Old Allies and New Friends in Nigeria’s External Relations

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Abstract: Nigeria’s external relations could be categorized into three eras viz, the colonial era, post-colonial period (when military rule dominated the political scene) and the period from 1999 to date, when democratic governance begins to take roots. During each era, the country’s external relations were premised on various factors, such as the form and structure of government, concurrent international political and economic dispensation, idiosyncrasies of the political class, and the economic prowess of the country at the material time. These patterns have determined the friends or allies or otherwise for Nigeria since the colonial times. In essence, the country has tended to develop closer relationships with one country than the other within the international system. In the light of the foregoing submissions, this paper examines the basic trends in Nigeria’s external relations and observes that such factors as inconsistent policies, undemocratic practices, mono-economy, and insecurity, among others have continued to affect Nigeria’s status among the comity of nations. While adopting a qualitative research methodology, the paper concludes that Nigeria needs to re-energize her national interests in order to gain her rightful place among the comity of nations.

Keywords: Allies, Alliance, Bilateralism, Multilateralism, National Interest

Introduction
Inter-state relations could be traced to the early times of political organization. Ever since the Treaty of Westphalia of the 17th century that berthed modern nation-state system, the practice of international relations has continued to evolve. This evolution, as correctly demonstrated by Palmer and Perkins (2004: 17), includes the growth of representative government, industrial and technological advancements that have continued to enhance the globalization process, population
increases, increased international economic interconnectedness, the evolution and development of international law, the growth of normative diplomatic practices, new dimensions in international conflict and conflict management, and a host of other international activities.

In summary, international relations encompass the political, economic, and socio-cultural interactions/affiliations among international actors (Adeniran, 1983: 11). These interactions have been dynamic over the centuries. In the same vein, Nigeria’s international relations have not been static. From the colonial to the post-colonial periods, the nature of the country’s international relations has continued to be dynamic based on her interactions with other countries of the world. The pace of the country’s international relations was specifically determined by the British during colonial rule, but at independence, Nigerian political leaders began to determine the foreign policy or external relations of the sovereign state. In order to examine the trends in the country’s external relations, this paper is structured into six sections—introduction, conceptual clarification, the country’s international relations during the colonial era and the period between 1960 and 1999, the period from 1999 to date and conclusion.

Conceptual Clarification: Allies, Bilateralism, and Multilateralism

The word “allies” is a derivative of the word “alliance”, which in the context of International Relations connotes the formulation of closer and enduring socio-economic and political affiliations, particularly among states, usually based on an agreement of mutual assistance or/benefits. Alliance formation is a common phenomenon of international relations throughout ages. Allies in international relations are therefore the actors that engage in alliance almost on a permanent basis. In the opinion of Liska (1968: 12), “alliance is a formal association between two or more states against the threat of a third”. Nigeria’s external relations since 1914 were no exception to the general practice of alliance formation because she has entered into different bilateral and multilateral alliances. However, the country has traditional allies and new friends within the international system. The traditional allies of the country are the states with which the country has continued to maintain closer and persistent relations for a very long period such as Britain and the United States.

Bilateralism is one of the major features of the international system. It is a form of political, economic, and socio-cultural collaborations between two sovereign states, in most cases for mutual interests. Usually, the recognition of the sovereignty and autonomy of a particular state guarantees the development of her diplomatic relations with other states. A cursory look at contemporary international relations would demonstrate that bilateral relations between states are dominated by economic relations. In the same vein, Nigeria had established diplomatic relations and had made economic and security agreements, treaties, and pacts with various nations across the globe on bilateral bases.

Multilateralism is one of the major instruments of international relations. It involves the establishment of diplomatic and economic interconnections among three or more sovereign states through consumption
of agreements and treaties. In modern multilateralism, institutional frameworks are established to guarantee the management and supervision of the objectives of the multinational agreements. Multinational organizations such as United Nations, World Trade Organization and others are the dominant of contemporary multilateralism. Nigeria has engaged in much multilateralism, particularly after independence, by belonging to such organizations as United Nations, African Union, ECOWAS and the Commonwealth of Nations.

