to all southerners (except political leaders) who took oath of future allegiance to the Union.³⁴ As part of being re-admitted into the Union, states had to ratify the new amendments to the constitution. The Union did a lot to help the south during the reconstruction. They built roads, got farms running again, and built schools for the poor and black children. Eventually the economy of the south began to recover.³⁵

However, the “no victor, no vanquished” mantra of the Gowon regime after the war in 1970 seemed similar to that of Linclon, but could hardly be said to have realised the objective on ground in the war torn areas in the East Central State (the core Igbo speaking area) based on reconstruction and re-integration.³⁶ Subsequently, the Nigeria-US economic relations got to a more significant dimension in the 1970s when the world energy crises raised the bar for the price and importance of Nigeria's oil supplies to the United States.

With the increase in Nigeria's oil production over time, her popularity in world politics considerably increased. The period of the oil boom was thus said to have lifted Nigeria to an unprecedented height of financial independence as relates to the external economic and political interactions. For instance, the dynamics of the oil boom era was an upsurge in the global oil prices, whose trigger-factor was political, at the time, the western countries'

support for Israel in the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war triggered a coordinated supply embargo by the Middle East against the US and other countries, coupled with the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries' (OPEC) reduction of oil supply resulting, as it were, in an increase in oil prices. By December 1973, the price of oil had doubled over the October 1973 level. In fact, from the early 1973 to the early 1974, the price of imported crude oil had tripled from US\$3 to US\$10 per barrel. As a result, the oil-producing countries, including Nigeria, accumulated more foreign exchange from the oil exportation.³⁷

The Nigeria-U.S. economic relations at the time were thus characterised by facts which had some significance. The first fact was the United States' overtaking of Britain as the main recipient of Nigeria's export by 1973. Secondly, Nigeria's exports to the United States were dominated by crude oil. Relatively, Nigeria became the second most important supplier of crude oil to the US in a period of critical demand for oil in the international market. Consequently, there was an expansion of the US investment presence in the Nigerian economy. The investment was mainly in the oil sector by the American companies such as Exxon-Mobil, Gulf, Halliburton, and Conoco-Philips among others.³⁸

Fourth Era, 1983-1993: The Period of the Structural Adjustment Policy/Dependence

The immediate post-1980s oil glut ushered in a new trend in the economic relations between Nigeria and the U.S. The Nigerian economy had suffered a great setback as a result of the collapse of the international oil market of the early 1980s. This resulted in a drop in the foreign exchange earnings, thereby causing an adverse balance of payment.

This period, however, witnessed various measures by the Nigerian government to halt the rapid decline of the 1981 oil sales. In this regard, N. Ebomuche and A. Okezie³⁹ are of the opinion that government came up in April 1982 with the promulgation of the Economic Stabilisation Decree, containing very stringent exchange control measures and import restrictions to address the serious challenges of external imbalance caused by the fall in the foreign exchange, as well as appropriate monetary and fiscal policies (austerity measures) which were geared towards a reduction in aggregate demand in the economy in order to dampen the pressure on the balance of payment.⁴⁰

The ambivalence that marked Nigeria-US relations under Shagari and Buhari regimes was, however, put to an end upon General Ibrahim Babangida's emergence as the new Head of State on August 27, 1985. Under this new military regime, the relations between Nigeria and the United States became cordial and warm and included rather close

cooperation on economic and political matters, characterised by the open-door economic policy linked to the structural adjustment policy.

Furthermore, as Nigeria's dominant economic partner, the US was particularly relevant in the execution of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), hence the Nigerian government officials believed and acted on the assumption that the United States was the anchor of their negotiation with the international finance institutions as well as private creditors. Besides, Nigeria expected the United States to encourage its foreign creditors to negotiate a rescheduling of its huge debt in order to quickly restore the country's credit worthiness and allow the resumption of essential imports.⁴¹

