GULLIVER’S TROUBLES
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Nigeria’s Foreign Policy after the Cold War

Edited by
Adekeye Adebajo and
Abdul Raufu Mustapha
Dedication

We dedicate this book to Anthony Kirk-Greene (a.k.a. Mutumun Kirki) and Gavin Williams (a.k.a Egbon n'Ibadan), two life-long scholars of Nigeria who have taught many generations of Nigerianists at Oxford, including eight of the contributors to this volume.
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Foreword

On 3 June 1975, I bade farewell to the Nigerian government after attending my last Cabinet meeting as Minister of Economic Development and Reconstruction, and took off to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to assume my new duties as the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations – four months after I was appointed to the post by Kurt Waldheim, the UN Secretary-General at the time. On 29 July 1975, a coup d’état was staged against General Yakubu Gowon’s government and General Murtala Mohammed – who had been Minister of Communications – became the Head of State of Nigeria, with General Olusegun Obasanjo, his Minister of Works, as the Chief of Staff and deputy head of state. I was promptly recalled to Nigeria and offered the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs.

One of the reasons given for the coup d’état was the lack of direction in Nigeria’s foreign policy. General Gowon, who had ruled the country for nine years since July 1966, was accused of personalising Nigeria’s diplomacy. General Mohammed therefore requested that I bring a new direction to Nigeria’s foreign policy, especially its policy in Africa. But I declined the offer, partly because I had just assumed a new responsibility after four months of delay and partly – and most importantly – because I had been in the Gowon government, as indeed had Mohammed and Obasanjo. But unlike them and other coup plotters, I did not think this was the right way to bring down the man who had led the country so meritoriously, and whose statesmanship had led Nigeria out of the bitterness and agonies of its post-civil war years. I realised that the military are amoral, but as a civilian, I had no alternative but to put morality and integrity above everything else.

However, the new head of state persisted. After several hours of argument and counter-argument, a compromise was reached, and it was agreed that I should join the government after one year. But in the meantime, it was suggested that I should head a Special Review Panel (later known as the Adedeji Panel), whose wide-ranging terms of reference included redrawing Nigeria’s foreign policy priorities and objectives, and restructuring and reorganising the entire Foreign Service machinery so as to enable the government and its Ministry of Foreign Affairs to meet effectively
and efficiently the challenges posed by the emerging activist foreign policy paradigm which the Panel advocated in its report.

Since 1975–76 (the period of the Panel), the world has gone through a series of major transformations. Particularly since the last decade of the last century and of the millennium, the world has witnessed an unparalleled interconnectedness between societies and among states following the end of the Cold War: the period that is the major focus of this book. This has brought about a fundamental shift in international relations as nations have become tied together ever more closely, through communications, trade, financial flows, socio-cultural fusion, political linkages and, above all, a technological explosion that has shrunk distances among nations and people. This revolution, which began in the 1990s, has given renewed meaning and significance to the assertion of John Donne, an English poet who wrote in 1623 that ‘no man is an island, entire to itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main’.

To what extent has Nigeria’s foreign policy been transformed by these defining global changes? How much rethinking has taken place in the corridors of power and among policy analysts? No doubt the setting up of another Special Review Panel is long overdue. If this volume can contribute towards attaining this goal, it would have contributed immensely to the development of a Nigerian foreign policy architecture capable of meeting the challenges posed by contemporary international realities.

These global changes, far-reaching as they have been, are also marked by five paradoxes. First is a tide of fierce nationalism and ethnicism, with the cohesion of states being threatened by brutal ethnic, religious, social, economic, cultural and linguistic divides. Thus, in spite of the sweeping changes brought about by the institutionalisation of the twin processes of globalisation – the universalisation of particularism, and the particularisation of universalism – centrifugal forces have been unleashed.

Second is the re-emergence of regionalism, which has further compounded the already complicated global situation. Multilateralism, having been considerably weakened by globalisation, regionalism has been revived in the hope that it might constitute the basis for an improved multilateral system. Little wonder that J. Naisbitt has urged that the New Age mantra should be ‘Think locally, act globally. Think tribally, act universally.’

The shift in the focus of foreign policy – from multilateral negotiations on development issues to a focus on the interference in the domestic policies and actions of developing countries – is the third fundamental change brought about by globalisation. International actions specifically aimed at the global environment for development, such as weakness in commodity markets, preferential tariffs for exports from developing countries, transfer of technology, measures to counter instability, aid on concessional terms and debt reduction and cancellation, to mention only a few, have virtually disappeared from the agenda. So also has North–
South dialogue ceased to exist. Globalisation has thus effectively put paid to the concept of international development co-operation.

The fourth paradox is a fundamental shift in aid policy. Aid resources have become focused primarily on addressing cross-border problems that are of direct concern to the donor countries, rather than for financing purely national projects and programmes in developing countries.

Finally, democracy has become universalised and mandatory for the legitimacy of every state and in order to qualify for donor support. The institution of multiparty systems and the holding of periodic elections on the basis of universal adult suffrage now constitute democracy-and-good-governance conditionality. This was how democracy in Africa came to be categorised as ‘donor democracy’: just enough fair voting and respect for human rights to satisfy the donor community.

The cumulative impact of these paradoxes is that the benefits of this new era of globalisation have bypassed most developing countries, which are mainly in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Central America. Besides, many of the widely acclaimed benefits of globalisation, such as more intensive and extensive integration of the global economy, increased international trade and a rapid increase in the flow of capital and foreign direct investment, are counterbalanced by loss of policy autonomy and the intensification of the marginalisation process. And although the world has been transformed into a global village, not everyone qualifies for citizenship.

Without doubt, Nigeria needs most urgently a new foreign policy architecture, both for intra-African as well as for global relations, which will enable it to face the challenges posed by these five paradoxes of globalisation. Such an architecture must, of course, be based on the country’s national interest. This book represents a kick-start to the efforts to build it.

_Adebayo Adedeji, CFR_

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_Ijebu Ode, Nigeria_

_February 2008_
Acknowledgements

The editors would like to thank all the authors of this five-year project. They have shown incredible patience and dedication in revising and updating their chapters, as well as an impressive commitment to academic quality and policy relevance. The Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR) in Cape Town, South Africa, as part of continuing efforts to disseminate Pan-African perspectives on Africa’s international relations, is truly honoured to partner with Oxford University’s Centre for International Studies (CIS) in the Department of Politics and International Relations, in bringing out this volume. We would like to thank our colleagues at these two institutions for their unflinching support and professionalism, which ensured the success of this project.

The project was largely funded by Oxford University’s Centre for International Studies, drawing on a grant from the MacArthur Foundation. CCR would also like to express our profound gratitude to the funders of its Africa Programme who supported this project: the governments of Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Finland; the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID); and the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC).

We are grateful to the former Director of Oxford University’s Centre for International Studies, Professor Yuen Foong Khong, for having faith in the project and for his constant encouragement and enthusiasm. We are grateful to the current Director of CIS, Professor Andrew Hurrell, who continued the tradition of warm and generous support established by Yuen. Additional financial support for the project was provided by the African Studies Centre, St. Antony’s College, University of Oxford, while administrative support was generously provided by Oxford’s Queen Elizabeth House. We are grateful to both institutions. We would also like to extend our enormous gratitude to Julia Knight, Wendy Grist and Maria Kujic at Queen Elizabeth House for their contributions to the project.

The editors would also like to thank our copyeditor, the formidable Helen Moffett, without whom this project could not have been delivered with a world-class quality and efficiency that is extremely rare. We also thank her co-copyeditors, the two Davids – Le Page and Buchanan – and Rodney Moffett. We thank Glenn Cowley and his colleagues at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Press for their professionalism. The editors are also grateful to Arthur Attwell and his colleagues at Electric Book Works.
for yet again meeting an impossible production deadline. At CCR, Dawn Alley, Elizabeth Myburgh, and Selma Walters provided important editorial, research and/or organisational support. CCR’s finance and communications team also contributed tremendously to this project.

Sadly, one of our authors, Jean-François Médard, died in 2005 before the completion of the project. His immense contributions to African studies will be fondly remembered, and his updated chapter in this volume is apt testament to his dedication and quality. The project was greatly enriched by the contributions of many eminent scholars and diplomats. In particular, we would like to thank Dr Christopher Kolade, former Nigerian High Commissioner to London; Mallam Haroun Al-Rashid Adamu, a prominent Nigerian journalist and publisher; Mr Allison Ayida, former Secretary to the Federal Government of Nigeria; the late Professor Elliot Skinner, former American Ambassador to Burkina Faso; Professor Joy Ogwu, former Foreign Minister of Nigeria and current Permanent Representative at the UN; Ambassador Ayo Oke, Head of the Africa Section at the Commonwealth Secretariat in London; and Professor Attahiru Jega, Vice-Chancellor, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria. Last but not least, we would like to thank our families and friends for their consistent support and understanding as we completed this project.

Adekeye Adebajo and Abdul Raufu Mustapha
PART I

Introduction
Hegemony on a shoestring

Nigeria’s post-Cold War foreign policy

ADEKEYE ADEBAJO

‘No country that is confronted with a long period of political instability, economic stagnation, and regression, and is reputed to be one of the most corrupt societies in the world, has a moral basis to lead others. If it tries to, it will be resisted.’ Adebayo Adedeji, Nigeria’s Minister of Economic Development and Reconstruction, 1972–75

Adebayo Adedeji is one of Nigeria’s most respected public servants, one-time cabinet minister, author of a landmark report on reviewing Nigeria’s foreign policy in 1976, and executive secretary of the United Nations (UN) Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) between 1975 and 1991. His statement above sums up the challenges for Nigeria that have so far prevented the country from playing an effective leadership role in the post-Cold War era.

Following one civil war, seven military regimes, and three failed democratic experiments, many observers – drawing inspiration from Nigeria’s foremost contemporary griot, Chinua Achebe – have noted that the country, from the ravaged mangrove swamps of the oil-producing Niger Delta to the religious ferment of the powerful North through the conflict-ridden Middle Belt to the bustling cities of the volatile South, is ‘no longer at ease’, and have wondered whether things could ‘fall apart.’

The British author and clergyman, Jonathan Swift, wrote his classic *Gulliver’s Travels* – from which this book borrows its title – in 1726, as a satire of human frailty as well as his own era, in which Whig politicians were persecuting their Tory
opponents. As part of Gulliver’s travels, he encounters tiny creatures in the land of Lilliput who end up behaving in a treacherous and cruel manner, tying up Gulliver, who appears to be a giant in comparison to them.4

Nigeria, the most populous country and one of the most powerful states in Africa, is a Gulliver; and the Lilliputians have been Nigeria’s leaders, whose petty ambitions and often inhumane greed – like the creatures in Swift’s tale – have prevented a country of enormous potential from fulfilling its leadership aspirations and development potential. As Kenyan scholar Ali Mazrui noted in 2001: ‘The giant of Africa was in danger of becoming the midget of the world. Africa’s Gulliver faced the threat of becoming the Lilliput of the globe.5

Over its nearly 50 years of independence, Nigeria has been reduced to a giant with clay feet. It is a colossal collection of impoverished masses, a crumbling Tower of Babel built on the rickety foundations of oil rents collected and squandered by its leaders. In spite of its enormous oil wealth – it is the world’s sixth largest producer – Nigeria remains a largely poor country. Over 70 per cent of its population still live on less than $1 a day, life expectancy is at an abysmal 47 years, and the country ranked 159 out of 177 states on the UN Human Development Index in 2006.6 Nigeria’s crumbling infrastructure and many of its corrupt and visionless leaders have failed spectacularly to diversify its economy to reduce its huge dependence on oil, which still accounts for over 95 per cent of foreign exchange earnings.

The country’s leaders have clearly lacked a sense of noblesse oblige (the obligations of rank). An estimated $380 billion of the country’s oil wealth was stolen by its post-independence leaders: about two-thirds of all economic aid given to Africa during this period.7 The government of General Ibrahim Babangida (1985–93) was unable to account for $12.4 billion of missing oil revenues that were part of a windfall from the Gulf War of 1991.8 The family of General Sani Abacha (1993–8) had to return $700 million (out of a reported $3 billion) in looted money after his death in June 1998. Despite allegedly spending more than $2 billion in reconstructing roads and over one trillion naira on the power sector,9 the civilian regime of an erstwhile military leader, Olusegun Obasanjo (1999–2007), failed to revive the country’s dilapidated infrastructure and electricity sector, and the country’s oil refineries were producing less when he left office in 2007 than when he was first elected in 1999.10

The Obasanjo regime also announced that it had lost $4 billion in potential oil revenues in 2006 to insecurity and the damage of pipelines by armed militants in Nigeria’s volatile south-east Niger Delta region.11 As Adigun Agbaje, Adeolu Akande and Jide Ojo eloquently noted: ‘Nigeria is a resource-rich country of poor people in which pathological substance often triumphs over sanitised form; institutional recession masquerades as institution building; endless new constitutions parade as substitutes for constitutionalism; and . . . performance is often in direct contrast to fervent declarations of intent and achievement.’12
This introduction will assess the legacy of Obasanjo between 1999 and 2007, before briefly outlining Nigeria's foreign policy since its independence in 1960. We then examine the idea of a Pax Nigeriana as a way of understanding Nigeria's historical leadership ambitions in Africa. The concept of ‘concentric circles’ is thereafter used to assess the domestic, regional and external influences on Nigeria's foreign policy, while at the same time providing a synopsis of the main arguments in the fourteen remaining chapters of this book. We go on to examine the significantly under-researched area of culture and foreign policy, before making brief policy recommendations to guide future foreign policy. This introduction concludes by describing our methodological approach and the academic and policy contributions of this book.

OBASANJO'S LEGACY: DEUS EX MACHINA?

In April 2007, Nigeria staged what was widely believed to be the most flawed and fraudulent elections in its 47-year history. The country's own 50,000-strong independent election observers, the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), described the process as a 'sham' and a 'charade', while Nigeria's ThisDay newspaper labelled the poll a 'rigging and killing extravaganza'. Groups like the Nigerian Bar Association, the Nigerian Labour Congress, the Nigerian Union of Journalists, and the Academic Staff Union of Universities also criticised the elections. Ballot boxes were stuffed and stolen, voters intimidated, and results appeared out of thin air in areas where voting had clearly not taken place, particularly in the Niger Delta. In May 2007, Obasanjo, the now septuagenarian leader of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), handed over a poisoned presidential chalice to Umaru Yar'Adua – governor of the Northern Katsina state and the first university graduate to rule the country – after an overwhelming 70 per cent victory (and the award to the PDP of 28 out of 36 state governorships) that many believed to have been achieved through fraudulent means. Several offices of Nigeria's Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) were burned down and an estimated 200 people died in election-related violence, mostly in the north of the country. The European Union noted that the election 'cannot be considered to have been credible' and issued its most damning report since it started observing polls. Other international observers also cast doubts on the transparency of the process. Yar'Adua, describing himself to Nigerians as a 'servant-leader', promised to make electoral reform a priority and to avoid a repeat in the elections of 2011. Election tribunals also overturned the results of six governors and more than a dozen senators by January 2008.