**Nigeria’s External Relations during the Colonial Era**

Administratively, the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorates in 1914 was the precursor to what is now called Nigeria, the largest of all the countries that were so created by the colonialists (Crowder, 1968:118). Colonialism could simply be defined as the occupation and control of an area by a foreign power. Colonial rule reigned in Nigeria for a century beginning with the annexation of Lagos in 1961 till independence in 1960. During this period, the pace of the country’s external relations and foreign policies was solely the business of the colonial government. However, it must be stressed that economic interactions with Britain and some other countries had been established before colonial rule. Between 1850 and 1900, trade in agricultural produce, which was paramount to the industrial development in Europe dominated Nigeria’s external relations with Britain, France and Germany. During this period, there were no formal diplomatic relations with these countries, majorly because the various parts of the country were yet to be woven together as one nation.

Between 1900 and 1960, the socio-political and economic landscape of Nigeria was subjected to the British economic interests. Colonial economic policies were formulated to ensure that the country and its people were integrated into the British international economy. During this period, it was a master-servant relationship and the Nigeria’s human, natural, and mineral resources were maintained for the benefits of the colonial power, Britain. Nigeria thus existed as an appendage of the British government where an imbalance trade relationship was created with the entire capitalist world. This submission has been corroborated by Claude Ake (1981:52) who emphasizes that the colonial administration only promoted the cultivation and export of commodities that were only profitable to it.

Although it is not controvertible that Britain dominated the major space of Nigeria’s external relations during this period, other countries such as Germany, United States and Japan also had some stakes in the country’s external relations, particularly in the area of trade and commerce. For instance, Okuntola (2005: 19) asserts that some German trading firms were major buyers of the Nigerian firm. Ukaogo (2003: 361) also averred that a German company pioneered oil exploration in Lagos in 1908. However during the World Wars, Nigeria’s external economic relations with these countries took another dimension in order to protect the British economic interests. For example, all German trading firms were banned from trading with Nigeria. The aim of the British was to cripple the German economy;
this is without minding the effect on Nigeria’s economy. Apart from Germany, the United States also was active in economic interactions with Nigeria. Between 1922 and 1927, United States’ importations into Nigeria consistently increased and became more solidified after the Second World War (Okuntola: 2005).

Another country that also had a meaningful economic tie with Nigeria during the colonial era was Japan. Nigeria-Japan trade relations began as early as 1914 when it imported goods worth 131 pounds to Nigeria (Ogunremi, 2004: 8). Japan’s earliest exports consisted of almost wholly agricultural, fishing, and mineral products. As from 1920, textiles, boots and shoes dominated Japan’s importation to Nigeria. Although the economic relations between the two countries continued to increase during the colonial period, it must be noted that the trade relations was a one-sided situation. However, Nigeria-Japan trade relations had to be sacrificed for the expansion of British economy during the Great Depression. The Imperial Preference System thus imposed quota on Japanese textiles between 1932 and 1937. Import duties were also imposed on some other Japanese goods such as galvanized iron sheets, paints, shirts, and singlets to reduce their competitiveness with British manufactured items.

In a nutshell, the dimension of Nigeria’s external relations during the colonial period was majorly on economic activities. This was because the sole aim of colonial rule was economic exploitation (Olashore, 1991:5). Also, there was absence of political autonomy to establish formal socio-political and diplomatic relations with other countries except Britain.

### Nigeria’s International Friends and Allies, 1960 – 1999

By October 1960, Nigeria had become politically independent. The direction of the country’s international relations during the period after independence was influenced by such factors as the quest for a world free of colonization, the bipolarity of the international system, the Nigerian Civil War, military intervention in politics, the economic prowess of the country, the international economic relations, and other factors. Majorly, the external relations of the country were influenced by the foreign policy framework of successive administrations.

The foundation of the post-independence external relations of Nigeria was laid during the closing period of colonial rule under the supervision of the British. The Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa was reported to have articulated the decision of the country to maintain friendly ties with all nations across the globe and participate in the activities of the United Nations and the Commonwealth of Nations. Also, Nigeria decided not to form alliance with any power bloc and was a leading crusader of the non-alignment principle. Africa was projected as the fulcrum of Nigeria foreign policy and she was committed to the decolonization process and solving problems of African countries. Except for the Civil War and military interventions in the politics of the country, these factors dominated the direction of the country’s external relations.

Nigeria took some very decisive international relations stance during the early years of independence. Her
engagements in bilateral and multilateral relations were noticeable as she became member of such organizations as the United Nations, Organization of African Unity (now African Union), the Non-Alignment Movement, and others. She sustained relations with her colonial master by becoming a member of the Commonwealth of Nations. Also, she established some relations with the European Economic Commission. Also, Nigeria established correspondent diplomatic missions with various countries across the globe. However, it must be emphasized that her foreign relations during this early period was preponderantly pro-West.