With the dramatic fall in oil prices in early 1986, the new regime of Ibrahim Babangida moved away from austerity measures to adjustment measures. An ambitious structural adjustment was adopted in June 1986. The programme was supported by a debt re-scheduling and external financing package to provide new funds, involving commercial banks, and the Paris Club and other creditors. With the support of the U.S, the World Bank supported the Structural Adjustment Programme with a Trade Policy and Export Development Loan in the amount of \$452 million.⁴² Also, in June 1987, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a standby arrangement of SDR 650 million (about \$830 million) in support of the adjustment programme, although the Nigerian government declared its intention not to withdraw on the IMF standby.⁴³

The Nigerian programme had two component measures aimed at changing the structure of the economy and policies to support stabilisation. While there was a considerable interplay between the two, the focus of the structural adjustment was on the exchange rate and trade reforms, while monetary and physical policies were important instruments of stabilisation.⁴⁴

The adjustment strategy was based on that external financing that would permit Nigeria to run current account deficits and thereby achieve higher import levels and growth rates than would otherwise be possible. In the spirit of the Baker Plan then, the approach was to allow debts to increase, although at a slower rate than projected export growth, with result that credit-worthiness would be restored over time.⁴⁵ The strategy allowed Nigeria to avoid further expenditure controls that would otherwise have been needed for rapid restoration of credit-worthiness. On its part, the U.S. re-scheduled all of Nigeria's official debts at the instance of Nigeria. To be sure, the bilateral structure at this period was one of dominance on the part of the U.S. and dependence on the part Nigeria.

Fifth Era, 1993-1999: The Period of Embargo on Nigerian Oil

The period, 1993-1999, was characterised by a face-off in the relations between the two countries mainly due to the posture of the military administrations under General Sani Abacha, and General Abdulsalami Abubakar who ran the country from August 1998 when Abacha died to May 29, 1999, when the country transitioned to a democratic rule. The hostile relationship between the U.S and the Nigerian government was said to have been heightened by the prevarication on the part of the Babangida administration on the implementation of the transition to- civil-rule programme which climaxed with the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election result. Despite tremendous pressures from some external bodies, Gen. Babangida went ahead and installed an Interim National Government (ING), rather than hand over power to Chief M.K.O. Abiola, who was widely presumed to have won the 1993 presidential polls. The Interim National Government, headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan of the Yoruba ethnic stock, was short-lived and General Sani Abacha took over as the Head of State in November 1993.

Nonetheless, the period of the Abacha regime was described as the lowest point in Nigeria-United States relations. The exceedingly repressive nature of that regime, its allegedly abysmal record of corruption and looting as well as the generalised system of instability, human rights abuses and insecurity earned it and by implication, Nigeria, a pariah status in the comity of nations. At the height of this global negative perception of Nigeria, the regime sentenced to death by hanging, a poet and environmentalist, Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists. In the wake of this imbroglio, Nigeria's relations with the US and Britain soured considerably.⁴⁶

Following the compounded state of crisis of confidence in Nigeria in the mid-1990s, the US responded with series of sanctions on Nigeria: the United States reduced its diplomatic staff in Nigeria, and the Nigerian military attaché in Washington D.C. was expelled. In the commercial and economic realm, the United States curtailed direct commercial flights to Nigeria.⁴⁷

Also, the United States suspended some of its cultural and intellectual exchanges with Nigeria. Moreover, she and other nations imposed various sanctions on Nigeria, including restrictions on travels by government officials and their families; suspension of arms sales and military assistance. Additional sanctions were also imposed as a result of Nigeria's failure to gain full certification for its counter-narcotics efforts.⁴⁸ Though this affected Nigeria's status as a loan-seeking country, trade in oil between both countries continued to blossom.

A slack in the oil market further depressed export earnings in 1993. By 1995, an outpouring of international appeals for leniency failed to move Abacha, hence the Nigerian government appeared impervious to global censure, especially in the absence of measures toward an embargo on the country's oil. Few days after the execution of the Ogoni activists, Shell BP and a consortium of other investors concluded a \$3.8 billion deal to build a natural gas complex in the country.⁴⁹

In 1997, Nigeria made some little progress in polishing its much-tarnished international reputation to no avail. In 1998, following the demise of Abacha and the emergence of General Abdulsalami Abubakar, the US embargo on oil was lifted as Abubakar's government completed the transition programme, which ushered in the Obasanjo administration.