Despite this flawed fin de régime, Obasanjo's tenure was not without some achievements. Early in his rule, he correctly identified Nigeria's debt issue as an obstacle to sustainable development. He travelled tirelessly to Western capitals in a bid to secure the annulment of the country's $30 billion external debt.
his able and forceful finance minister between 2003 and 2006, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, he was able to negotiate a deal that effectively wiped out Nigeria’s entire $30 billion external debt by paying $12.4 billion and having $17.6 billion annulled – the largest such financial deal in sub-Saharan Africa. Obasanjo’s regime stemmed inflation at 10.9 per cent in 2006; achieved 5–6 per cent growth rates; stabilised the naira (the national currency); improved the country’s credit rating to increase investment; and built up foreign exchange reserves which stood at $48 billion in April 2007. Widely praised bank reforms by Charles Soludo, the energetic governor of Nigeria’s Central Bank, brought some stability to the sector, reducing the number of banks from 89 in June 2004 to 25 by January 2006.

Obasanjo’s Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), led by the fearless Nuhu Ribadu, recovered over $5 billion in stolen assets and prosecuted 82 corrupt businessmen and policemen. In unprecedented moves in 2005, Tofa Balogun, Nigeria’s Inspector-General of Police, was convicted of corruption and jailed; Fabian Osuji, education minister, and Mobolaji Osomo, housing and urban development minister, were also fired for respectively bribing legislators to pass a budget and selling government properties (including to close relatives of Obasanjo’s wife). Investment banks like JP Morgan, Citibank, Deutsche Bank and Standard Bank also increased their presence in Nigeria, while $1 billion of portfolio inflows entered Nigeria in the first half of 2006 alone.

Obasanjo’s regime was credited with improving the telecommunication sector, increasing telephone lines from 400,000 to 40 million in six years. This period also saw the establishment of a parastatal for Diaspora Affairs to enable a group of Nigerians estimated at 17 million to contribute to the country’s development. According to Nigeria’s government, in the first six months of 2007, Nigerians in the diaspora sent home an estimated $8 billion in remittances.

But Okonjo-Iweala was dismissed by Obasanjo as finance minister (and resigned after a brief stint as foreign minister) in 2006, and the EFCC was accused of manipulation by Obasanjo to target his political opponents in a selective manner. Obasanjo’s unsuccessful and undignified attempt to change the Nigerian constitution in April 2006 to allow him to run for a third presidential term badly damaged his democratic credentials. He reportedly offered bribes of $400,000 to senators and representatives; had armed police break up a meeting in Abuja of legislators and governors opposed to a third term; and threatened state governors who failed to support his bid with impeachment. Obasanjo’s anti-corruption drive was often undermined by accusations of bribing legislators. The former military general, who had carved out a role as an elder statesman after relinquishing power in 1979, had already revealed his anti-democratic colours in 1989 when he said: ‘My present suggestion that we adopt a one-party system is very much in consonance with a possible and logical outcome of our political development.’ Obasanjo’s legacy was also tarnished by an ugly spat with his vice-president, Atiku Abubakar, which saw
both men accusing each other of corruption relating to the government’s Petroleum Technology Trust,\(^26\) while Obasanjo attempted, through dubious means, to exclude Atiku from contesting presidential elections in 2007. Nigeria’s president attempted to use the EFCC to prevent Atiku from contesting the race on grounds of corruption, declaring a public holiday to delay the seating of the country’s Supreme Court. (Nigeria’s Supreme Court eventually ruled that Atiku could run for the presidency barely a week before the polls.)

Obasanjo’s legacy must be assessed against the background of the serious socio-economic difficulties inherited from four years of the profligate Second Republic between 1979 and 1983, which was followed by sixteen years of military misrule under Generals Muhammad Buhari, Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha between 1983 and 1999. Obasanjo, a former military leader and respected international statesman who had handed power back to civilians in 1979, had seemingly emerged from prison as a *deus ex machina*. He was to be a bridge between the military and civilians and between the North and South, a new broom who would sweep out the corruption and abuses of military brass hats who had lost any sense of purpose beyond plundering the national treasury and brutally pummelling innocent citizens into submission.

At the beginning of his presidential term in 1999, Obasanjo inherited a plethora of conflicts: Ogonis against Andonis, Ijaws against Itsekiris, Tivs against Jukuns, Chambas against Kutebs, Katafs against Hausas, Yorubas against Hausas, Hausas against Igbos, Ife against Modakeke, Omulgriso against Agolugri.\(^27\) Some of these conflicts continued under Obasanjo’s rule, leading to an estimated 12 000 deaths from violence related to religious and ethnic feuds. Nigeria’s ‘imagined communities’\(^28\) developed their own differing interpretations of the same history and proceeded to defend these interpretations on the basis of birthright and blood. Though these conflicts over land, religion, resources and chieftaincy titles mostly had local roots, opportunistic political leaders exploited them for their own parochial ends, realising how easy it was to add fuel to the smouldering flames of local brushfires.

Nigeria’s economic problems also prompted many of its citizens to turn to religion for succour. The popularity of both Islamic and Christian fundamentalist groups increased, even as wealthy and ostentatious preachers played on the gullibility of their desperate flocks. Under Obasanjo’s rule, religion was turned into a political weapon, particularly as prominent members of an insecure Northern Nigerian political class (including former heads of state Shehu Shagari and Muhammad Buhari), whose members had long ruled the country, reacted to the election of a Southern president in 1999 by supporting calls for *Sharia* criminal law in the North. These actions had dangerous historical antecedents in Nigeria: during debates in the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) in 1978, most Northern delegates walked out over the issue of a federal *Sharia* court of appeal.\(^29\) In 1986, the government of General Ibrahim Babangida appeared to alter Nigeria’s
participation in the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) from observer status to full membership. This led to loud criticisms in the largely Christian South about preserving Nigeria’s secular status.30 (See Fawole in this volume.) During Obasanjo’s first term in office between 1999 and 2003, a dozen states in northern Nigeria (containing about a third of Nigeria’s population) declared themselves in favour of the constitutionally questionable application of Sharia criminal law. In a situation repeated sporadically between 1999 and 2007, communal riots between Muslims and Christians in Kaduna in 2000 led to hundreds of fatalities, while Plateau state experienced similar clashes in 2004.31

Northern and Southern politicians both failed to condemn the destructive acts of ethnic militias in violence that stemmed from religious riots. Obasanjo, a self-described born-again Christian Southerner with a need to maintain the political support of the largely Muslim North, had to walk a political tightrope. His regime drifted uneasily between anarchy and tyranny. It either used too little or too much force to manage religious, resource and ethnic conflicts. In Kaduna and Aba, Obasanjo was slow to control rampaging mobs. In Odi and Gbeji in 2000 and 2001 respectively, his soldiers employed disproportionate force to ‘pacify’ the area in military campaigns of awesome destructiveness totally unworthy of a democratic government.

Nigeria’s post-1999 Fourth Republic was also marred by the fraudulent and unruly actions of politicians in several of the 36 states of the federation. In July 2003, the governor of the eastern Anambra state, Chris Ngige, was kidnapped briefly by police after falling out with Chris Uba, his political ‘godfather’, who was reputed to be close to Aso Rock (seat of the Nigerian presidency), over government patronage. Sixteen months later, armed arsonists damaged government buildings in Anambra state in an apparent attempt to assassinate the governor. After another governor, Rashidi Ladoja, fell out with Lamidi Adedibu, his political ‘godfather’, over money and appointments in the western state of Oyo in December 2005, hired thugs destroyed government buildings following a fracas in the state parliament that involved gunfire. In the same month, Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, the governor of Southern Bayelsa state, was impeached and expelled from office after escaping from Britain (disguised as a woman) while on bail on charges of money-laundering and illegal expenditure on his home in London running into several million British pounds.32

Such actions, along with ‘419’ scams (named after the relevant section in Nigeria’s criminal code) consisting of fraudulent cons, impersonation and forgery – worth, by some estimates, as much as $250 million annually – have damaged Nigeria’s international reputation. (See Mustapha in this volume.) Though these crimes have been committed by a minority of Nigerians and have involved many gullible Western individuals of dubious integrity (letters are often sent asking for funds to be deposited into a Western bank account in exchange for a cut of millions of dollars of government money), they have tarnished the country’s reputation nevertheless.
Obasanjo’s rule proved to be a bundle of contradictions. Considered as an indispensable force for stability, he instead oversaw one of Nigeria’s worst periods of instability. Considered a force for unity, he presided uneasily over a country that is perhaps now more divided than at any time in its history since the civil war of 1967–1970. Considered a force for national salvation, he instead watched helplessly as the country was nearly torn apart by sectarian violence.

One must concede that much of this rot had set in under successive inept administrations since 1979, but these divisions were exacerbated under Obasanjo’s rule. In his 2006 memoirs, Nigeria’s Nobel laureate, Wole Soyinka, aptly described the flaws in the former Nigerian president’s character: ‘Obasanjo is a man of restless energies . . . A bullish personality, calculating and devious, yet capable of a disarming spontaneity, affecting an exaggerated country yokel act to cover up the interior actuality of the same, occasionally self-deprecatory yet intolerant of criticism, this general remains a study in the outer limits of compulsive rivalry, even where the fields of competence or striving are miles apart.’

Suffering from what many critics have described as a ‘messiah complex’, Obasanjo seemed to suffer from delusions of grandeur in which he saw himself in the same light as Nelson Mandela, South Africa’s saintly post-apartheid leader and Nobel peace laureate. Some supporters have described him as ‘the founder of modern Nigeria’, a sort of African Ataturk (founder of modern Turkey). But it is clear that Obasanjo lacked the stature of Mandela, one of the greatest moral figures of the twentieth century. The South African leader’s graceful exit from power in 1999 after a single presidential term was in stark contract to Obasanjo’s shabby efforts to seek an unconstitutional third presidential term in 2006.

Obasanjo, who acted as his own oil minister throughout the eight years of his rule, further tarnished his historical legacy through an arrogant penchant for omniscient and omnipotent behaviour. According to a survey by Afrobarometre, Obasanjo’s approval rating dropped from 84 per cent in 2000 to 32 per cent by 2005, as Nigerians became increasingly disenchanted with his autocratic leadership style. Seemingly claiming a divine mandate, during the debates on a third presidential term in April 2006, Obasanjo made the notorious comment to the Washington Post: ‘I believe that God is not a God of abandoned projects. If God has a project, he will not abandon it.’

Thankfully, Nigeria’s legislators and civil society actors did not agree that the Almighty had a role to play in changing the country’s constitution in order to give Obasanjo a third presidential term.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF NIGERIA’S FOREIGN POLICY

Next, we briefly assess Nigeria’s foreign policy since its independence in October 1960. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa marked Nigeria’s arrival on the global diplomatic
stage by severing diplomatic ties with France, three months after independence, in January 1961, in protest at French atomic tests in the Sahara. Nigeria’s foreign policy under the First Republic and its anglophile prime minister was, however, widely felt to be conservative and pro-Western, as Nigeria struggled for pre-eminence with Kwame Nkrumah’s Ghana. During the Nigerian civil war between 1967 and 1970, France’s support for Biafran secessionists, Britain’s hesitant support for the federal government, and America’s condescending dismissal of Nigeria as a British ‘sphere of influence’ led to a more activist, less naïve postwar foreign policy, which culminated in the creation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) under General Yakubu Gowon in 1975. Nigeria had sought to buy regional influence through the revenues derived from a fortuitous oil boom. By 1970, the country’s 250,000-strong army was the largest in black Africa, nearly four times the size of the combined armies of the thirteen other independent states in West Africa at the time. By 1974, Nigeria’s gross domestic product had risen to $19.7 billion: larger than the combined economies of all of black Africa. The country currently has a 94,500-strong army that dwarfs the combined total of its fourteen neighbours.

Nigeria’s post-civil war decade saw the country succeed in its attempts – under the leadership of Adebayo Adefeji, its minister of economic development – to create ECOWAS as an instrument to pursue a leadership role, buy itself security, and expand its markets in West Africa while reducing the dependence of its francophone neighbours on France. At the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Trade Ministers meeting in Lagos in February 1973, Nigeria’s Ambassador Olu Sanu was asked to be Africa’s spokesperson at the Lomé Convention talks between the ACP and the European Economic Community, now the European Union. The Lomé talks led to a new trade agreement in February 1975. Lomé was the first negotiating forum involving francophone and anglophone African states, and was crucial in increasing the confidence and trust that would lead to the establishment of ECOWAS in May 1975. Following the unity that was forged in the Lomé process, francophone states saw that economic co-operation in a larger bloc could bring mutual benefits to West African states, and Nigeria was finally being accepted as a credible leader on African issues.

But while Nigeria increased its political influence in West Africa, ECOWAS failed to achieve its economic goals of creating a common market. A rival French-backed francophone organisation, the Communauté Economique de l’Afrique de l’Ouest (CEAO) – whose members were all part of the CFA (Communauté Financière Africaine) franc currency zone – instead competed with ECOWAS for sub-regional pre-eminence. A ‘radical’ interlude under Generals Murtala Mohammed (1975–76) and Olusegun Obasanjo (1976–79) saw Nigeria leading African opinion in the decolonisation and anti-apartheid struggles, and providing support to liberation
movements through the Organisation of African Unity’s (OAU) Liberation Committee. This was also the period when Nigeria’s leaders most actively used the government-funded Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) as a think-tank for generating policy advice.


Lagos promoted the strengthening of the OAU, hosting the organisation’s first ever economic summit in 1980. The meeting agreed on the Lagos Plan of Action, which called for increased self-reliance in agriculture and industry, expansion of infrastructure, support for sub-regional economic groups, and the creation of an African Common Market by 2000 (since extended to 2025). Nigeria’s ‘economic diplomacy’ during this period reflected the country’s continued efforts to be a leading spokesperson for Africa on global economic issues. Lagos was instrumental in convening a second OAU Economic summit in 1985, at which General Buhari called on international financial institutions to show greater understanding for Africa’s economic problems, and requested an increase in capital and financial resources from the West to Africa.

With its increasing dependence on the goodwill of Western donors, Nigeria felt increasingly vulnerable in its foreign policy actions, compared to the relative independence that the oil wealth of the 1970s had provided. After Nigeria failed to condemn the American bombing of Libya in 1986, many members of the Nigerian press and academic community scathingly criticised the Babangida regime for being a Western lackey, recalling the government’s non-reaction to Shagari’s similar silence over the American invasion of Grenada three years earlier.

Nigeria embarked on a structural adjustment programme in July 1986, as economic conditions worsened and debt payments continued to mount. The Babangida government devalued the naira in a bid to boost non-oil exports and to diversify its economy. General Ike Nwachukwu, who was appointed as foreign minister in 1987, became the main proselytiser of a policy of ‘economic diplomacy’, aimed at
negotiating debt reduction and attracting foreign investment, as Nigeria's external debt reached $33 billion by 1988. At the OAU summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in July 1989, Nigeria's Chief of General Staff, Admiral Augustus Aikhomu, called for the cancellation of all official African debts and for more financial resources from donor countries. By 1990, Babangida was advocating a new ‘Marshall Plan’ for Africa as reparations for centuries of slavery and colonialism by the West.