In the realm of bilateral relations, Nigeria did not hesitate to break diplomatic ties with France in 1961 when France tested an atomic bomb in the Sahara Desert. The action was against the firm warning by Nigeria having observed that the test was going to be injurious to Nigeria and some other African countries. Thus, Nigeria imposed stern economic measures on France, first banning all ship movements of French origins from navigating the coastal areas of Nigeria. However, these stringent decisions were reversed because of the negative impacts on many neighbouring countries like Senegal, Togo, Benin and others which had massive economic dependencies on France. Also during this period, Nigeria maintained unfriendly posture towards Portugal because of her colonial activities in Angola. Nigeria led other African countries out of a General Assembly meeting of the United Nations because of this issue, until Portugal was asked to leave the meeting.

In the case of apartheid South Africa, Nigeria along with 25 other African states drafted and sponsored a strongly worded resolution which sort to impose sanctions on the apartheid regime but the Western Powers opposed this and supported a resolution that was weak and incapable of dismantling apartheid immediately. For Nigeria, the first step was for the apartheid government of South Africa to withdraw from the Commonwealth of Nations. In June 1961, the Nigerian Minister of Labour moved a resolution to compel South Africa to quit the ILO. The motion was carried and South Africa had to leave the ILO meeting. In order to quicken the dismantling of racism and colonialism in the continent, Nigeria also supported the South-Western African People Organization (SWAPO).

The Nigerian Civil War had a huge impact on the country’s external relations, particularly at that material time. As a result of the Civil War, Nigeria broke diplomatic relations with countries like Ivory Coast, Gabon, Tanzania, and Zambia. This was because all of these countries supported and recognized Biafra. President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia supported the Biafra because they had their own fundamental problems with Britain on the Rhodesia question. Both Gabon and Ivory Coast provided the channels through which French military assistance were supplied to Biafra. Though Britain maintained a pro-federal government posture during the period of hostilities, public opinions in England were anti-federal government. British support for the federal government was majorly influenced by factors such as her foreign investments in Nigeria,
particularly her economic interest in the Nigerian oil (William, 1978:39). However, it must be added that Britain displayed some questionable posture towards Nigeria during the War; example was its embargo on arms sales to Nigeria in 1968 (Aworawo: 2003). The United States maintained a pro-federal government posture, though she later raised alarm about genocide (Achebe: 2012). Though the United Nations espoused a neutral position during the war, its decision was in the long run pro-federal government.

As for France, it maintained the balance by supporting Biafra, relying on the logistics provided by both Ivory Coast and Gabon. However, it must be stated that despite her support for the Biafra, France did not pronounce a formal recognition for Biafra. French support for the Biafra is understandable; one Nigeria (because of her large size and economic potentials) remained a constraint to France political and economic dominance in West Africa. Secondly, the stringent policies that were imposed on France after the atomic test were regarded as an affront on French status as a Superpower. Portugal also supported the balkanization of Nigeria because she felt that this would diminish Nigeria’s influence in Africa and enhance her (Portugal’s) colonial interest on the continent. On the other hand, the Civil War consolidated the nascent external relations between Nigeria and the Soviet Union (William, 1978:36). This relationship was particularly engendered by the lackadaisical attitude of the “West” towards the federal government in the cause of the Civil War. In 1967, a “Cultural Cooperation Agreement” was signed between both countries. The Soviet Union did sold sophisticated military weapons and provided technical training to the Nigerian troops.

The Organization of African Unity (now African Union) supported the federal government. At a Conference in Kinshasa in 1967, the organization resolved that the territorial integrity of Nigeria remained sacrosanct and gave recognition to only the federal government. However, some neighbouring countries such as the Republic of Benin were used by pro-Biafra governments for the shipment of war implements. Nigeria was accused of neglecting her neighbouring states’ problems for more distant international issues like apartheid in South Africa. Arising from this, attempts were made to normalize relations with these states immediately after the war. Nigeria embarked on joint economic ventures with some of these states, especially Benin, Togo, and Serra Leone on bilateral basis, to improve her interstate relations with them. Nigeria’s road to economic buoyancy began close to the end of hostilities and this has a lot of influence on her external relations. The end of the Civil War was followed by a boom in the Nigerian Petroleum Industry (Fawole, 2003: 2). At that point, Nigeria emerged as the leading producer of petroleum in the African continent. The new economic status actually influenced the dimensions of Nigeria’s foreign relations. First, Nigeria became a member of OPEC, which paved way for cordial diplomatic and economic relations with member-countries. Also, Nigeria was able to severe diplomatic relations with Israel in 1973, when other African nations were still foot-dragging on Israel’s complexity in the murder of President Anwar Sadat of Egypt. The relation was
not restored until in the 1980’s. In addition, Nigeria was able to give a lump sum of N19 Million to the Commonwealth Technical Cooperation and also decided to pay salaries of Civil Servants in Grenada. These steps help to enhance Nigeria’s international image.