Following the inauguration of the Obasanjo civilian administration in May 1999, the face of Nigeria-U.S relations was to change and improve considerably. It has thus been said that the rising tempo of Nigeria-United States relations led to the establishment of the US-Nigeria Joint Economic Policy Council (JEPC) which was launched in Washington in 1999, as a framework to strengthen bilateral consultations on economic reform, debt relief, investment and aid.⁵⁰

Social Trends in Nigeria-U.S. Relations

Social relations between Nigeria and the United States of America have also recorded significant benefits ever since 1960. In retrospect, a good number of Nigerians were known to have obtained their formal education in the United States even before 1960. In fact, from the 1930s some Nigerian citizens, as pointed out elsewhere in this study, began to receive education from some universities and colleges in the U.S. Besides, as at 1992 there were over thirty thousand Nigerians schooling in the United States.⁵¹ Most of these Nigerians have since returned home to become political leaders, while others were engaged in other fields of endeavour, especially in the universities and industries.⁵²

Culturally, the Nigeria-US relations were predicated on the age-long cultural encounter and interactions between them over twenty million Negroes⁵³ that were incidentally sold into the United States during the era of the slave trade. However, this encounter is known to have enhanced the cultural relations between America and Africa in general, and Nigeria, in particular. On the other hand, a large number of African slaves destined to live, work, procreate and die in the Americas took their root from Nigeria through the Bights of Benin and Biafra. Nigeria and the United States have thus, over the years, aspired toward the ideals of multi-cultural and multi-ethnic democracy, and shared interest in the protection and promotion of human rights. The aspiration became evident in

the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which, inter-alia, provided for a system of government similar to the United States of America’s presidential system of government with bi-cameral legislature and the institutions checks and balances. The maintenance of American cultural and historical linkages with Nigeria, to a great extent, is known to lubricate the U.S.-Nigeria’s relations. As earlier stated in the study, a great number of Americans have traced their origins to Africa. Many of those African-Americans believed their origin to be in Nigeria.⁵⁴

Many Nigerians have also adopted the U.S. as their second home. An analysis of data from 2009-2013 reveals that the Nigerian diaspora in the United States to be approximately 376,000 individuals, counting migrants born in Nigeria and U.S. born individuals with at least one parent who was born in Nigeria.⁵⁵The size of the Nigeria-born population in the United States has grown from a small base since 1980, when an estimated 25,000 immigrants were U.S residents. As at 2013, Nigerian migrants accounted for about 0.6 per cent of the United States’ overall foreign-born population, about half of whom arrived before 2000.⁵⁶

The Nigeria diaspora were the best educated of the 15 groups in the Rockefeller Foundation Aspen Institute Diaspora Programme (RAD) analysis.⁵⁷ The Nigeria in Diaspora Organisation (NIDO), founded by diaspora members at the urging of Nigerian government, also has several chapters in the United States and collaborates closely with the Nigerian Embassy and other governmental structures. The table below may provide an illuminating guide to the reader:

Table 3 Characteristics of the Nigerian Diaspora in the United States, 2009-2013

	Nigerian Diaspora in the United States*	Total U.S. Population
Household Income		
Median Household Income	\$52,000	\$50,000
Average Household Size	3.0	2.5
Share of Households with High Incomes(\$90,000+)	25%	25%
Share of Households with very high Incomes (\$140,000+)	10%	10%
Employment		
Total population age 16 and older	262,000	239,386,000
Share in the Labor force	73%	64%
****that was employed	88%	91%

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*** that was in a professional occupation+	46%	31%
Educational Attainment **		
Total population age 25 and older	207,000	201,925,000
*** with less than high school education	3%	13%
*** with high school or some college education	31%	57%
*** with a bachelor's degree	37%	20%
*** with an advanced degree	29%	11%
Population Characteristics by Generation		
First- and Second-Generation Immigrant Population	376,000	73,140,000
First-generation immigrant population***	213,000	38,468,000
*** that was working age(18-64)	83%	81%
***that entered the United States before 2000	51%	64%
***Naturalized as U.S. citizens	52%	44%
Second-generation population****	163,000	34,672,000
*** that was under age 18	63%	46%
*** that was working age (18-64)	37%	43%
*** with only one parent from Nigeria	38%	

* Defined as all first and second generation Nigerians born in U.S.