In summary, from the 1960s onwards, the Pax Nigeriana had involved all regimes from Balewa to Babangida placing Africa at the centre of their foreign policy. The influence Nigeria sought in West Africa could only be achieved if the country built its credibility as a regional leader. This leadership was most clearly expressed in West Africa through Nigeria's dominance of ECOWAS, while the country also played an active part in the liberation struggles in southern Africa waged through the OAU and the UN. Nigeria's leadership aspirations in the 1960s were certainly not realised. Though Lagos' views were respected in intra-African diplomacy, where they exerted some influence, Nigeria's descent into civil war by the end of its first decade of independence weakened its case for African leadership. The country's leadership ambitions would have to await the reunification of the nation and a fortuitous oil boom.

By the 1970s, Nigeria had Africa's largest population, black Africa's richest economy, and its biggest army. Washington courted Nigeria as part of its Africa policy; Southern Africa's Frontline States invited Nigeria to their meetings; Lagos chaired the UN’s Special Committee against Apartheid for over two decades; Nigeria was instrumental in formulating OAU positions; and ECOWAS grudgingly accepted Nigeria's leadership in West Africa. But the fact that a majority of African states voted against Nigeria's candidacy to the UN Security Council in 1977 and 1993, after the country had violated the African Group at the UN's rotational rules, demonstrated a continued wariness of Nigeria's hegemonic ambitions.

Though Nigeria's military leaders during the oil boom era sounded and acted less pro-Western than Balewa, their most profitable trade relations remained largely with the West. The country's closest diplomatic, social and economic ties were still those with Western Europe and America, despite claims to be pursuing genuine non-alignment. In 1979 the Eastern bloc accounted for only 2.1 per cent of Nigeria's imports and 0.2 per cent of its exports, while the West accounted for 75.5 per cent of its imports and 86.6 per cent of its exports. Most of Nigeria's students, civil servants, and soldiers who undertook foreign training still went to Western institutions. However, by the late 1970s, Nigeria's foreign policy, unlike that of the Balewa era, won the political support of articulate groups such as students, trade unions and the media. The country was at last playing the role expected of it at independence in 1960, and Nigerians could take pride in their country's leadership role. Lagos increasingly employed 'oil diplomacy' as a foreign policy tool. It bought influence by selling oil to its neighbours at concessionary rates; it showed its disapproval of Chadian faction
leaders during the latter’s civil war (to which Nigeria sent peacekeepers) by cutting off oil flows between 1979 and 1982; it did the same after Jerry Rawlings’s violent coup in Ghana in 1979; and in the same year, Obasanjo nationalised the British Petroleum share in BP-Shell Nigeria in a bid to influence London’s Rhodesia policy.

Pax Nigeriana’s greatest influence was, however, achieved in the country’s own sub-region. Lagos succeeded in extending its influence in West Africa through the creation of ECOWAS, and became a respected actor on the wider continental scene. ECOWAS remained Nigeria’s greatest foreign policy achievement until 1990. Overcoming the opposition of France and the vast majority of francophone states, Lagos had created a vehicle through which it could extend its influence in its sub-region. ECOWAS was the very embodiment of Pax Nigeriana: it provided a forum through which Nigeria could mobilise support for its goal of forging closer sub-regional economic and military co-operation in order to lessen French influence in West Africa.

By the 1980s, however, the Pax Nigeriana was becoming more difficult to pursue, as Nigeria’s domestic economic crisis and increased dependence on Western bilateral donors and Western-dominated financial institutions – notably the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund – forced the government to scale back the generous levels of economic assistance to its neighbours, and its high-profile political role of the 1970s. The increasing nationalism of Nigeria’s foreign policy was most dramatically captured by the mass expulsions of nearly three million mainly West African citizens in 1983 and 1985. However, despite its economic problems, in 1984, Nigeria’s economy was still more than twice as large as that of Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana and Senegal combined. Lagos also had to bear the burden of regional integration and other efforts at military co-operation in West Africa. This explains why Nigeria could continue to pursue a policy of ‘hegemony on a shoestring’, demonstrated when it led military interventions into Liberia and Sierra Leone between 1990 and 2003.

But the Pax Nigeriana became difficult to pursue with tighter purse-strings, and it was clear that ECOMOG (the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group) would encounter enormous difficulties. The three peacekeeping interventions in Chad between 1979 and 1982 launched during the country’s oil boom had, after all, failed to achieve their objectives, and exposed the logistical shortcomings of the Nigerian army. By 1990, Nigeria had accumulated an external debt of $30 billion. Where the country had relied on cocoa, groundnuts and palm oil in the 1960s, its over-reliance on the shaky foundations of a largely mono-crop oil economy was evident in the 1990s, when it relied on a richer but no less volatile and erratic source of income. General Obasanjo returned to the helm as an elected civilian president in 1999 in rather more difficult economic circumstances than he had bequeathed to Shagari in 1979. (See Gambari in this volume for a more comprehensive assessment of Nigeria’s foreign policy.)
PAX NIGERIANA: UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF NIGERIA’S POST-COLD WAR FOREIGN POLICY

It is important to comment briefly on the concept of hegemony, a term included in the title of this chapter. Hegemony has, over the decades, conjured up images of domination, bullying behaviour and arrogance on the part of Great Powers. It is true that past and present hegemons, such as Britain during the nineteenth century and the United States during the twentieth century, sometimes used their power and primacy aggressively through colonialism and other forms of domination in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. But hegemony need not necessarily be a negative phenomenon. The pound and the dollar stabilised the international monetary system under Pax Britannica and Pax Americana while, after the Second World War, the United States helped Europe and Japan’s economic recovery, provided its allies with a nuclear umbrella, and led the creation of the international trade system. One can in fact talk of ‘constructive’ hegemony in which hegemons are able not only to articulate the rules and norms for respective regions, but are also able to convince other states to follow such rules and respect and adhere to established norms. Hegemony therefore involves leadership and influence and not just bullying dominance.

Nigeria has often been described as a local hegemon and ‘Giant of Africa’, on account of its population of 140 million, geographical size, and relatively large economic and human resources. The country is the world’s sixth largest oil producer and exporter of over 12 per cent of American oil by 2007; it possesses gas reserves that could supply Western Europe for a decade; it accounts for 75 per cent of West Africa’s economic strength; and has about 60 per cent of its population. The aspiration to continental leadership, manifest since independence in 1960, is central to understanding some principal features of Nigeria’s foreign policy, such as the breaking of diplomatic relations with France in 1961 over the issue of nuclear testing in the Sahara; the creation of ECOWAS in 1975; membership of the ‘Frontline States’ of Southern Africa in the struggle against then-Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa in the 1980s; the country’s long-term chairmanship of the UN’s Special Committee against Apartheid; and Nigeria’s leadership of peacekeeping missions in Chad (1979–82), Liberia (1990–98 and 2003), and Sierra Leone (1997–2000).

Bolaji Akinyemi, a former Nigerian foreign minister between 1985–1987, coined the expression Pax Nigeriana in 1970 to describe Nigeria’s leadership role in the founding of the OAU. It represents Nigeria’s ambition to play a political, economic and military leadership role in Africa, or on issues related to the continent. Politically, Nigeria sought to exert its leadership at the UN, the OAU and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and to speak loudest for African concerns. Militarily, the country has sent peacekeepers to Congo, Chad, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Somalia,
and has provided military assistance to Tanzania and Gambia, as well as to liberation struggles in southern Africa in the 1970s and 1980s. Economically, Nigeria has tried to exert its leadership through ECOWAS as well as through 'oil diplomacy', by providing economic assistance to its poorer neighbours.

Pax Nigeriana is reflected in the utterances of those of Nigeria’s soldiers, diplomats, politicians, journalists and students who share a common belief in Nigeria’s ‘manifest destiny’ with special responsibilities to be a regional ‘big brother’. The metaphor of a benevolent older brother who is more experienced and thus responsible for protecting his younger siblings has often been employed in Nigeria’s diplomatic and popular parlance. This ‘big brother syndrome’ has afflicted Nigeria’s leaders since independence, and smacks of a paternalism that has often irritated its neighbours. Nigeria’s leaders often gave the impression that all the country had needed to do was simply appear on the African stage in 1960, and all other countries would have bowed in deference at the splendour of the African colossus. The country’s leadership role is widely seen as inevitable, but its unilateral, arrogant style has often been questioned by its neighbours.

Nigeria must thus learn to treat its neighbours with respect and consult more closely with them if its leadership aspirations for the Pax Nigeriana in West Africa are to be realised. Most of these countries no longer question the need for Nigeria’s leadership, but rather its penchant for a unilateral diplomatic style that offends the sensibilities of smaller, poorer and weaker states. There still remains much unease in the sub-region about Nigeria’s domination of the ECOMOG military commands in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Sule Lamido, Nigeria’s foreign minister under Obasanjo’s first term between 1999 and 2003, recognised these fears when noting: ‘It is important that while you are playing the role of Big Brother, you have to recognise that the countries you are dealing with are sovereign nations. You have to know this and recognise that psychological feeling of independence.’

Some Nigerian politicians and diplomats have made an explicit comparison between the country’s hegemonic aspirations and the historic role that the United States has played in its own Latin American and Caribbean neighbourhood. Shehu Shagari, Nigeria’s president between 1979 and 1983, noted: ‘Just as President Monroe proclaimed the American hemisphere free from the military incursions of European empire builders and adventurers, so also do we in Nigeria and in Africa, insist that African affairs be left to Africans to settle.’ Nigeria’s former Ambassador to Washington, Olu Sanu, expressed a similar sentiment when he said, ‘We have to be recognised as a regional power in West Africa. This is our region and we have a right to go to war. It is a Monroe doctrine of a sort.’ Nnamdi Azikiwe, Nigeria’s first president, talked of ‘the historic and manifest destiny of Nigeria on the African continent’, while Nigeria’s late Justice Minister, Bola Ige, who served in Obasanjo’s civilian administration, argued that: ‘... I believe that Nigeria will be the first black superpower ...'
There are similarities between Nigeria and the United States. Both are large countries that are feared and envied by their neighbours due to their power and wealth relative to other countries. Nigerians and Americans are also widely considered to be loud, brash and arrogant. But Pax Nigeriana, unlike Pax Americana in an earlier age, has not involved militarily expansionist imperialism or a quest for a ‘Greater Nigeria.’ That is not to suggest that Pax Nigeriana is purely altruistic. Since its civil war of 1967–1970, Nigeria has sought to loosen France’s neo-colonial ties in West Africa and to gain more security and larger markets for itself. But one can explain Nigeria’s military interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s not through military aggrandisement for political control of Liberia and Sierra Leone, but rather through political aggrandisement for long-term military and economic influence in West Africa.

The ECOMOG interventions were consistent, for example, with actions like the creation of ECOWAS in 1975, and Nigeria’s military intervention in Chad between 1979 and 1982. Over 200 000 Nigerian soldiers have been deployed to peacekeeping missions around the globe, and the country has contributed troops to nearly 40 major UN and regional peacekeeping missions in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. ECOMOG was an effort to extend the Pax Nigeriana, but was also an exercise in ‘hegemony on a shoestring’. (See Adebajo in this volume.) Nigeria lacked the military and economic resources as well as the international political support to act as an effective hegemon. Hegemony essentially requires both capacity and legitimacy, as well as the ability to provide leadership to convince other states to follow the hegemon willingly. Nigeria was unable to impose its will on Liberia and Sierra Leone, while ‘bargainers’ like Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Senegal and Ghana challenged Nigeria’s leadership of ECOMOG. Nigeria is thus an aspiring rather than an effective hegemon.

The concept of Pax Nigeriana can also be understood within the context of the ‘responsibility to protect’ doctrine (adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2005), which asserts that the international community has a special responsibility to protect vulnerable populations if sovereign governments are either unwilling or unable to do so. Nigeria’s foreign policy – based on the fact that the country is the largest black nation in the world and that one in every five Africans is a Nigerian – has exhibited a missionary zeal, claiming a special responsibility to protect, or at least speak on behalf of, black people in apartheid South Africa, pre-civil rights America and contemporary Brazil. As former Nigerian leader General Yakubu Gowon noted: ‘Peoples of African descent throughout the world see in a strong Nigeria a banner of hope, and an instrument for achieving self-respect for the black man, so long degraded everywhere.’ Nigeria, along with other countries such as South Africa, attempted during the UN reform process in 2005 to obtain a permanent seat in a reconstituted 15-member UN Security Council. (This initiative failed and the
Security Council was not expanded.) Many of Nigeria's soldiers, who have served on UN peacekeeping missions in places like Lebanon, Angola, Kosovo, Bosnia and Somalia, also felt that a military withdrawal from Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s would be humiliating, and instead argued that Nigeria had a special responsibility and duty to protect civilians in these countries. They thus sought to fulfil Nigeria's leadership responsibilities in West Africa through ECOMOG's success, regardless of the cost to the country's treasury.

But there were some contradictions in Nigeria's assertion of a 'responsibility to protect' in Liberia and Sierra Leone. As earlier noted, between 1983 and 1985 the country expelled about three million mostly West African immigrants, amidst a deepening domestic economic crisis in Nigeria. This dealt a severe blow to the credibility of the Pax Nigeriana. Not only did these populist actions contradict the Nigeria-led ECOWAS commitment to the free movement of persons across West Africa, they also violated the norms and principles of protecting fellow Africans that had guided Nigeria's foreign policy since its independence in 1960. Closer to home, the abject neglect of the peoples of Nigeria's oil-producing Niger Delta by successive governments has shut down a quarter of the country's oil production and radicalised disaffected and unemployed youths in this region, leading to the kidnapping of foreign oil workers and the murder of policemen and soldiers. Nigeria's military governments, particularly during the 1990s, employed disproportionate force – sometimes against unarmed civilians – to try to stamp out dissent in this volatile region, frequently violating the most fundamental rights of the country's citizens.

The hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight Ogoni activists by General Abacha's regime in November 1995 was only the most visible manifestation of this brutal approach. Saro-Wiwa and his colleagues were protesting against the devastation wrought by Shell and other foreign companies, which have destroyed farmlands and fisheries and damaged the environment in these areas, leading to massive impoverishment and widespread respiratory illnesses. Successive Nigerian regimes, including Obasanjo's civilian regime, have spectacularly failed to assume their own 'responsibility to protect' the people of the narrow creeks and mangrove swamps of the delta. (See Okonta in this volume.) Nigerian premier Tafawa Balewa's environmental 'responsibility to protect' Africans of 1961, when Lagos cut diplomatic ties with France to protest atomic tests in the Sahara, was thus not extended to Nigeria's own citizens by its post-Cold War leaders.