In 1975, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was formed to foster the inter-state economic relations across the West African sub-region. This sub-regional organization was supposed to become a melting point for development and Nigeria provided the most generous financial support, at a point paying about one-third of the annual budget of the organization. Apart from the pure economic consideration for the formation of ECOWAS, the forum was meant to provide a leeway for the eradication of the Anglophone/Francophone dichotomy in the West African sub-region, which underscored the political considerations for the formation (Edosie and Osagie, 1982: 41). In 1977, Nigeria hosted FESTAC 77, which made nations around the world begin to see Nigeria as an emerging force, both economically and politically. It was assumed that for a nation to have invested in such venture her economic prowess is not in doubt.

The increasing economic relations coupled with the decision to adopt the American model of presidential system of government promoted Nigeria’s diplomatic ties with the United States in the late 1970’s. The Nigerian Head of State at this period, Olusegun Obasanjo developed a personal relationship with President Jimmy Carter. An enduring economic and socio-political friendship was therefore promoted between both countries and gradually Nigeria and United States became a sort of allies. The dictum, “no permanent friend, but permanent interest” manifested in the Nigeria-British relations. The Liberation struggle and emancipation of Africa caused a great deal of dissatisfaction between Nigeria and her erstwhile colonial master, Britain and also the United States. The British refusal to co-operate with Nigeria and Africa in general on the Rhodesian issue affected relations between the two countries for almost a decade. The British intransigent in Southern Africa led to the introduction of the indigenization policy of 1976 by the Obasanjo regime. Through this policy, Britain lost two vital companies to the Nigerian government; Barclay Bank and African Petroleum (Aworawo: 2003).

By 1979, Nigeria had been integrated into the capitalist structure of the international economy. Her dependency on oil revenue was increasingly massive and her focus on agriculture was overturned. The glut of the early 1980sin the petroleum market led to a substantial decrease in revenue for the country which impacted her external relations. The dimension of the country’s external relations became nebulous during this period. On one hand, the country complained about the massive and illegal incursion of Ghanaians into her territory. On the other hand, she was committed to the emancipation of Southern Africa. Another good example was when Angola was raided in 1981; Nigeria and other African states sponsored a resolution condemning the raid on the floor of the United Nations General Assembly. The motion was carried but United States vetoed the resolution,
which earned the United States criticisms from many African States. But it must be stressed that economic cooperation and assistance from the United States was more paramount to Nigeria than the criticism. In 1982 the Nigeria Economy had been so battered to the extent that it took the intervention of Saudi Arabia and OPEC to put pressure on oil companies to keep buying Nigerian oil. As a result, stringent economic measures were introduced and many aliens from the member countries of ECOWAS were repatriated against ECOWAS principles. These have a lot of impact on Nigeria’s external relations.

The military coup of December 31, 1983 ushered in the regime of Major-General Muhammad Buhari. The administration made efforts to use foreign policy as an effective instrument for rebuilding the economy and address the issue of internal security. Unlike the Gowon and Obasanjo era, when Nigeria sacrificed some of her economic interests on the altar of African unity, solidarity and emancipation, it was clear in Buhari’s foreign policy posture that where the national interest of Nigeria conflicted with those of her neighbouring states in particular and Africa in general, there would be no automatic yielding to the later (Fawole: 2003).