** Highest level reported.

*** All individuals who report Nigeria as their place of birth, excluding U.S. births abroad.

**** All individuals who report having at least one parent born in Nigeria.

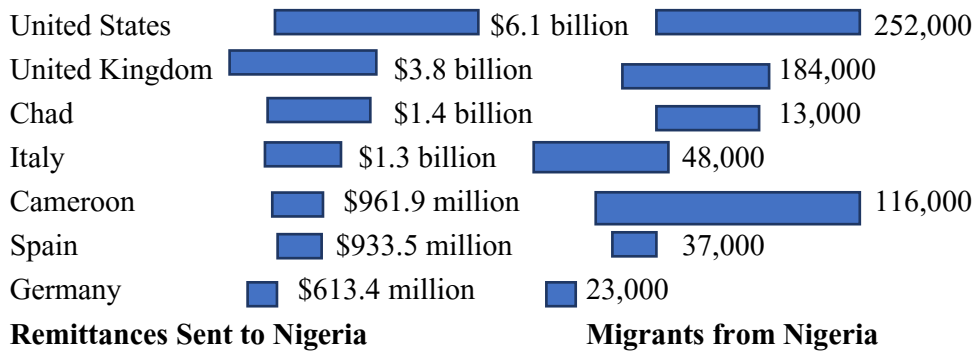
Note: Estimates are based on Migration Policy Institute analysis of U.S. Census Bureau CPS pooled 2009-2013 data.

Source: All Census Bureau data were accessed from Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS), <http://usa.ipums.org/usa/>. Accessed on.....

The U.S is the primary destination country for Nigerian-born international migrants and the top source of Nigeria's remittances. The Nigerian diaspora in the United States were known to transfer approximately \$6.1billion in remittances to Nigeria in 2012.⁵⁸ Nigeria's remittances totalled \$20.6 billion and represented 7.9 per cent of the country's \$262.2

billion gross domestic product (GDP) in 2012.⁵⁹ The table below helps the reader to understand the remittance of U.S Dollars by emigrant Nigerians from the U.S. in 2012.

Table 4 Remittance Inflows to Nigeria by Sending Country and the Nigerian Emigrant Population, 2012



Source: Migration Policy Institute Analysis of World Bank Prospects Group Tables for Annual remittance inflows and outflows (October 2013 update) and the 2012 Bilateral Remittance Matrix, the World Bank’s World Development Indicators and the United Nations Population Division’s Matrix of Total Migrant Stock by Origin and Destination (mid-2013)

It may be very important, at this point, to note that the United States needs Nigeria to achieve her objective in her campaign against international drug trafficking. However, it has been observed that the economic hardship in Nigeria, beginning in the 1980s, may have resulted in the emergence of a substantial drug-dependent culture and in the conversion of Nigerian borders into major routes for drug trafficking to the United States and other countries. In a Ph.D dissertation carried out at the Department of History and International Studies, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria, Dr. Felix U. Dike situates Nigeria as a hub and major route for trans-shipment of hard drugs to the U.S.A. In its 1997 report on inter-national drug trafficking, Dr. Dike argues, the U.S. State Department observed that Nigeria was the hub of African drug business and Nigerian multi-crime organisation continued to grow world-wide.⁶⁰ To this end, American agencies had at the time looked up to the Nigerian authorities to help combat the menace of drug trafficking in the country. Nevertheless, the Nigeria-U.S. cooperation on drug trafficking is said to go back to 1987 when the two countries signed a mutual law enforcement agreement which was followed by a special anti-drug Memorandum of Understanding.⁶¹

Political and Military Trends in Nigeria-U.S. Foreign Relations

Political stability and economic growth is very critical to achieving and sustaining an orderly development. Undoubtedly, Nigeria and the United States are strong partners in the fields of politics, security and economy. The United States is said to be Nigeria's important diplomatic partner and both countries have embassies and consulates in each other's territories.