**The ‘Concentric Circles’: Domestic, Regional, and External Influences on Nigeria’s Foreign Policy**

This study will examine both the conceptual and practical aspects of Nigeria's foreign policy, the institutions and processes of policy formulation, and the domestic
influences on this policy. Since Nigerian public opinion has tended to exert more influence over foreign policy under civilian governments (which have to be more accountable to parliament, the public, and the press) than under military regimes (which have often been able to ignore such influences), it is important to explain the diverse sources of Nigeria’s foreign policy. The country has been under military rule for 29 out of its 47 years of independence – about 64 per cent of this period. Costly and ultimately domestically unpopular military interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s could probably only have been sustained by military brass hats who were not accountable to the Nigerian electorate. Significantly, the civilian Obasanjo administration withdrew the bulk of Nigeria’s 12 000 peacekeepers from Sierra Leone in 1999–2000.

A major goal of this study will therefore be to explain domestic, regional and external constraints and influences on Nigeria’s foreign policy. Nigerian diplomats and scholars have often explained the country’s foreign policy in terms of four ‘concentric circles’ of national interest, as eloquently described by Ibrahim Gambari in this volume. The innermost circle represents Nigeria’s own security, independence and prosperity, and is centred on its immediate neighbours – Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger; the second circle revolves around Nigeria’s relations with its ECOWAS neighbours; the third circle focuses on continental African issues of peace, development and democratisation; while the fourth circle involves Nigeria’s relations with organisations, institutions and states outside Africa.56

This concept still guides Nigeria’s foreign policy priorities, and our study is organised around these four ‘concentric circles’, starting with domestic and foreign policy background and key domestic challenges. We then examine formal and informal relations in the West African sub-region, focusing on key relations and informal trade. We assess Nigerian-led ECOMOG interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone; then turn to the key bilateral relationship between Nigeria and South Africa within the context of both countries’ leadership roles in continental affairs. A third and final section analyses Nigeria’s relations with key bilateral (Britain, France, the United States and China) and multilateral actors and organisations outside Africa (the United Nations, the European Union and the Commonwealth).

**Domestic**

The chapters in the first part of this book explore the history of Nigeria’s efforts to attain stable nationhood; the history and practice of its foreign policy; an assessment of its foreign ministry and diplomats; and an analysis of the significance of military and security issues in Nigeria’s foreign policy, as well as the problems of managing disaffected populations in its oil-producing areas. Ibrahim Gambari, a scholar-diplomat who served as Nigeria’s foreign minister between 1984 and 1985, stresses
the importance of a strong domestic base and a clear definition of the country’s national interest in order to pursue an effective foreign policy. He assesses the history of Nigeria’s foreign policy between 1960 and 1999, arguing that there has been more continuity than change in the country’s external relations. Gambari concludes his chapter by offering three policy recommendations: the need to define clearly Nigeria’s foreign policy in a complex and dynamic post-Cold War environment; the imperative to strengthen Nigeria’s foreign policy institutions and personnel; and the need for Nigeria’s executive and legislative branches to work together to define and implement an effective foreign policy. Oladapo Fafowora, a former Nigerian ambassador at the UN in New York and career diplomat and scholar, assesses the often ‘unsung’ role of the Nigerian diplomat in the formulation and implementation of her or his country’s foreign policy. Fafowora’s chapter examines the establishment of the Nigerian foreign service in 1957, and highlights the role of the pioneering group of Nigerian diplomats. He goes on to assess the current training of Nigerian diplomats; the structure of its foreign service; policy formulation and co-ordination within the ministry; and the contribution of Nigerian diplomats to policymaking, before calling – as Gambari does – for more funding for the Nigerian foreign service.

We thus begin our examination of the ‘concentric circles’ with the innermost domestic circle. Nigeria, on account of its human and natural resources, is one of Africa’s most strategic countries. Yet the country’s potential is limited by enormous domestic problems, which continue to raise serious doubts about its ability to fulfil its stated hegemonic ambitions. As Raufu Mustapha’s perceptive chapter explains, the country has been described as a ‘crippled giant,’ and this book’s title of ‘Gulliver’s Troubles’ echoes this theme.

Mustapha’s chapter provides a rich historical background to some of the ethnic and regional cleavages and political economy challenges that have adversely affected Nigeria before and since its independence in 1960. He identifies three distinct ‘faces’ that have determined the outcomes of Nigeria’s foreign policy. The first is the formal world of diplomatic accords and sub-regional hegemonic ambitions, while the other two describe how Nigeria’s ‘fractured’ nationhood has negatively affected its foreign policy ambitions, and had a negative impact on the country’s ‘identity’ or global reputation. Mustapha’s central argument is that the latter two factors – fractured nationhood and global reputation – impose an additional and unnecessary burden on Nigeria achieving its foreign policy goals. These factors should thus be given more attention in formal foreign policy institutions.

As earlier noted, Nigeria has been wracked by violence related to disputes over religion, resources, land and ethnicity, which have resulted in an estimated 12 000 deaths in the eight years of civilian rule after 1999. The country’s 94 500-strong military is also desperately in need of reform after nearly 25 years of decay and politicisation, which have adversely affected its professionalism, as Alade Fawole’s
chapter clearly shows. Even under civilian rule between 1999 and 2007, the army has been involved in massacres of civilians in Odi and Gbeji in 2000 and 2001 respectively in efforts to halt local disputes. Fawole argues that Nigeria's foreign policy has defined national security too narrowly, emphasising military matters rather than broader issues such as regime security; food and resource security; securing porous borders; and other issues. He shows how Nigeria's civil war of 1967–1970 had a radical effect in forcing its leaders to take national security more seriously. Fawole uses case studies such as Nigeria's dispute with Cameroon over the Bakassi peninsula (which the International Court of Justice awarded to Cameroon in 2002); sporadic Nigeria/Chad border skirmishes; Libya's expansionist role in Chad; and South Africa's role in Equatorial Guinea to illustrate his point about Nigeria's urgent need for a coherent national security doctrine. The chapter also focuses on internal threats to national security as a result of radical religious groups, as well as ethnic militias such as the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and the Oodua People's Congress (OPC). Fawole calls for a proper harmonisation of Nigeria's military/security and foreign policy; the need to improve the combat readiness of the country's army; and the urgent task of protecting its offshore oil installations and porous borders.

Nigeria's oil-producing areas have also remained volatile, a situation which was dramatically symbolised by the strong campaign waged against foreign oil companies and the Nigerian government by international non-governmental organisations following the hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight Ogoni environmental activists in November 1995, as Ike Okonta's chapter eloquently describes. Okonta offers a rich case study of perhaps the greatest foreign policy debacle in Nigeria's history: the hanging of the 'Ogoni Nine' by General Abacha during a Commonwealth summit in Auckland, New Zealand. Nigeria was subsequently suspended from the Commonwealth and branded an international pariah. Okonta argues that oil remains a bane to Nigeria's efforts at establishing a functioning federation. He draws parallels between the role of what he describes as Nigeria's new 'comprador' class of rulers, and their alliance with foreign multinationals such as Anglo-Dutch oil giant Shell, which was accused of collaborating with the Abacha regime against Saro-Wiwa's Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) in order to protect its parochial commercial interests in the Niger Delta. Okonta then examines the relationship between MOSOP and international activists like The Bodyshop and Greenpeace, criticising these international actors as being naïve in describing the Ogoni as an 'endangered indigenous group' within Nigeria. Okonta notes that Nigeria is unlikely to achieve its leadership ambitions in Africa as long as its rapacious elite fails to address the socio-economic inequities of the Niger Delta.

Foreign oil companies, led by Shell, have justly been accused of decimating Nigeria's oil-producing areas and of neglecting the social needs of the people in the region.
Shell’s use of sub-standard and environmentally unfriendly equipment and methods has resulted in a reported 40 per cent of its oil spills occurring in Nigeria, despite operating in about 100 countries. The livelihood of the people in these areas has been destroyed by polluted rivers and forests and oil-drenched fields. Shell also reportedly provided funds for a brutal military campaign in the Niger Delta that resulted in dozens of deaths and the destruction of hundreds of homes in the 1990s. In February 2007, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), whose leaders had been accused of disrupting the flow of oil and kidnapping foreign oil workers in pursuit of a greater share of oil revenues to develop their region, threatened a war that could eventually lead to the disintegration of Nigeria. These are important new areas for any serious study of Nigeria’s post-Cold War foreign policy.

Regional

While Nigeria’s hegemonic ambitions in Africa are not in doubt, the results of its numerous economic and diplomatic initiatives over the last five decades cannot be described as an unqualified success. For example, despite its enormous oil wealth, Nigeria did not completely succeed in its goal of using ECOWAS as an instrument to reduce the dependence of francophone West African states on France. Three decades after ECOWAS sought to establish a customs union, informal trade (smuggling) within West Africa outstrips formal trade; the sub-region’s resourceful traders continue to exploit porous borders and largely unconvertible currencies to their advantage, as the chapter by Kate Meagher ably shows. Despite plans to create a common West African currency, the continued existence of a francophone currency zone tied to the euro (formerly the French franc) is perhaps the clearest sign of the divisions that still frustrate regional integration within ECOWAS and the achievement of the Pax Nigeriana.

ECOWAS still contains some of the poorest countries in the world, and many of these countries have little or no industry, energy, cash crops or minerals. They have thus relied heavily on customs duties for much of their government revenues. There remain no less than ten mostly unconvertible currencies within ECOWAS, making intra-community trade and inward investment difficult. Sub-regional exports also remain competitive rather than complementary, and colonial trading patterns with the West have largely remained intact. Furthermore, there are serious infrastructural difficulties in transportation and communication. ECOWAS has thus become more of a political forum to attempt to forge sub-regional consensus than an economic union providing tangible benefits for increased trade.

Nigeria’s trade with the rest of the world is still mostly outside its own region. In the last quarter of 2005, 53 per cent of Nigeria’s exports went to the US; 21.8 per cent to Asia; 18.5 per cent to Europe; and only seven per cent to African countries. Nigeria’s
imports in the same period followed the same pattern: 36.8 per cent from Europe; 30 per cent from Asia; 24 per cent from the United States; and nine per cent from African countries. In numerical terms, however, Nigeria’s exports to West Africa for the whole of 2005 totalled $3.4 billion, including oil, cement, cotton, sugar molasses and cosmetics. A Joint Development Zone has been established with São Tomé and Príncipe to manage common maritime resources, while a West African gas pipeline is expected to run from Nigeria through Benin, Togo, and Ghana.

In his chapter, Akinjide Osuntokun, a history professor and former Nigerian ambassador to Germany, meticulously assesses Nigeria’s relationship with its immediate neighbours in West Africa and further afield in Central Africa: Niger, Chad, Benin, Equatorial Guinea, São Tomé and Príncipe and Cameroon. The chapter focuses on Nigeria’s traditional rivalry with France, a country that also has its own political and economic interests in many of these countries. Osuntokun notes that Abuja must devise a policy to deal with Paris that recognises that the Gallic nation also has its own genuine interests in its traditional ‘sphere of influence’. The chapter acknowledges that Nigeria has been able to win influence through its generosity to many of these countries, but suggests the country should exploit more effectively its cultural affinities with Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa diasporas living in countries such as Benin, Cameroon and Niger; and use institutions like ECOWAS, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Gulf of Guinea Commission to ensure that Nigeria pursues genuine economic integration with its neighbours.

In her rich chapter, Kate Meagher argues that informal trading networks in West Africa – dominated by Nigerian traders – could potentially provide institutional resources to promote more effective regional integration in the sub-region. These trading networks should, however, not be seen as a panacea, as they have often had a negative effect on agricultural and industrial development as a result of smuggling and corruption. Trade within West Africa has meanwhile remained stuck at a derisory six per cent. Informal trading networks have often had an adverse effect on trade and monetary stability in West Africa. The challenge for Nigeria’s foreign policy, according to Meagher, is to harness the economic capacities and organisational skills of these dynamic trade networks to efforts at economic incorporation and social integration of ethnic and commercial groups in the sub-region.

To turn from regional integration to regional instability, it must be acknowledged that West Africa remains at the epicentre of many of Africa’s conflicts, and so is one of the world’s most unstable sub-regions. In the 1990s, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Senegal have experienced some form of civil conflict, while Côte d’Ivoire – formerly an oasis of stability in West Africa – has been divided by a civil war that erupted in 2002. Nigerian-led peacekeeping interventions into Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s lasted eleven years, resulted in over 1 500 Nigerian fatalities, and cost the country’s treasury billions of dollars, as my later chapter
recounts. Though embroiled in political, financial and military difficulties (as well as challenges of HIV/AIDS), these interventions were the first in the post-Cold War era to be launched by a sub-regional organisation – ECOWAS. Liberia was the first-ever mission in which the UN deployed peacekeepers in 1993 alongside an existing sub-regional organisation. The ECOMOG interventions succeeded in defusing civil conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone, although instability later returned to Liberia.

My chapter in this book seeks to demonstrate how these interventions – launched by Generals Babangida and Abacha – were consistent with Nigeria’s historical pursuit of grandeur and leadership on the continent. The failure of the ECOMOG mission in Guinea-Bissau in 1999, involving Lilliputian peacekeepers from Benin, Gambia, Niger and Togo, and to which Nigeria did not contribute troops, demonstrated the indispensability of West Africa’s Gulliver to sub-regional peacekeeping efforts. Nigeria also restored the elected leader of São Tomé and Príncipe, Fradique de Menezes, to power, following an attempted coup in July 2003, and led peacemaking efforts in Togo in 2005. Nigeria sent peacekeepers to Sudan’s Darfur region in 2004 under an African Union mission; its former foreign minister, Babagana Kingibe, was AU special envoy in Darfur; and its chief of defence staff, General Martin Agwai, became force commander of the UN/AU hybrid mission in Darfur in July 2007.

Obasanjo’s civilian administration between 1999 and 2007 faced pressure from parliament, the press and public opinion that Generals Babangida and Abacha were more easily able to ignore or did not have to face (parliament having been quashed). It was thus significant that Obasanjo withdrew 8 500 Nigerian troops from Sierra Leone, and insisted that the UN take over the mission to which he then contributed 3 500 Nigerian peacekeepers. In August 2003, Obasanjo also insisted that a UN mission take over a Nigerian-led mission in Liberia three months after its deployment in order to share the costs of sub-regional peacekeeping more equitably. It is likely that Nigeria will continue to seek UN legitimacy and burden-sharing in future peacekeeping missions under civilian regimes, although its participation in the ill-equipped and poorly-resourced 7 000-strong AU peacekeeping mission in Sudan’s Darfur region since 2004, suggests that some lessons of the ECOMOG missions of the 1990s remain to be learned. However, one issue for which some have criticised Obasanjo’s administration was the handing over – under US diplomatic pressure – by the Nigerian government of former Liberian president and warlord Charles Taylor to a Special Court for Sierra Leone in March 2006 to face charges of war crimes. (The trial was subsequently moved to The Hague.) As president, Taylor had been granted asylum in Nigeria in July 2003 to avert a bloodbath in Liberia. As former Nigerian foreign minister Bolaji Akinyemi noted: ‘The handing over of Charles Taylor by force to the UN Court in Sierra Leone cuts the ground from under the concept [of regional enforcer.] It diminishes the capacity of Nigeria in future African conflicts. No African leader is likely to accept undertakings from Nigeria in future.’
This volume also examines Nigeria’s most important bilateral relationship on the continent – with Africa’s richest country, South Africa. From the start of negotiations to end apartheid in 1990, Nigeria was increasingly forced to focus attention on its own West African sub-region, having generously supported liberation movements in southern Africa in the previous three decades. South Africa followed peacekeeping efforts by Nigeria in West Africa with similar interventions in Lesotho (1998) and Burundi (2003).