Within the West African sub-region, the administration tried to maintain good neighbourliness through the principle of reciprocity. The administration entered into different bilateral dialogues with Benin, Cameroun, Chad and Niger. The essence was to assure these countries that the new administration was committed to a policy of good neighbourliness and expected that they would in turn assist Nigeria to cushion security threats, smuggling and other hostile activities. However, when nefarious criminal/economic activities were persistent at a magnitude that was crippling the country’s economy, the administration ordered the closure of its borders and ordered illegal aliens out of the country. These acts deepened the existing strained relationship between Nigeria and other ECOWAS states. Ghana, Senegal and Guinea expressed displeasure against this posture. Nigeria under Buhari did not make much impact on the South Africa situation. While other regime saw the issue of Liberation from the point of identifying with the oppressed black nations, Buhari saw it from the angle of national interest and security (Fawole, 2003: 36).

Nigeria’s external relations during the rule of General Ibrahim Babangida also were constrained by the terrible economic conditions which the country was facing until the beginning of the oil price windfall arising from the Gulf crisis. During this period, such ideas and multilateral diplomatic instruments as the Concert of Medium Powers, the Technical Aid Corps Scheme (TACS) and the controversial Black Bomb were conceived. For example, the Concert was to bring together medium powers such as Switzerland, Austria, Yugoslavia, Brazil, India, and Nigeria in a forum to promote greater international relations. Through the TACS, Nigeria was able to provide manpower to countries like Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and others (Obi and Okwecheme, 2000: 77). The programme boosted the bilateral relations between Nigeria and these countries; for example, it made for the
establishment of the Jamaican High Commission in Lagos (Bamgbose, 2007: 85). Also, Nigeria was able to enter into financial agreements with Benin, Britain, Japan, India, Iran, Australia, Ghana, Angola and others. In Africa, Nigeria maintained very active international relations as a “Big Brother”. For example, she mediated in the border disputes between Mali and Burkina Faso in 1986. Also in the same 1986, Nigeria and some other member states of the Commonwealth boycotted the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh, Scotland. This was as a result of the British opposition to sanctions against the apartheid regime in South Africa. The regime promoted good neighbourliness by re-opening the country’s land borders. In recognition of this brotherly decision, ECOWAS gave Nigeria its chairmanship position in three consecutive years. In 1986, Nigeria championed the idea for a Non-Aligned Fund to assist the Southern African states which had been victims of destabilization by racist government. Also, Nigeria established the Namibia Solidarity Fund in June 1989, which had the financial and material contributions of Nigerians worldwide. Also during this era, both General Joseph Garba and Chief Emeka Anyaoku were appointed President of the 44th Session of UN General Assembly and Secretary-General of Commonwealth respectively (Bamgbose, 2007: 87).
The annulment of June 12, 1993 presidential elections marked a watershed in the annals of the country’s foreign relations. Many of her allies and friends imposed a plethora of sanctions on the country. Her traditional allies like the United States and Great Britain severed relations with Nigeria because of the annulment. This phase in the development of the country’s external relations was compounded by the emergence of the General Sani Abacha regime, which engaged in human rights abuses on a massive scale, particularly the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the other eight Ogoni activists. Nigeria’s bilateral and multilateral relations suffered a setback. The Commonwealth of Nations suspended the country for two years, while Britain, United States, South Africa and all members of the European Union recalled their ambassadors from Nigeria (Ogaba, 1999: 67).
As a result of this international isolation, Nigeria began to develop closer ties with new friends such as Libya, Sudan, Gambia, Niger Republic, Iran, Iraq, Indonesia, North Korea, Malaysia, Turkey and China. General Abacha, while delivering an address at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), emphasized that the policy shift from the traditional allies was a move towards developing closer relations with nations across the world. Ogaba (1993: 73) reasons that this policy shift was a confirmation of Nigeria’s sovereignty in the international system. A prominent feature of this paradigm shift was the economic and political relations with China, which became more consolidated from this period onward. Areas of interconnections include oil production, railway development, seaports, mass-housing projects, and diplomatic collaborations. At the multilateral level, the Developing-8 (D-8) was formed to foster economic relations among member-states and counteract the activities of the G-7. Members of this body included Turkey, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia,
Malaysia, Iran, Egypt, and Nigeria (Ogaba, 1999: 68).

The sudden demise of Abacha marked another turning point in Nigeria’s international relations. The country was in need of some ventilation against the huge amount of sanctions that were imposed by the West. It also needed to get out of the diplomatic isolation to which the Abacha regime had been confined. As such, a substantial part of the General Abubakar regime, which succeeded it was devoted to improving the country’s battered image. General Abubakar engaged in many international trips to South Africa, France, United States, Britain and others in order to open the locked doors against the country. After a satisfactory transition programme to democracy, many countries (old friends and new allies) began to reestablish diplomatic ties with the country.