Unfortunately, with the June 12 (1993) presidential election saga in which an internationally acclaimed free and fair election in Nigeria was annulled by the Babangida military regime, and its attendant human rights violations under General Sani Abacha, as well as the failure of the Nigerian authorities to embark on a smooth and meaningful democratic transition, the political relationship between Nigeria and the United States became sour, leading to the imposition of sanctions on Nigeria by the U.S government and other global bodies. However, with the death of General Abacha in June 1998, the two countries' strained relations were said to have begun to improve, especially with the emergence of General Abdulsalami Abubakar as Head of State.

More importantly, as 1999 ushered in a democratic rule in Nigeria, and the removal of visa restrictions, increased official visits of the U.S. representatives, dialogue in the areas of mutual assistance, and the grant of a Vital National Interest Certification on counter-narcotics, effective from March 1999 brought a new dawn in Nigeria-US diplomatic ties.⁶² After the inauguration of President Olusegun Obasanjo on May 29, 1999, the U.S.-Nigeria bilateral relations began to take a different shape, unlike what it had been during the Abacha military regime. Cooperation on many vital national interests such as national security, economic development, investment, regional peacekeeping, among other things, began to flourish.⁶³

It may appropriately be recalled as has been stated elsewhere in the study that the history of Nigeria's presidential system of government and the 1979 constitution would be incomplete without recourse to the United States of America. Clearly stated, Nigeria's presidential system of government, which was adopted in 1979, is a prototype of the United States system, which most of the then Nigerian elites found more credible and suitable for a heterogeneous country like Nigeria than the British parliamentary system.

To be sure, few foreign political actions are based entirely on goodwill; they are more often rooted in prudence and practicality. Although, promoting democracy may be a sufficient national interest of itself, such an idealistic perception is usually augmented by more concrete or material considerations. This may be true of the United States as may have been averred to by the then U.S. president, John F. Kennedy, to the effect that:

“every nation determines its policies in terms of its own national interests”.⁶⁴ The tradition of American foreign policy is usually to the effect that both moral idealism and self-interest are combined to make it more effective and dynamic. For example, during the Gulf War of 1990 up to 1991, the United States Secretary of State, James Baker, shuttled around the world soliciting for friends and allies against Iraq based on the moral principle of ending aggression and building a new world order, while at the same time telling the U.S. reporters that the conflict was more about jobs, probably because cheap Middle Eastern oil would stimulate U.S. economic growth.⁶⁵ In this sense, therefore, the primary national interest overtook the pursuit of moral ideals that the U.S. foreign policy claimed to stand for.

It is on record that the Nigerian government lent its strong diplomatic support to the U.S. government’s efforts to counter terrorism in the aftermath of the September 11(2001) attacks on the World Trade Centre. The Nigerian government, in its official statement, had condemned, in strongest terms, that terrorist act and supported military action against the Taliban and Al Qaida. Moreover, Nigeria became a frontline state in the anti-terrorism campaign among countries in sub-Saharan Africa.⁶⁶

Militarily, to restore the security deficiencies of Nigeria’s defence industry that had been weakened by the interplay of weak, inept and misguided policies, Nigeria was known to have sought the cooperation of the United States in 1999. This was made manifest in the training of the Nigerian military personnel in the United States. This development was, to a large extent, contributory to the transformation of Nigeria’s military and other security outfits. Also, to ensure that the Nigerian armed forces remained focused and dynamic against the emerging dangers in the contemporary global system, in the year 2000, about twenty Nigerian military officers were sent to the United States of America for training.⁶⁷

Moreover, between 2000 and 2015, successive Nigerian governments encouraged exchange of visits between the military ranks of the country and those of the United States for exchange of ideas and sharing of intelligence, especially on issues of regional security. We recall that in 1991, Sani Abacha as Nigeria’s Minister of Defence and Chief of Defence Staff, was on a visit to the United States of America at the invitation of General Collin Powell, Chairman of the U.S Joint Chief of Staff.⁶⁸ The possible reason for such a visit would probably have been to acquire firsthand information on military technology.