Many scholars and policymakers have begun to investigate how the financial and military muscle of aspiring regional hegemons like Nigeria and South Africa can be harnessed to assist multilateral conflict management efforts in Africa. The leadership roles of Nigeria and South Africa in Africa are assessed in detail by Chris Landsberg in his chapter, which describes both countries as being members of an ‘African Concert of Powers’. Nigeria developed an important bilateral relationship with post-apartheid South Africa that led to the development of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) in 2001, a plan to promote democratic governance and financial probity in Africa in exchange for Western financial assistance, debt relief and increased trade and investment. Nigeria and South Africa also played a pivotal role between 1999 and 2002 in establishing the new African Union (AU), successor to the Organisation of African Unity.

Landsberg’s chapter ably describes the leadership role played by both countries in establishing the AU and NEPAD. The AU, unlike the OAU, stresses democratic accountability among regional leaders, and, in contrast to the sovereignty-obsessed OAU, calls for interventions in cases of egregious human rights abuses, while also seeking to sanction military putschists. Military regimes in Comoros, Côte d’Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau were barred from OAU/AU summits between 2000 and 2003. Nigeria and South Africa have also attempted to institutionalise their closely co-ordinated foreign policies and to cement their political and economic ties through the establishment of a Binational Commission (BNC) in 1999, though as Landsberg shows, there have recently been some tensions between both countries on issues such as the battle for an African UN Security Council permanent seat in 2005; disagreements over peacemaking efforts in Côte d’Ivoire in 2006; and South African president Thabo Mbeki’s opposition to Olusegun Obasanjo continuing as AU chair in the same year. The failure of the Binational Commission between both countries to meet between 2005 and 2007 has been a further source of concern for relations between Abuja and Tshwane (Pretoria). In 2004, Obasanjo unveiled his own domestic version of NEPAD: the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). This was a poverty-alleviation strategy and blueprint for economic growth. NEEDS had four focus areas: reforming government institutions; providing an enabling environment for the private sector; enacting a social charter; and reorienting people’s values. The initiative also sought to diversify Nigeria’s economy.
beyond oil. However, by the end of Obasanjo’s tenure in 2007, only limited success in some sectors such as banking could be attributed to this programme.

External

Turning to the role of external actors, the third and closing section of this volume begins by examining first Nigeria’s multilateral relations at the UN, where it aspires to becoming a permanent member of a reformed Security Council; then the Commonwealth, from which it was suspended between 1995 and 1999; and lastly the EU, with which it has its largest external trade relations. Martin Uhomoibhi, Nigeria’s ambassador to the UN in Geneva, one of the country’s foremost multilateralists, and a scholar who was directly involved in many of the events about which he writes, assesses these three important multilateral relationships, which he describes as Nigeria’s ‘oldest . . . most diverse, and . . . most enduring’. His chapter examines how these three institutions have advanced Nigeria’s national interests since independence. It describes Nigeria’s participation in UN peacekeeping; its long-time chairing of the UN’s Special Committee against Apartheid and support of decolonisation and anti-apartheid efforts within the UN and the Commonwealth; the quest for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council; suspension from the Commonwealth in 1995 and sanctioning by the EU at about the same time; and development issues within the UN, the Commonwealth and the EU. Uhomoibhi concludes his chapter by noting that, despite some difficult challenges faced by Nigeria in these three multilateral institutions, the country’s ties with the UN, the EU and the Commonwealth have been mutually beneficial. He argues that Nigeria’s long-term interests are therefore well served by continuing and strengthening these ties.

The other chapters in the final section of the book deal with Nigeria’s relations with four of the five veto-wielding permanent members of the UN Security Council: France, Britain, the United States and China. (Nigeria does not currently have such close ties with Russia, the fifth member – although Moscow has invested in Nigeria’s gas sector, and Russia’s United Company [Rusal] bought a 77.5 per cent stake for $250 million in the Aluminium Smelter Company of Nigeria in February 2007.)

After 1960, France undertook over 21 military interventions in Africa to prop up or to change out-of-favour regimes, as the late Jean-François Médard’s succinct chapter explains. After describing the clientelistic relations between France and its former African colonies in the system known as FrançAfrique, Médard notes that, although political relations between Paris and Abuja have historically been characterised by ‘deep distrust, hostility and conflict’, economic relations have paradoxically been profitable, developing almost independently of political tensions. The Gallic nation was the major obstacle to the realisation of Nigeria’s hegemonic ambitions in West Africa. Relations between both countries have,
however, improved in the post-Cold War era, and many policymakers and business interests in France have started to regard Nigeria – an important trading partner of France – as less of a rival and more of an ally in managing local conflicts. This change of policy is partly explained by the end of the Cold War, which has made Western countries wary of military interventions in Africa, particularly after US- and Belgian-led UN peacekeeping debacles in Somalia (1993) and Rwanda (1994) respectively. The ECOMOG interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone seemed to mark Nigeria’s opportunity to dominate its sub-region free of the constraint of the interventionist French gendarme.

Franco-Nigerian relations, however, had an inauspicious start. The French president from 1958 to 1969, Charles de Gaulle, was particularly irked by Nigeria’s severing diplomatic ties with France in January 1961 to protest French atomic tests in the Sahara. Full diplomatic relations were restored only in May 1966. Between 1963 and 1966, Paris frustrated Nigeria’s negotiation of a trade deal with the European Economic Community. During the Nigerian civil war of 1967 to 1970, France, along with francophone Côte d’Ivoire and Gabon, colluded to assist Biafran secessionists with arms and/or diplomatic support in an effort to reduce the potential threat to its ‘sphere of influence’ from a dismembered Nigerian federation.

By 1990, however, some signs pointed to an end to the Franco-Nigerian rivalry in West Africa. With Nigeria having become France’s largest market for its investments in black Africa, French political and business interests argued that Nigeria should play a greater role in regional integration. Médard’s chapter shows how, following a deep crisis of Françafrique – a corrupt and cosy system that had guided relations between Paris and its former colonies for three decades – a new generation of French policymakers emerged, pushing for a change in its Africa policy. They set about encouraging greater democracy; reaching out to anglophone countries like Nigeria, South Africa and Ghana; and pushing for reducing the francophone African burden on the French treasury. These views were particularly prevalent during the premiership of the patrician Edouard Balladur between 1993 and 1995. Both Olusegun Obasanjo and French president Jacques Chirac visited each other’s countries between 1999 and 2007. (Chirac’s visit to Nigeria in July 1999 was the first by a French president to Nigeria.) The election of conservative right-wing politician Nicolas Sarkozy as French president in May 2007 could well signal an end to an interventionist Gallic role in Africa, as the generation of French leaders such as Jacques Chirac who saw Africa as their chasse gardée (private hunting-ground) exits the national stage.

Two recent interventions by Britain and France in Nigeria’s West African ‘sphere of influence’, however, suggest that the era of external interventions may not yet be completely over, a factor which Nigeria must confront as it pursues its hegemonic ambitions in West Africa. In 2006 France, which stood aside in December 1999 as a coup d’état led by General Robert Guei was staged in Côte d’Ivoire, had 4 600 troops
in the country trying to halt a civil war. A British intervention in Sierra Leone in 2000, which shored up a collapsing UN peacekeeping mission (UNAMSIL), veered from Britain’s traditional post-Suez non-interventionist stance in Africa, and sparked Anglo-Nigerian rivalry for influence in this former British colony, as Kaye Whiteman’s chapter shows. (During the Suez crisis of 1956, American pressure and international outrage at the UN combined to force a reversal of a British-French-Israeli seizure of Egypt’s Suez canal shortly after Gamel Abdel Nasser had nationalised it.)

Whiteman elegantly examines the complex bilateral relationship between Nigeria and Britain, its ‘mother country’, arguing that this relationship has resembled both a ‘switchback’ – moving from cordial to acrimonious and tense – and a ‘fallback’ – using pre-existing relationships outside official government circles to ease some of these tensions. Whiteman also discusses the under-examined role of the large Nigerian community in Britain, highlighting the success of several ‘Nigerian-Britons’ in the area of arts and culture, and noting the importance of non-governmental organisations that have promoted trade and understanding between both countries. Some of the difficult episodes highlighted in the chapter include: British hesitance to provide Lagos with military assistance during the Nigerian civil war of 1967–1970; tensions over the assassination of popular Nigerian head of state General Murtala Mohammed in February 1976; the attempt by the administration of General Muhammad Buhari in July 1984 to kidnap the politician Umaru Dikko (wanted in Nigeria on corruption charges) from his home in London; and the hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa by the Abacha regime in November 1995 and Nigeria’s subsequent suspension from the British-led Commonwealth, an incident which Whiteman describes as ‘the lowest ebb’ in the bilateral relationship. Much of Nigeria’s wealth, stolen by its politicians and their allies, has ended up in Western banks. Whiteman notes that Nigerians have complained that British banks and the Tony Blair administration between 1997 and 2007, failed to co-operate sufficiently with efforts by the Obasanjo regime to recover millions of pounds of ill-gotten loot stashed away in Britain.

Another important bilateral relationship involves Nigeria’s ties with the world’s sole superpower: the United States, which Gwendolyn Mikell ably describes. Nigeria has been a major exporter of oil to the United States since the 1970s, and currently accounts for about 12 per cent of total American oil imports. But this strong trade relationship has not always translated into smooth political relations, and there were tensions between both countries over American policies in Southern Africa in the 1970s and 1980s. In the 1990s, the relationship between Washington and successive military regimes in Nigeria became strained, and the United States only belatedly provided some military assistance to support Nigeria’s peacekeeping efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. After 1999, the United States provided support to Obasanjo’s civilian government for democratic and security sector reform, and identified Nigeria and South Africa as Africa’s ‘pivotal states’. US President Bill Clinton visited
Nigeria in August 2000 and a main street in the capital of Abuja was named after him. President George W. Bush also visited Nigeria in July 2003, and Mikell assesses US policy towards Nigeria during his administration between 2001 and 2008.

Mikell argues that US post-Cold War relations with Nigeria have been dominated by three priorities: bilateral economic affairs; regional security; and democratic governance. Having assessed the historical bilateral relations between Washington and Abuja and highlighted the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) of 2000, as well as the African Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA) of 2002 in the trade and security fields respectively, she examines the effect of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 on the United States on the bilateral relationship. Mikell focuses on important interest groups and individuals in four arenas: key Nigerian policy players; Nigeria’s NGO sector; key American policy players; and American NGOs and think-tanks. The chapter highlights how these key actors have shaped US–Nigeria relations. In concluding the chapter, Mikell offers five policy recommendations to guide future US–Nigeria relations: first, greater consistency in the US/Nigeria military-security relationship; second, increasing American diplomatic reach within Nigeria; third, developing a strategy for a US economic action agenda in Nigeria; fourth, increasing American investment in Nigeria’s health (especially HIV/AIDS), education and human development sectors; and finally, strengthening democratic institutions and governance standards in Nigeria.

A debate by Nigerian legislators about a Nigerian defence pact with the United States at the beginning of the Obasanjo administration in 1999 smacked of breathtaking naïveté about US foreign policy interests, and revealed an alarming lack of self-confidence among Nigeria’s leaders. Washington, like many other Western powers, had clearly demonstrated during the brutal regime of General Abacha that it could do business with any Nigerian government that protected its oil interests. Even after incidents like the brazen hanging of Ogoni activists during a Commonwealth summit in 1995, the United States and other countries failed to impose any substantial sanctions – such as an oil embargo or freezing of ill-gotten personal financial assets – that could have hurt Abacha’s military junta. It was noteworthy that former American secretary of state under Bill Clinton, Warren Christopher, quietly reassured American oil companies in Nigeria during his tour of Africa in 1996 that he would not push for an oil embargo against Abacha’s regime. What supporters of a Nigeria–US defence pact had failed to realise was that, after the death of 18 US soldiers during the debacle in Somalia in 1993 as part of a UN peacekeeping mission, Washington had decided that it would no longer send its soldiers to die in Africa. With no American enthusiasm for such a pact, Nigeria’s legislators learned the hard way that their country’s democracy would best be protected from the machinations of military brass hats by democratic
governance and a regime that enjoyed the support of Nigerians, and not through the long barrel of an American gun.

The final bilateral relationship examined in this book is the increasingly important tie between Nigeria and China, a rising Great Power which has arguably been the most active external power in post-Cold War Africa. In an original and well-researched chapter, Sharath Srinivasan assesses Sino-Nigerian relations within China’s broader political and economic strategy towards Africa. He argues that Nigeria is likely to play a mediating role between China, Africa and the West. The chapter is divided into five sections. The first reviews China’s historical and political role after 1945, highlighting how Beijing flirted with Biafran secessionists during Nigeria’s civil war of 1967–1970 in order to counter Soviet and Western support for Lagos, before strongly courting Nigeria while seeking to replace Taiwan at the UN (which it successfully did in 1971). The second explores the dramatic increase in China’s engagement with Africa after the end of the Cold War. Nigeria provided a market for Chinese goods and service exports as well as a source of much-needed energy, and a potentially strategic alliance in African diplomacy. The third section examines growing African concerns about whether China’s ‘peaceful rise’ will help or hinder the continent’s own development. Section four offers a critique of one-sided Western assessments of China’s destabilising impact on Africa, while providing a more nuanced analysis of how leading African states such as Nigeria can positively shape Sino-African relations for the mutual benefit of both sides. The final section of the chapter appraises the prospects for Sino-Nigerian relations within the broader context of Beijing’s growing geo-strategic role on the continent.

CULTURE AND FOREIGN POLICY

We next turn to the issue of culture, described by Joseph Nye as part of ‘soft power’: non-military resources that countries can deploy to influence others to follow their lead and to desire what they want. Within the Nigerian context, this is an under-examined but important part of the country’s foreign policy, and we focus on two issues: Nigeria’s hosting of a pan-African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in 1977, and the phenomenal rise of ‘Nollywood’, Nigeria’s prolific indigenous film industry, which has attracted devotees all across the continent and among Africans in the diaspora. This issue is also linked to how Nigeria’s image abroad can affect the pursuit of the country’s foreign policy, a subject which Raufu Mustapha discusses in his chapter. The achievements of Nigerian writers, musicians, actors and sportsmen have been impressive, as Kaye Whiteman notes in relation to Nigerians in Britain. Wole Soyinka became the first African winner of the Nobel prize for literature in 1986. Ben Okri won the Booker prize in 1991, while Chinua Achebe won the Man Booker international prize for fiction in 2007. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie won the
prestigious Orange literary prize in 2007, while Nigerian footballers such as Stephen Keshi, Nwankwo Kanu, 'Jay Jay' Okocha, Finidi George, Obafemi Martins and John Obi Mikell have made their mark in prestigious European football leagues. Nigerian painter Chris Ofili won the Turner prize, while the country has produced artists such as Fela Anikulapo-Kuti and Sunny Ade, singers such as Seal and Sade, and actors such as Chiwetel Ejiofor (winner of the Best Actor award at the 2008 Olivier Awards) and David Oyelowo, who are winning international acclaim.