**Nigeria’s International Relations since 1999**

The military relinquished power to a democratically elected administration in May 1999. However, it must be emphasized that the change to democracy did not immediately translate to positive international inclinations towards the country. The new regime was expected to take the redemption crusade from where the General Abubakar administration stopped and ensure that Nigeria was re-integrated in the international system. It was this desire that culminated in the array of international trips during the first term of the Olusegun Obasanjo civilian administration. In order to achieve the re-integration, Nigeria opened new missions in Singapore, Mexico, Greece, Ukraine, Lebanon, Thailand, Turkey, and Bangladesh. Within a short space of time, the country’s international reputation was redeemed and her activeness in international engagements was immediately visible again. It should however be stressed that, as efforts were made to mend relations with her old allies, relations with the News Friends were also sustained.

As a result of her renewed international posture, Nigeria resumed her international activities. She was able to broker peace in distressed nations such as Sierra-Leone and Liberia. In 1999, President Obasanjo and Omar Bongo of Gabon launched the Gulf of Guinea Commission (CGC) on peace, stability and management of oil resources and to further economic integration. Members of the Commission were Angola, Cameroun, Congo Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Nigeria, and Sao Tome and Principe. The Gulf of Guinea is strategic in international relations because it harbours one of the biggest reserves of oil in the continent of Africa (Bamgbose, 2007: 146). Also, Nigeria entered into a bilateral treaty with Sao Tome and Principe in 2001. This treaty was a far-reaching cooperation between the two countries. It was aimed at promoting development and preventing conflict. Nigeria assisted Sao Tome and Principe to restore its ousted president in 2003. Also, when the government of President Kumba Yala of Guinea was toppled in 2003, Nigeria condemned the action as being completely against democracy. In Liberia, Nigeria was committed to ensuring peaceful atmosphere and deployed 2000 Nigerian Armies to Liberia. Nigeria also consolidated on Abacha regime’s negotiation and resolution of the conflict in Sudan. In Togo, Nigeria’s efforts at democratic transition after the demise of President
Gnassingbe Eyadema were significant. Also, Nigeria provided a huge financial assistance to the Republic of Niger, when the country was facing famine challenges in 2005. Again, Nigeria was very instrumental in the formation of New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and transformation of OAU to AU (Bamgbose, 2007: 147).

Nigeria’s relations with the United States were immediately regularized. Apart from the increase in the consumption of the Nigerian crude oil by the United States, the Open Skies Agreement was entered into with the United States. The essence was to enhance travel and trade, productivity, high quality job opportunities, and economic growth. Also, Nigeria was encouraged to tap into the AGOA policy of the US. However, it must be added that US-Nigeria relations had become tense at a point because of such issues as Nigeria’s stance against same-sex marriages/intercourse, US’s weak military assistance against Boko Haram, and US’s drastic withdrawals from purchase of Nigeria’s crude oil.

In the spirit of sportsmanship, Nigeria regularized its cordial relations with her traditional allies, particularly Britain. The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair visited Nigeria in 2002, to boost trade relations between the two countries. However, relations became a little frosty in 2005 when Britain pronounced a ban on Nigerian first timers between the ages of 18 and 30 from entering the United Kingdom. Nigeria and Britain signed NIGERSAT-2 on November 6, 2006. The bilateral agreement was with the British Satellite Specialist Survey Technology Limited (SSTL). The pact was to supply Nigeria with ground infrastructure to further establish a national indigenous space capability.

To her new friends, the democratic government also promoted bilateral and multilateral economic and diplomatic relations. International relations were developed with the Middle East and Asia. Relations between Nigeria and Iran became cordial and a Memoranda of Understanding were consummated between the two countries which focused on grants to Nigeria for a feasibility study on the establishment of a transformer-manufacturing plant, and on cooperation between the then National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) and the Iranian Power Company (Bamgbose, 2007: 148).

The bilateral relations with the People’s Republic of China became more concrete since the emergence of democracy in Nigeria. There were correspondent visitations between former Presidents Hu Jintao and Obasanjo, at which several agreements were signed on the areas of trade relations, railway assistance, financial grants, oil block grants, military cooperation and other bilateral relations. The Chinese private sector also had huge investment in various sectors of the Nigerian economy. During the period of insurgency in the oil-rich Niger Delta in the mid-2000’s, the Nigerian government developed military cooperation with China for supply of arms and training of personnel.