Furthermore, Nigeria was (and has remained) a beneficiary of the United States’ security grants. The country’s military relationship with the U.S. is said to have assumed an important dimension beginning from May 1999 when Nigeria’s fourth republic was inaugurated. It is thus estimated that over twenty million dollar grant was given to Nigeria by the U.S. government under the security cooperation agreement signed between the two

nations. In addition, another ten million dollars was to be given to Nigeria annually by the U.S government for two years under the Cooperation Assistance Agreement. In 2002 alone, Nigeria was known to have received seven hundred and fifty million dollars (\$750m) from the government of the United States, specifically meant for the training of the Nigerian soldiers, including an additional one million U.S dollars (\$1m) proposed to be approved by the United States Congress.⁶⁹

It would be appropriate, at this point, to clearly state that the Cooperation Assistance Agreement, which the U.S. initiated with Nigeria's return to democratic rule, was for the re-training and re-equipping the Nigerian armed forces for a robust peace-keeping operation. In the agreement, it was stated that Nigerian soldiers would be given advance infantry training in the United States Air Force schools and other specialised courses for military education, weapon maintenance and operation, as well as civilian-military relationship, according to Lieutenant Mark Ahles of the U.S. Defence Institute of Security Assistance Management.⁷⁰ What may be obvious from such capital investment was the possible capacity-building effect on the Nigerian military given the challenge that they have in the recent past faced as a result of insurgency upsurge in parts of the country. Such trainings would have undoubtedly equipped the military to contain such upsurge with a determined political will.

Summary and conclusion

This study has analysed the patterns and dynamics of Nigeria-US relations from 1960 to 2015 as it concerns the national interest of both countries. It also pointed the discourse arising from the issues raised in the study; it is possible to state that the research has been able to show the patterns and trends that have defined Nigeria's relationship with the U.S.A. between 1960 and 2015. It shows that political, social, and economic and security issues were responsible for the fluctuations that were observed in the bilateral relations. Although, the relationship was very strong at Nigeria's independence in 1960, the issues of colonialism, racism and, of course, the cold war itself, were to strain this bond in the 1960s and 1970s. Due to Washington's commitments to its European allies, and America's domestic politics over segregation, the country may have had to tread the path of caution over the issues of colonialism and racism. Put clearly, Washington may have shown some level of reluctance to condemn apartheid regime in South Africa. In conclusion therefore, the study is designed to ascertain the extent of the challenges that have characterised the many years of relations between the two countries

Recommendations

As Nigeria continues to pursue its transformation agenda, this research recommends that Nigeria should concentrate its foreign policy attention and resources on cultivating special bilateral relations with the U.S and other countries that are strategic to its development aspirations as an emerging industrial, political and regional power. Nigeria should therefore engage primarily in those relations that are potentially strategic to its national transformation.

In the globalised world of terror and insecurity, emphasis should be placed on curbing trans-border crimes that tend to infiltrate from neighbouring countries. By extension, this measure, if taken, would further reduce the rate of proliferation and smuggling of small arms and light weapons through porous borders between Nigeria and its neighbours.

As B. Ate has suggested, countries, (including Nigeria) should forge a special relationship, based on economic, democratic and security considerations. Nigeria's foreign policy- makers should, therefore, develop a programme of systematic exploitation of vital indices of relations with a strategic country and international institutions to advance Nigeria's economic agenda. These options should focus on a creative manipulation of channels of foreign direct investments, development assistance and trade all of which are of central importance to the U.S. in the global economy, politics and international security.

The Nigerian-U.S. partnership must be constructed and managed in strategic terms, on the broad model of U.S's relations with South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan after World War II. These countries achieved economic modernisation and growth due to the fact that United States invested in their security and created opportunities for them to adopt Western models for capital investments and skills acquisition for development.

It is further recommended that there is a need to strengthen the bilateral relations between Nigeria and the United States through regular diplomatic visits and discussions on issues of mutual benefits. The United States it is recommended should assist Nigeria in strengthening democratic institutions by combating corruption through building of strong institutions with the capacity to entrench the rule of law for providing a conducive environment for both local and international businesses to thrive.

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