Nigeria's Festival of Arts and Culture of 1977 was a redefinition of pan-Africanism by an increasingly self-confident nation that had long defined itself as ‘the Giant of Africa.’ The festival involved thousands of artists from across Africa, as well as members of the diaspora from the Caribbean, South America, North America and Australasia. As American academic Andrew Apter noted: ‘Nigeria emerged as the unequivocal leader of the new black world. Spending lavishly on its global citizens, the Nigerian state accrued political capital as master of ceremonies while recasting the nation in indigenous terms as the fons et origo of virtually all black cultural traditions.’ FESTAC involved events like durbars, regattas (with war canoes) and traditional dances, as well as elaborate works of art and the construction of a stunning 31-metre high national theatre and sprawling festival village. Apter places the festival in the context of imperial spectacles such as London's Crystal Palace Exhibition (1851) and America's Columbian Exposition (1893), noting that such ‘cultural productions’ revealed connections between empire and knowledge.

FESTAC represented a national showpiece by a self-confident elite: it marked the arrival of the world’s largest black nation into the ranks of the nouveaux riches, and promoted African culture as a sign of cultural equality with a West that had often denigrated the continent’s cultures. This event marked the celebration of a party that Nigerians assumed would never end.

Interestingly, some Nigerian born-again Christians ascribe the start of the country’s decline to the ‘demonic’ masks and gods unleashed by FESTAC. Many continue to regard the event as having been a profligate ‘Festival of Awards and Contracts’ during the wasteful era of the oil boom 1970s, when the problem, according to Nigerian head of state, General Yakubu Gowon, was not getting the money but finding ways to spend it! The decision to build, by 1991, a brand-new capital with spectacular highways, conference centres and religious buildings in Abuja – which now hosts the ECOWAS secretariat as a potent symbol of Nigeria’s regional leadership – was also taken during the euphoric days of the oil boom. Abuja’s street-names reflect a pan-African identity, and the Nigerian capital has served as the centre of many continental peacemaking initiatives on conflicts such as those in Liberia, Sudan and Togo.

It is, however, the phenomenon of Nigeria’s prolific film industry – ‘Nollywood’ – that has attracted the most recent positive international attention to the country.
Nollywood makes over 2 000 films a year, which is more than America’s Hollywood or India’s Bollywood. The industry is thought to employ about one million people when including production and distribution, making it the second-largest employer in the country. Annual sales are estimated at $250–350 million. The Nigerian movies started rolling off the shelves in 1992 with a blockbuster film called ‘Living in Bondage’, which was about a man who gains wealth and power by killing his wife and repenting after her ghost haunts him. The theme of ritual murder and redemption is one that runs through many of these movies, which have spread like wildfire in African societies in which superstition and born-again Christianity are very much a part of daily life. Other popular titles have included ‘Glamour Girls’, ‘Honey’, ‘The Battle of Love’, ‘Thunderbolt’, ‘Sango’, ‘Rituals’, ‘Survivors’, ‘Goodbye Tomorrow’, ‘Mortal Inheritance’, ‘Agogo Eewo’, ‘She Devil’, ‘The Prostitute’ and ‘Strange Women.’

The films are still mostly on videos and DVDs and are thus widely available to both rich and poor, not just in Nigeria, but across West Africa, East Africa and South Africa. Many of the films are available in cities like Accra, Nairobi, Dar es Salaam and Johannesburg, and are widely watched within the African diaspora in Europe and North America. As veteran Nigerian producer Tunde Kelani noted: ‘. . . our movies are definitely African. Their popularity shows that Africans have a lot in common socially, culturally and politically.’

‘Nollywood’ films have nevertheless sparked demonstrations in Ghana and Tanzania against crass materialism and ‘voodoo-mongering.’ Some Ghanaians also blamed serial murders that occurred in their country on Nigeria’s Igbo community, due to the resemblance of these incidents to the fictional accounts gleaned from ‘Nollywood’ movies. Chukwuemeka Chikelu, Nigeria’s Minister of Information and National Orientation at the time, recognised the importance of ‘Nollywood’ when telling its directors in 2003: ‘I invite you, my friends, to see your work as an integral part of a renaissance project. The renaissance of a great nation, the renaissance of a great people. Your work is an ambassador from Nigeria to the world. It is an international diplomat requesting no accreditation. The content of your work is the only credential that is presented for Nigeria in the living-room of millions of people around the world.’

‘Nollywood’, however, has its critics who complain about the poor quality of the films; their lack of originality in revisiting the same themes for parochial commercial gain; and a negative stereotyping of Nigeria as a haven for witchcraft and wizards. Chukwuemeka Chikelu, the same Nigerian information minister who lavishly praised ‘Nollywood’, reflected this concern in noting to Nigeria’s film-makers: ‘Your challenge is to ensure that your work does not cause these people to deny your countrymen the respect that they deserve . . . We are not a nation of violence and blood; neither are we a nation of cults and frauds. We are not a nation of witches and wizards; neither are we a nation of crime and intrigue. We are a nation of sports, of arts and sciences, a rich culture, a vibrant population, a nation of leaders, a pride of Africa.’ In similar
vein, Audu Ogbeh, then chairman of the ruling People’s Democratic Party, criticised ‘Nollywood’ in 2003 for churning out hastily-conceived stories that trivialise Nigerian society, representing its people in ways they could no longer recognise. But while there may be some substance to the critique of the quality of some of the movies, just as with Hollywood and Bollywood, the market will surely weed out poor quality, and the preference of consumers will ultimately decide which films are commercially profitable. The charges that the ‘Nollywood’ factory is mass-producing culture based on a repetitive formula are equally applicable to Hollywood. As for negative cultural stereotyping, this is also a weak criticism that may reflect the prejudices of a Westernised African urban elite, since the films merely reflect what 70 per cent of Africans see as their daily reality of money, marabouts and magic. The movies deal with relevant contemporary issues of proselytising, polygamy and prostitution; military brass hats and mysterious ritual murders; drugs and dodgy politicians; gangsters and godfathers; AIDS, adultery, and ‘aliens’ from neighbouring countries. They hold up a mirror to society that may be uncomfortable viewing for corrupt, corpulent elites.

‘Nollywood’ may in fact be leading the way to the first authentic African cinema that has wide appeal across the continent and its diaspora. As one of Nigeria’s leading writers, Odia Ofeimum, eloquently noted in 2003, Nigeria’s film industry is ‘a representation of ourselves by ourselves! . . . it is sometimes better to tell your story even incompetently and badly than for it to be mis-told by others . . . those whose stories are not told become invisible, even to themselves; they are easily forgotten; the forgotten become or remain a disempowered people; the disempowered are generally a lost people.’

PILLARS OF SUPPORT

Returning to traditional foreign policy issues before concluding this introduction, we offer some policy recommendations to guide Nigeria’s future foreign policy. The country will need to improve bilateral relations and form strategic partnerships with four important states – South Africa, France, Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire – in order to achieve its foreign policy objectives in Africa.

The relationship with South Africa has been discussed in detail above. Abuja must also maintain and strengthen its military relationship with Accra, which proved so crucial to the success of ECOMOG’s efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone between 1990 and 2003. Nigeria must further continue to improve its relations with France. Nigeria’s leaders have discovered that French leaders are eager to do business with them. Despite past suspicions of French intentions in Africa, Nigerians must stop their knee-jerk response to every action by francophone states that assumes a hidden agenda by a French puppeteer, and take cognisance of the changing French role in
Africa. It is time that political co-operation between these countries caught up with their lucrative economic relationship.

Nigeria must also continue to improve ties with Côte d’Ivoire, still potentially – despite its civil war – the richest and most important francophone state in West Africa. Nigeria and Côte d’Ivoire have historically been the financial backbone of ECOWAS and the leaders of the anglophone and francophone blocs in West Africa. A strategic partnership between Abuja and Abidjan could help bridge the anglophone/francophone dichotomy that has hampered regional economic and military co-operation in West Africa for the last five decades. Nigeria should continue to play a supportive role within ECOWAS in efforts to end the Ivorian crisis. Both governments should also meet more regularly to promote trade and political co-operation.

Finally, a democratic Nigeria will be important for building sub-regional and international support for foreign policy objectives, as well as guaranteeing the international legitimacy and securing external support for any future military interventions, while avoiding the charges of hypocrisy faced by General Abacha in restoring democracy to Liberia and Sierra Leone while denying it to Nigerians at home. An arrogant unilateralism has sometimes been evident in Nigerian diplomacy, particularly during the era of Abacha’s abrasive foreign minister, Tom Ikimi, between 1995 and 1998. Ikimi’s brusque style was subsequently dubbed ‘area boy diplomacy’ by his Nigerian critics. Nigeria will have to be careful not to arouse the fears of its neighbours through unilateral military interventions and other actions that make it appear to be pursuing parochial policies in an effort to dominate its sub-region. To fulfil its leadership ambitions in West Africa, Nigeria will have to provide not just the military muscle for sub-regional peacekeeping, but the vibrant domestic market needed to sustain economic integration, provide economic assistance to its neighbours, and ease the acceptance of its leadership role in West Africa. Only by being strong at home, can Nigeria effectively contribute to resolving problems abroad.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THIS BOOK AND ITS APPROACH

This book provides one of the first comprehensive assessments of Nigeria’s post-Cold War foreign policy. Since 1986, only two broad studies on Nigeria’s foreign policy have examined the domestic, regional and external dimensions of this policy. They are former Nigerian foreign minister U. Joy Ogwu’s New Horizons for Nigeria in World Affairs (2005); and Nigeria’s New Foreign Policy Thrust (2004), a volume edited by Bola A. Akinterinwa, the former special assistant to Olu Adeniji, Nigeria’s foreign minister (2003 to 2006). Our study intends to match the impressive scope of Gabriel Olusanya and Raufu Akindele’s 1986 edited volume, Nigeria’s External Relations.

In 1990, the latter authors edited The Structure and Processes of Foreign Policymaking and Implementation, which focused on internal foreign policy decision-making
rather than on the regional and external aspects of Nigeria's foreign policy. Given this
gap in the literature, this book seeks to fill the need for a comprehensive study, one
which examines Nigeria's most important domestic issues related to foreign policy;
the key regional issues; and relations with the most important external bilateral and
multilateral actors. The abundance of Nigerian foreign policy studies in the 1960s
and 1970s has disappeared, and the current drought is relieved only by small pockets
of work produced by the likes of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs.

Much of the recent literature on regionalism and foreign policy has tended to
focus on Europe, Asia and the Middle East. As a result, this book aims to contribute
to the study of the foreign policy of one of Africa's most important states – Nigeria –
as well as to the study of regionalism in Africa. The concept of regional security
complexes has not yet been discussed in detail in the African context. The link
between hegemony and regionalism is also seriously under-theorised. This book,
with its focus on the role of a regional hegemon, Nigeria, in West Africa, hopes to
make an empirical contribution to the consideration of such theories. Through this
study, scholars will be able to develop a comparative perspective on regionalism.
Furthermore, sub-regional security relations and dynamics are still not well under-
stood, and only through sufficient empirical knowledge based on studies like this
one can this process even begin.

We paid careful attention to bringing together a multidisciplinary and diverse
group of international researchers of the highest calibre to undertake this study.
Though Nigerian scholars and practitioners who have devoted their academic and/
or diplomatic careers to the study and practice of Nigerian foreign policy form the
core of this volume, nearly half of the researchers come from outside Nigeria: South
Africa, Australia, Britain, Canada, France and the United States. Four of the authors
are themselves scholar-diplomats with intimate knowledge of Nigeria's policymaking
process: they include a former Nigerian foreign minister (Ibrahim Gambari); a
former Nigerian Ambassador to the UN in New York (Oladapo Fafowora); a
former Nigerian ambassador to Germany (Akinjide Osuntokun); and the Nigerian
ambassador to the UN in Geneva (Martin Uhomoibhi). This is a book premised on
the belief that an effective foreign policy must be built on a sound domestic base
that promotes both effective economic development and democratic stability.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


22. I thank Martin Uhomoibhi for this observation.


27. See Karl Maier, 2000, *This House has Fallen: Midnight in Nigeria* (New York: Public Affairs).


37. For the most comprehensive account and documents of the Nigerian civil war, see Anthony Kirk-Greene, 1971, *Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria*, Volumes 1 & 2 (London: Oxford University Press).


Hegemony on a shoestring


45. See Bolaji Akinyemi, 1974, Foreign Policy and Federalism (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press).

46. Personal interviews with diplomatic and military officials on a research trip to Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone in July and August 1999.

47. Sule Lamido, interview. 'I will surprise my critics', ThisDay, 8 August 1999, p. 10.


58. See, for example, Ike Okonta and Oronto Douglas, 2003, *Where Vultures Feast: Shell, Human Rights and Oil* (London and New York: Verso); and Maier, 2000, *This House has Fallen.*


62. I thank Raufu Mustapha for these observations.


78. I thank my sister, Adefemi Adebajo, for this interesting observation.


82. Odia Ofeimum, 2006, 'In Defence of the Films We Have Made,' *Chimurenga* 8, p. 51.


84. Cited in Ofeimum, 2006, 'In Defence of the Films We Have Made', p. 44.

85. Cited in Ofeimum, 2006, 'In Defence of the Films We Have Made', pp. 44–45.

86. Cited in Ofeimum, 2006, 'In Defence of the Films We Have Made', p. 45.

87. Ofeimum, 2006, 'In Defence of the Films We Have Made', p. 50.


89. This memorable phrase was coined by Gabriel Olusanya, former Director-General of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs. 'Area boys' are thuggish local youths. See also Tunde Asaju and Dotun Oladipo, 'Ikimi's Jungle Diplomacy', *Newswatch*, 28 September 1998, pp. 8–16.


PART V

Conclusion
A large and dynamic country such as Nigeria has an important role to play in the international system. As Ibrahim Gambari has argued in his chapter in this book, despite the military and economic clout of the Great Powers during the Cold War, even small and weak states were able to exercise some influence in the international system. This fundamental truth has not changed, even in the face of the unipolar moment of the post-Cold War era, and growing concerns about American unilateralism. Many of the challenges facing the international system continue to defy purely national solutions. Since its independence in October 1960, Nigeria has played an important role in the international relations of Africa. Apart from rising to the diplomatic challenges of Biafran secession between 1967 and 1970, as noted by Kaye Whiteman in his chapter, Nigerian diplomacy has been central to the mobilisation of support for nationalist and anti-apartheid causes in Southern Africa, and the promotion of conflict resolution and democratic governance in West Africa. Within the context of Africa and West Africa, therefore, Nigeria is uniquely placed to play the role of ‘anchor state’, as suggested by Gwendolyn Mikell in her chapter, or the role of a sub-regional ‘caretaker’, as suggested by Beninois president Yayi Boni in July 2006.