Nigerian-German trade relations dated back to the colonial period as was illustrated in the third section of this paper. German products have been part of the Nigerian life before and since independence. The relations have increased since 1999; German Private Sector is heavily represented in the Nigeria economy judging by the fact that they are one of the most important trading partners of Nigeria particularly
in the areas of construction and automobiles. As part of efforts to consolidate these economic ties, the Jonathan administration partnered with the German Government to boost industrial skills development and improve access to finance for the Small and Medium Scale Enterprises across the country. Also, leading German companies like Julius Berger, a giant construction company in Nigeria, have added to economic relations between the two countries (Bamgbose, 2007: 146).

Mention must be made of the economic relations with Japan which had also existed since the colonial era. A formal diplomatic tie between the two countries began in 1964 with the establishment of the Japanese embassy in Lagos. Since this time, bilateral co-operations have been growing steadily until the 1990s when there was a downturn in the trade and commercial exchanges between Nigeria and Japan. Democracy and the economic reforms in the financial and investment sectors have recently led to an upsurge in the number of Japanese businessmen in the Nigeria. This is manifested in the pattern of the balance of trade which tilted towards Nigeria between 2002 and 2006 especially with the increase in the purchase of Nigeria’s crude oil and petroleum products by Japan. Nigeria and Japan also collaborated in the area of educational development through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which had sponsored educational exchange programmes, build schools and offer grants to scholars for specific studies in Japan. JICA also assisted Nigeria in the area of rural electrification and agricultural projects, such as rice production and milling in Edo and Imo States. In addition, Marubeni Corporation of Japan is involved in the development of the country’s energy sector. The corporation rehabilitated the Egbin Thermal Station in Ikorodu, Lagos. Other companies like Mitsubishi Company of Japan are also involved in power projects in Nigeria (Bamgbose, 2007: 149).

Conclusion
Nigeria has interacted with many countries of the world on bilateral and/or multilateral basis. These interactions have been in the areas of trade and economic relations, security and alliance formations, diplomatic and political collaborations, and socio-cultural interconnections. The country’s traditional allies outside Africa have been the United Kingdom, the United States, and member-countries of the European Union. But as a result of diplomatic isolation at some points, Nigeria made new allies and developed relations with them. These include China, Malaysia, Indonesia and some mid-east countries. Such factors as immense natural resources deposit, a rich cultural diversity, foreign direct investment opportunities, and population strength encouraged a fair number of countries around the world to move into bilateral relationships with Nigeria. Furtherance to this, the number of diplomatic missions of Nigeria, popularly acclaimed as the “giant of Africa” and “the most populous country in Africa” increased geometrically. However, it is observed that the country’s external relations have been influenced in some ways by the dictum of “no permanent friend, but permanent interest”. This is to illustrate that the template of the country has kept changing according to the dictates of her national interest.
In her century-long external relations, some factors have affected her status in the international system. One of these is over-reliance on one source of revenue - oil. This has continued to dictate the direction of her foreign relations because she has been friendlier with top buyers of her crude oil and countries that have huge foreign direct investment with her. Sometimes, her interests had been sacrificed on the altar of maintaining relations with these economic allies. Internal insecurity such as incessant religious violence, terrorism and insurgency have also been determinants of the country’s international economic and political relations. In the face of these security challenges, the drive for foreign investment has been affected. Also the bid by the country to procure armaments and military support to cushion security challenges has really affected her relations with allies. The United States has drastically reduced her purchase of Nigerian crude oil, while South Africa once accused Nigeria of shady financial practices in the purchase of arms to counter terrorist acts. These positions have had negative impact on the country’s international image.

The issues of corruption and human rights abuses have been constraints to the place of the country in the international arena. The country has been rated low within the comity of nations because of these practices and these practices scare away genuine investors from Nigeria. A good example of this was during the era of the Abacha regime, which was notorious for gross human right abuses. For Nigeria to manifest her true status in the international system she must be able to harness her numerous potentials for sustainable development and stability. It is believed that no country would be able to call the shot in international relations without a solid national economy which must also be diversified. Apart from this, the foreign policy of the country must be definite and proactive enough to enhance her status within the globe. Contemporary international relations demand normative democratic practices for recognition in the global system. Nigeria needs to augment her democratic practices in order to boost her image within the comity of nations. This should be done is without compromising her sovereignty and potentials as a regional political and economic power.

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