But this significant potential is accompanied by a number of difficulties and challenges. Given the interplay between domestic forces and the external environment, does Nigeria have the internal coherence to play the role of a ‘middle power’? And if Nigeria evolves as an anchor state, we are left to ask, an anchor for which interests? Despite its many strong points, there is still a feeling that Nigeria’s diplomacy is punching below its rightful weight. If this perception is to be overcome, the significant challenges to Nigeria’s foreign policy in a post-Cold War era...
War era must be addressed urgently. This concluding chapter will examine four key challenges: domestic; regional; extra-regional; and professionalism within Nigeria's foreign service.

THE DOMESTIC CHALLENGE

As many of the contributors to this volume have noted, Nigeria’s domestic problems represent a serious challenge to its hegemonic ambitions abroad. Nigeria’s claims to potential power – a large population and revenue from oil – are also its Achilles’ heel. As Abdul Raufu Mustapha’s chapter has shown, Nigeria continues to grapple with a heritage of ethnic and cultural diversity. Conflicts over the distribution of political and economic goods among its ethno-regional groupings have made it difficult for a coherent national ethos to emerge, or a clear definition of the country’s national interests. The constant battle between centrifugal and centripetal forces within the federation lies at the heart of fears of Nigeria’s disintegration. Military rule between 1966 and 1979, and between 1984 and 1999, made these tensions worse, but democratic rule since 1999 has yet to develop a comprehensive and generally acceptable solution to the problem of mass political alienation. As Adekeye Adebajo makes clear in his introduction to this book, a hegemon must have both the means and the legitimacy with which to exercise power. How can Nigeria project its legitimacy abroad when this power is being questioned by important constituencies at home, as Ike Okonta has asked in his chapter? The unresolved situation in the Niger Delta is indicative of the limits of military and bureaucratic power for the successful development of both Nigeria's domestic and foreign policies. There has also been a lack of sustained domestic involvement in the definition of foreign policy goals, coupled with the difficulty of building domestic consensus around important foreign policy objectives. During military regimes, few channels exist for the public to engage with foreign policy issues. The democratic dispensation since 1999 has yet to address this lack of access, and parliamentary oversight of the foreign policy process remains weak and ineffective. The Nigerian state therefore faces the challenge of converting raw power into legitimate authority – a feat not yet achieved in post-colonial Nigerian statecraft. There is also the problem of the weak institutionalisation of this legitimacy. Considering these continuing difficulties over the constitutional and political arrangements in Nigeria, many Africans may be tempted to cite the dictum, ‘Physician, heal thyself!’; whenever Nigerian politicians, diplomats, and soldiers come calling on their numerous peacemaking missions abroad.

A central factor in the lack of Nigeria’s domestic legitimacy is the question of a common Nigerian citizenship. The constitutionally prescribed distinction between the ‘indigenes’ of a state or community, and non-indigenes, usually referred to as ‘settlers’, effectively introduces a two-tier system of rights within Nigeria. Closely tied
to this is the fact that some ethnic groups – by virtue of their political, bureaucratic and economic clout – are more equal than others, with insufficient attention paid to the protection of the interests of ‘ethnic minorities’. Finally, there is a general lack of social citizenship through the elaboration of social policies that unite Nigerians along socio-economic lines.

Instead, what Nigeria has had for the last forty years has been the pernicious politics of the distribution of oil rents and their associated ‘curse of oil’. Oil has been closely associated with decreasing productivity within the Nigerian economy. Figures suggest that between 1950 and 1972, a Nigeria that experienced an independence struggle and a civil war still managed to post an annual per capita income growth of 3.2 per cent per annum, while between 1973 and 1994, a Nigeria at peace and awash with oil revenues could only manage a per capita income growth of 0.1 per cent per annum.\(^1\) The rentier logic promoted by oil revenues generates the politics of ‘representation without taxation’, leading to institutional and policy weaknesses arising from a lack of accountability. Recent studies also point to this connection between oil and poor economic performance. Oil revenues have promoted a culture of waste and poor institutional quality in Nigeria.\(^2\) The contentious politics of ethno-regionalism are exacerbated by the political economy of oil and stunted growth, all of which have combined to undermine the possibilities for a dynamic social and political system, and have resulted in more than 70 per cent of the population living on or below the poverty line. As Akinjide Osuntokun points out in his chapter with reference to Nigeria’s immediate neighbours, ‘an abjectly poor neighbour is a dangerous neighbour’. In this regard, Nigeria might very well become a danger to itself. The domestic challenge for Nigeria’s foreign policy is therefore the re-engineering of the constitutional, political and economic system, with the twin objectives of reducing areas of contention and promoting public welfare.

Four specific areas require urgent attention if this domestic challenge is to be fully addressed. Firstly, Nigeria needs a constitutional settlement that commands the acceptance, if not the respect, of a majority of its 140 million citizens and 250 constitutive groups. The 1999 constitution (bequeathed by the military regime of Abdulsalaam Abubakar), which formed the framework for the return to democratic politics, is defective in many important respects, one of which is the centralisation of power in Abuja at the expense of the states and other sub-national communities. Ike Okonta, in his chapter, has drawn attention to the importance of a truly federalist constitution, and it is a matter of serious disappointment that the three attempts made between 1999 and 2006 to reform the constitution all failed to redress its problems. The National Political Reforms Conference (NPRC) of 2005 was presented as an effort to develop a political reform process in tandem with the ongoing economic reform process. However, the conference failed to achieve its objectives because it was constituted in an undemocratic manner, with its members
appointed by President Olusegun Obasanjo and state governors. The body was therefore reduced to a gathering of ethno-regional notables, who played out their usual politics of ethno-regional brinkmanship instead of seeking compromise and accommodation. The NPRC was also dogged by suspicions that former president Obasanjo was trying to use the conference to achieve a poorly concealed ambition to extend his tenure beyond the constitutionally stipulated date of May 2007.

The second effort at constitutional review was the Constitutional Reform Bill of 2006, which was debated and rejected by the National Assembly. The bill bundled together over 100 suggested amendments to the 1999 constitution, including the attempt to amend Section 137 sub-section 1(b), which limits the tenure of Nigeria’s president to a maximum of two terms of four years each, to allow for an extra term of four years for President Obasanjo. The manipulative and authoritarian efforts made to secure this amendment in April 2006 led most Nigerians to believe that constitutional reform had become the pretext to achieve undemocratic ends. Popular disquiet and the spirited defence of a two-term presidency by the media, civil society groups and sections of the National Assembly led to the defeat of the entire constitutional reform effort.

The final effort at constitutional reform was led by civil society organisations under the Pro-National Conference Organisations (PRONACO). Though this was touted as a popular alternative to the elitist efforts of the NPRC and the National Assembly, this process also degenerated into intrigues and schisms that confused the general public and resulted in a proposed constitution of dubious legitimacy.

It appears that each of these three constitutional reform processes was hijacked by vested interests to the detriment of the nation. As a result of this failure to achieve a generally acceptable constitutional settlement, the level of instability in Nigeria continues to be very high. As the late Jean-François Médard notes in his chapter, even France, long considered to be interested in weakening Nigeria (as evidenced by its role during the Nigerian civil war of 1967 to 1970), is now said to be concerned about Nigeria’s possible disintegration and the resulting dire consequences for Paris’ ex-colonies on Nigeria’s borders.³

A second area of urgent domestic challenge to Nigeria is the decayed public infrastructure in the country. Nigeria is currently a country with an erratic supply of electricity, inadequate water supply, a poorly trained labour force and hamstrung economic productivity. Seeking to project national power from such a weak base poses problems of effectiveness and sustainability.

A third area of challenge is the critical deficit in Nigeria’s social policies and the resulting lack of a civic citizenship. On the grounds of both equity and efficiency, much can be done to promote the access of the bulk of the Nigerian population to basic education, health and housing, and to improve the quality of existing socio-economic provisions.⁴ Nigeria needs a social contract with its citizens as a basis for
demanding their loyalty and support for both its domestic and foreign policies. The palpable disillusionment with the paltry ‘democracy dividend’ since 1999 is therefore a threat to the effectiveness of the country’s foreign and domestic policies.

Finally, Nigeria needs to improve the general tone of its governance, addressing graft and corruption, and promoting not just the accountability of governments after policies have been implemented, but also responsiveness to the needs of citizens in the policymaking process itself.

Some steps have been taken to meet these four challenges since 1999, but much remains to be done. Only a Nigeria relatively at peace with itself can rightly aspire to bring peace and prosperity to others. These structural challenges have been further complicated by the lack of legitimacy of the April 2007 election process. Nigeria’s Independent National Electoral Commission’s (INEC) catalogue of illegalities included the flouting of court orders; illegal and/or unconstitutional disqualification of candidates; refusal to include the names and pictures of major opposition candidates for the gubernatorial elections in eastern Anambra state in contravention of court rulings; and the late arrival and/or non-arrival of voting materials in many places, often followed by results being announced despite no voting having taken place. In some states, INEC headquarters announced a result even when the Resident Electoral Commissioner *in situ* said there was no result; results were declared while collation and counting of votes were still ongoing; and a month after the April polls ended, three INEC staff were caught thumb-printing ballot papers meant for the election at Igarra in western Edo state, in a bid to manufacture evidence in support of their already declared results. These can hardly be said to be the actions of a competent and fair arbiter in an electoral contest.

INEC’s commissions and omissions were compounded by the widespread use of violence during party primaries and during the actual elections. Patterns of the systematic use of violence included the use of thugs, bombings and assassinations to ‘select’ party candidates during party primaries; the use of police and soldiers to intimidate voters (and in many places, security forces were also observed participating in the seizure of ballot boxes); the use of thugs to perpetrate violence with impunity, leading to the killing of at least 200 people; and post-election political assassinations in south-western Ondo state.

**THE REGIONAL CHALLENGE**

In his chapter on the Nigerian-led Economic Community of West African States [ECOWAS] Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Liberia and Sierra Leone, Adekeye Adebajo has argued that diminishing external interest in Africa in the post-Cold War era is bound to increase the influence of sub-regional countries such as Nigeria. He also notes that before 1990, Nigeria had sought to project power in
the West African sub-region through largely non-military means, with three of the country’s four military interventions occurring under authoritarian military regimes. However, along with William Fawole in his chapter, Adebajo notes the increasing primacy of the military in the foreign policy process since 1990. Both authors also point to financial and logistical weaknesses in the deployment of Nigeria’s military muscle. Abuja needs to resist the temptation of seeing Nigeria as the new ‘policeman’ of West Africa: a replacement for the increasingly reluctant French gendarme. The promotion of regional security and peace through ECOMOG, important as this is in a potentially volatile region, must be complemented by strategies emphasising the creation of a common regional economic infrastructure; the expansion of regional economic opportunities; and the promotion of democratic institutions and values across Africa. As Ibrahim Gambari has argued in his chapter, the promotion of democratisation is central to Nigeria’s national interests.

To achieve its economic objectives, Nigeria needs to go beyond the concern with regional trade, to consider wider issues of economic transformation and development. Kate Meagher, in her chapter, has rightly argued that one must resist the temptation to believe that the widespread, yet unofficial, cross-border economic interactions in West Africa have the potential of leading to ‘real’ integration and transformation within the sub-region. Effective vision and co-ordinated action are also needed from sub-regional states to promote effective integration, but not the sort of rhetoric-laden efforts that characterised the extinct Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the newer African Union (AU) and ECOWAS; nor the symbolic but wasteful investment in a few industries in the Republic of Benin, as highlighted by Akinjide Osuntokun in his chapter. Poverty and disaffection are just as dangerous to the rest of West Africa as they are to Nigeria. Wielding a big stick is thus not always an effective response to deep-rooted structural problems. Considering the history of colonial schism, a two-track ECOWAS (in which some states move more rapidly towards integration than others) may be necessary to address the transformational and developmental needs of West Africa more effectively.

Ike Okonta has argued in his chapter that there is an increasing militarisation of the Gulf of Guinea. According to Nigeria’s former defence minister between 2006 and 2007, Thomas Aguiyi-Ironsi (son of the late head of state in the period January to July 1966), the increased foreign military presence in the region is due to ‘the incapacity of our armed forces to secure and adequately police the territory’. There has been a marked increase in the presence of the US Navy in the Gulf of Guinea. During a visit to Nigeria in August 2006, Linda Thomas–Greenfield, US deputy-assistant secretary of state for African Affairs, spoke of a proposed American-initiated ‘Niger Delta Security Initiative’ and the increasing convergence of Nigeria’s ‘home-grown’ security initiatives with America’s vision. The two ‘home-grown’ initiatives she was referring to are the Presidential Implementation Committee on
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Maritime Security and Safety (PICO-MSS); and the Gulf of Guinea Energy Security Strategy (GGESS). At a meeting of the PICO-MSS and a US technical committee on maritime safety, it was noted that the United States had stepped up naval operations in the Gulf of Guinea, ‘from almost no activity in 2004 to 130 ship-days in 2005 and planned more ship-days [in 2006]’. The agenda for this ‘partnership’ was also heavily influenced by Washington. The GGESS was set up in 2005 as a collaborative agency between Nigeria, the United States and Britain, with the aim of combating oil theft, the circulation of illegal small arms and money-laundering, as well as promoting local development initiatives. The vision of this body, of ‘bringing violence to the minimum’ in the Gulf of Guinea, has distinctive military and policing overtones. By means of this platform, Thomas-Greenfield announced, the US military would provide Nigeria with ‘a network of centres, radars, and communications facilities’ along with ‘training that is of substantial value’. Representatives of the governments of Norway, Canada, the Netherlands and Switzerland attended the 2006 meeting of the GGESS as observers, with the intention of acquiring membership thereafter. So far, these initiatives have excluded the other members of the Gulf of Guinea Commission – São Tomé and Príncipe, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Angola, Cameroon, Congo-Brazzaville and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). These countries seem to have been integrated into the security planning under the Gulf of Guinea Guard Force (GGGF), which was created ‘to monitor and protect their common maritime interests’. It is not clear what the relationship of the GGGF is to the GGESS. The situation in the Gulf of Guinea is also related to United States initiatives in establishing an Africa Command and the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP), which link the United States with nine countries in the Sahel and Maghreb regions, including Nigeria. The potential danger to Nigeria and other countries posed by this increased military entanglement with the United States and its global ‘war on terror’ is clear.

Arguing that ‘size matters’, Chris Landsberg has suggested in his chapter that Nigeria and South Africa have, since 1999, seen themselves as indispensable interlocutors between Africa and the global system. While both countries have been at the forefront of introducing new and progressive norms into Africa’s inter-state relations, many of these norms and their associated institutions have yet to be fully consolidated or properly tested. Both Nigeria and South Africa are sometimes seen as ‘bullies’ by their neighbours; and both are sometimes held in suspicion by other African countries on account of their alleged ‘privileged’ relationships to Western countries. Meanwhile, the African Union suffers to some extent from Western perceptions of the OAU as a toothless network of autocratic African leaders. Can both Abuja and Tshwane (Pretoria) overcome these negative perceptions by earning the legitimacy with which to transform themselves into genuine regional hegemons? Considering the centrality of the personal relationship between former
Gulliver’s Troubles

president Olusegun Obasanjo and Thabo Mbeki in this strategic alliance, can this relationship be maintained after both leaders have left the official scene by 2009? In an increasingly unilateralist world, there remains a challenge of building a continent-wide multilateralism in which these two countries would play important, but not domineering, roles. Moreover, the relationship between Nigeria and South Africa needs to be based on core democratic norms. For example, a pro-democracy organisation, Nigerians United for Democracy (NUD), berated President Thabo Mbeki for his ‘indecent haste’ in congratulating and hosting Obasanjo’s successor, Umaru Yar’Adua, soon after the much-condemned April 2007 elections.

THE EXTRA-REGIONAL CHALLENGE

Nigeria’s relationship with foreign powers will also pose new challenges in the coming decades. Relations with the United States, Britain, France and China are of particular strategic importance to Nigeria. The Nigerian state’s lack of internal legitimacy has been exacerbated and compounded by the problematic elections of April 2007. The elections were condemned by many domestic and international bodies as falling far short of acceptable international standards, and even of Nigeria’s past record at holding elections. The consequent undermining of the external legitimacy of the Umaru Yar’Adua administration is illustrated by the relatively low level of the American delegation despatched to his inauguration in May 2007. While American First Lady Laura Bush had led the American delegation to the inauguration of the Liberian president, Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson, in January 2006, Jendayi Frazer, US assistant secretary of state for African Affairs, led the delegation to Yar’Adua’s inauguration. Furthermore, it has been alleged that former president Obasanjo’s request for a ‘farewell visit’ to the White House before handing over to Yar’Adua was rebuffed, while Tony Blair omitted Nigeria in his own ‘farewell’ trip to Africa in May 2007.

With respect to the United States, Gwendolyn Mikell has suggested in her chapter that the US ‘war on terror’ may have led to a situation in which America’s national security interests take precedence over a more balanced foreign policy thrust that would address the concerns of countries such as Nigeria. Herein lies the potential danger in Nigeria’s increased military collaboration with the United States. African countries, particularly Nigeria and South Africa, will have to go the extra mile to ensure that their concerns are not ignored by vital institutions of the American policymaking process. With specific regard to Nigeria, the United States seems to have three identifiable interests: (1) the Islamic heritage of a large percentage of the population in northern Nigeria and the attendant fear of global Islamist ‘infiltration’; (2) the increasing importance of the oil-rich Niger Delta and Gulf of Guinea to US strategic supplies; and (3) the alleged role of Nigerian drug smugglers in drug-trafficking and money-laundering in the United States. In each of these areas, Nigeria
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needs a clear understanding of its particular interests and international obligations, so that these interests are not ignored or trampled upon in its dealings with American officialdom. Washington’s tendency to bully African countries was very apparent in March 2003 when Obasanjo, Mbeki, and Senegal’s Abdoulaye Wade sent a joint letter to President George W. Bush asking for a peaceful disarming of Iraq under UN auspices. These three African leaders made a special case for multilateralism, arguing for the preservation of the integrity and credibility of the UN. In response, Obasanjo is said to have received a phone call from a Bush White House aide who pointedly asked him: ‘What do you think you are doing?’ Shortly after this encounter, US military assistance to Nigeria was cut, allegedly because the Nigerian military had been used against the civil population in Benue state. In the same vein, considerable American pressure on the Nigerian government and the newly elected Liberian president, Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson, led to the eventual handover of Charles Taylor to the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone in March 2006.

Special attention must also be paid to Mikell’s suggestion that there is an ongoing privatisation of aspects of foreign policy, which means that many non-governmental organisations can now influence the policy process in the West. This can be a double-edged sword for countries such as Nigeria. On the one hand, as Ike Okonta has argued, some of these non-governmental bodies can exercise unwarranted and negative influence, such as the redefinition of the Ogoni struggle as an ‘indigenous people’s struggle’ by well-meaning, but ultimately disruptive (and sometimes naïve) international NGOs, when in fact the struggle started as a broader civic protest against bad governance and neglect. On the other hand, as Kaye Whiteman has suggested in his chapter, the increasing influence of people-to-people relationships in the foreign policy process, coupled with the rising numbers of Nigerian-Britons (and Nigerian-Americans) can potentially provide a significant bridging role between Nigerian policymakers and policy processes in the West. By permitting these diasporic Nigerians to hold dual citizenship, the country is already seeking to respond to the aspirations of this highly mobile group. One contentious issue is the demand for voting rights by the Nigerian diaspora. Section 77 of the 1999 Constitution limits the registration of voters to Nigerians resident in the country, while the National Assembly, through the Electoral Act of 2001, sought to bar Nigerians with dual citizenship from running for office. In the April 2007 presidential election, Isa Odidi, a candidate for the New Democrats Party, successfully challenged this ban. The Nigerian government tends to view the diaspora mainly as an important source of investment and technical know-how. In fact, their official and unofficial remittances were said to amount to over $4 billion in 2004, and reached $8 billion in the first six months of 2007. While the authorities are keen to mobilise Nigerians abroad for greater involvement in the economy, there is also a need to respond to demands from the diaspora for political inclusion in Nigeria’s policy process.
Nigeria appears to be the lynchpin of changing French attitudes towards Africa. The contribution by Jean-François Médard in this book has suggested that French policy on Africa in general and Nigeria in particular is undergoing significant changes, a trend not always sufficiently recognized in Nigerian academic and diplomatic circles. On the one hand, within francophone Africa, there is an increasing continentalization and multilateralization of once-cosy paternalistic relations focused on France’s ex-colonies. On the other, outside the immediate French orbit, there is a grudging move by Paris away from the knee-jerk aversion to the ‘friends of the Anglo-Saxons’ such as Nigeria, South Africa and Ghana. While France is not moving out of Africa completely, it is trying to change the nature of its hegemonic ties with the continent. Finding it increasingly costly to maintain its erstwhile clientelistic relations with its former colonies, Paris is moving towards a multilateralization of these relations that maintains most of its influence, while spreading the costs of its policies to its European Union (EU) partners and the African neighbours of its former colonies.

In this regard, France has sought to use Nigeria to achieve food security and economic well-being in francophone West Africa, despite evidence that increasing flows of Nigerian crops, petrol and other goods into neighbouring francophone states are destabilising Nigeria’s economy. Given these concerns, France’s policy on Africa poses both a threat and a challenge to Nigeria: a threat to the extent that France might continue to exercise influence while leaving others to absorb the costs; and a challenge, if the countries that Paris is now courting – Nigeria, South Africa, and Ghana – can bring African interests to bear on new French thinking. The increasing normalisation of French policy towards Africa poses special challenges to Nigeria. While South Africa has no historical animosity with France and is located far from the francophonie, Ghana was never seen by France as a strategic threat in the way that Nigeria was (and possibly still is). Can Nigeria thus ensure that whatever new balance evolves out of changing French thinking does not jeopardise its own economic or regional interests?

China represents another important challenge for Nigerian policymakers. With China, as with France, Abuja needs to define a clear long-term strategy for engagement which supports the structural transformation and development of West Africa’s economies, and also provides a diplomatic counterweight to the sort of western engagement represented by the Bush White House between 2001 and 2008. The Obasanjo/Mbeki partnership in Africa tended to focus much of its energies on Africa’s relations with the West. More of this attention must also be focused on Sino-African relations, which should not be left to countries such as Zimbabwe and Sudan that seek to exploit Chinese ‘amoral’ attitudes to shore up their autocratic regimes. Different African countries are benefiting from – or are threatened by – China in distinct ways, suggesting that some continent-wide co-ordination is
needed if Africa is to maximise the opportunities presented by its relations with Beijing, while minimising its negative effects. Thabo Mbeki has already warned that Africa must guard against establishing a ‘colonial relationship’ with China.  

Nigeria’s relations with China have been driven more by efforts to cope with short-term problems than by a wider strategic vision. Since the 1980s, import liberalisation and weakened consumer purchasing power in Nigeria have led to increasing trade deficits with China. Huge flows of Chinese consumer goods have threatened Nigeria and other African countries with de-industrialisation, particularly in the garment and shoe sectors. How are these structural imbalances to be addressed? Under General Sani Abacha’s regime between 1993 and 1998, Abuja’s thinking did not go beyond the export of more Nigerian oil to China to cover the trade deficit between both countries. Under the post-1999 Obasanjo civilian regime, the horizon broadened to include infrastructural development; targeted investment; satellite communications development; and the promotion of Nigeria’s agricultural exports, particularly cassava, to China.

As Sharath Srinivasan has suggested in his chapter, more can still be done, especially if we consider the examples of countries such as Mauritius. The state-to-state focus of Sino-Nigerian relations should be broadened to include the promotion of localised Sino-Nigerian business networks, which could give added flexibility and creativity to current efforts at inter-governmental level. At a general strategic level, China’s vision of a world run by a ‘Concert of Powers’ is not antithetical to Nigeria’s aspirations to ‘middle power’ status, though some of Beijing’s ‘amoral’ relationships with autocratic regimes in Africa may undermine efforts at evolving a better governance framework for the continent. Sino-African relations will represent a paradigm shift from Africa’s existing unsatisfactory relations with the global system only if the vision and effort needed are given proper emphasis by important African countries such as Nigeria and South Africa.

Finally, Martin Uhomoibhi’s chapter has argued in favour of Nigeria’s need to harness its bilateral extra-African relations to a continued active presence in three key multilateral institutions in which the country has historically played an important role: the United Nations, the Commonwealth, and the European Union. The country can increase its diplomatic profile by engaging these institutions more skilfully and effectively.

**THE CHALLENGE OF PROFESSIONALISM**

The challenges outlined above cannot be adequately addressed without paying proper attention to the institutional framework for foreign policy formulation and execution, particularly with regard to the ministry of foreign affairs, the National Assembly, and within civil society. When Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was appointed
foreign minister in August 2006, she discovered that the ministry had no internet connection with the outside world, including its missions abroad, and that the lifts in the building were not functioning. Embassy buildings in Khartoum, Teheran and others in Latin America were said to be leaking. This sort of context is hardly conducive to creative and professional thinking.

Even greater attention needs to be paid to the staffing of the foreign affairs ministry. A 2002 study by the Bureau of Public Service Reform (BPSR) showed that most government ministries in Nigeria have ageing staff, with whole generations missing from the staff profile. Corruption and incompetence also trouble foreign ministry staff: between June and August 2006, the Authentication and Consular units of the foreign ministry were closed down on account of these problems.

Oladapo Fafowora – himself a former Nigerian career diplomat – has also argued in his chapter that funding and training of Nigerian diplomats both face serious constraints and financial cutbacks. He suggests that only 25 per cent of foreign ministry personnel speak a second international language apart from English. For his part, Ibrahim Gambari, a former Nigerian foreign minister, has argued for a move away from a foreign service based on generalists, to one based more heavily on specialists. In this era of intricate trade negotiations and rapid movement of people across the globe, specialist disciplinary and language skills are of vital importance. Both Gambari and Fafowora have also argued that Nigeria’s constitutionally prescribed ‘affirmative action’ programme – known as the ‘federal character’ principle – need not undermine merit, talent and efficiency. Nigeria’s ministry of foreign affairs clearly needs reshaping and strengthening, and its staff must be better trained, managed and adequately motivated to perform their duties at a more professional level. In May 2007, N21 billion [naira] (about $155.6 million) was approved for capacity-building within Nigeria’s foreign ministry. The excessive personalising of the foreign policy process by successive heads of state is another obstacle to the institutionalisation of professionalism within the foreign policy bureaucracy.

Finally, additional Nigerian institutions requiring support and capacity-building include the National Assembly, political parties, and civil society organisations, all of which can play enhanced roles in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic. For example, more can be done, through consultation and the provision of information and analysis, to involve these institutions more effectively in the foreign policy process so as to generate the needed understanding and legitimacy of decisions taken. Only once such measures have been implemented, and Nigeria’s leaders have met the other domestic, regional and extra-regional challenges outlined here, can West Africa’s Gulliver start to fulfil his continental leadership ambitions in the post-Cold War era.
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NOTES AND REFERENCES

4. The Service Compact with all Nigerians (SERVICOM) has yet to go beyond official rhetoric and effectively challenge the shoddy delivery of service by many public organisations, while the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, aimed at providing nine years of basic education, has faced severe implementation problems. In 2006, the federal government started considering the establishment of a joint pilot programme with the Kwara State government, aimed at providing free health care to pregnant women and children under five. Social transfer to the poor andelderly through a universal state-funded pension scheme is completely absent in Nigeria.
5. For example, manufacturers and farmers in Nigeria have been protesting about the operations of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS), claiming that it would encourage the dumping of cheap Malaysian products and the de-industrialisation of Nigeria. See ‘ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Will Cost Nigeria $900m’, www.thisdayonline.com, 17 July 2006, and ‘Producers fault lifting of ban on vegetable, textile imports’, www.ngrguardiannews.com, 17 July 2006. In response, the President of Benin Republic, Yayi Boni, called on Nigeria ‘to continue to play its brotherly role by allowing more goods from Benin to come into Nigeria’, www.ngrguardiannews.com, 21 July 2006. Meanwhile, ECOWAS is working on a Common External Tariff (CET) to be implemented in 2008.
14. Since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, US officials have shown both overt and covert interest in the Islamic intelligentsia of northern Nigeria. In January 2003, an American-sponsored dialogue was held in Kano between US diplomats and academics on the one hand, and Northern Nigerian traditional leaders and academics on the other. At this dialogue, the US Ambassador to Nigeria at the time, Howard Jeter, wondered why Northern Nigerians were concerned about the Israel-Palestine conflict, but not interested in the conflict in Sudan. ‘Exploring Mutual Perceptions: Dialogue Between US and Nigerian Opinion Leaders’, Ibrahim Ado-Kurawa, Weekly Trust, 22 March 2003. In 2005, the former US Ambassador to Nigeria, Princeton Lyman, was reported to


10 November 1995

Former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo was the first African leader to visit Nelson Mandela in jail – a gesture of solidarity that was not reciprocated by the South African leader when Obasanjo found himself in the same position in 1995, although Mandela did push for his release.
16 November 1995

A betrayed and angry South African President Nelson Mandela threatens to wield the stick of sanctions against the regime of General Sani Abacha in November 1995, after the autocrat had hanged Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight environmental and human rights activists who had campaigned against the Nigerian government and Shell oil company.
5 August 1997

Walter Ofonagoro, Information Minister in Nigerian autocrat General Sani Abacha’s regime, reportedly told a media seminar in July 1997 that South Africa was ‘a white country with a Black head of state’ – an allegation the Nigerians quickly denied when South African authorities demanded a formal apology.
13 June 2004

An African delegation of heads of state from Nigeria (Olusegun Obasanjo), South Africa (Thabo Mbeki) and Senegal (Abdoulaye Wade) attended part of the annual Group of Eight (G8) Industrialised Countries Summit, hosted by American President George W. Bush at Sea Island, Georgia, in June 2004.
30 May 2007

In a poll mired in controversy, Umaru Yar’Adua was inaugurated as Nigeria’s president in May 2007 amid widespread allegations of vote-rigging and fraud.