



GLOBAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN-SOCIAL SCIENCE: H  
INTERDISCIPLINARY

Volume 14 Issue 3 Version 1.0 Year 2014

Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal

Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA)

Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

## The Theory and Practice of the National Interest in a Geostrategic World: Aspects of Nigeria and the United States National Interest Examined

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**GJHSS-H Classification:** *FOR Code: 040699p*



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# The Theory and Practice of the National Interest in a Geostrategic World: Aspects of Nigeria and the United States National Interest Examined

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Civilization is social order promoting cultural creation. Four elements constitute it: economic provisions, political organization, moral traditions and the pursuit of knowledge and arts. It begins where chaos and insecurity end. For when fear is overcome, curiosity and constructiveness are free, and man passes by natural impulse towards the understanding and embellishment of life (Will Durant, 1954).

## I. INTRODUCTION

The attempt made in this paper is not intended to be an indictment on the conduct of foreign policies by world powers; it only concerns to point to the danger in the unilateral pursuit of the National Interest (NI), and its implications to national unity and international stability. Recent upheavals in Iraq have made this examination auspicious and imperative. It has confirmed the assertion by David Domke (2004), that George W. Bush's administration call for an end to "major combat", in Iraq in May, 2003, "left me with one conclusion: "the administration's political fundamental subverted many of the country's most precious democratic ideals".

The debate as to whether the United States (US), upholds the spirit of '76 has long been overtaken by the overwhelming developments in the international arena and by the US involvement in world affairs after the two world wars. The world wars terminated

America's traditional policy of isolation and translated it from a regional player to a full participant of international affairs. It will be recalled that the Monroe doctrine of 1823 restated the principles of isolation and non-entanglement in international affairs earlier expounded by President Washington in 1793 and 1796 respectively during his farewell speeches (Ritche, 1985). Monroe had inter-alia, warned European nations to hands off the American republics (Latin America and the Caribbean), and equally reassured European powers that the US would not participate in purely European affairs; this explains partly why in Africa, the US was not a "scrambling power".

Developments during and after the Second World War, however, convinced the US that it could no longer live in isolation. This is even more so today where technological improvement in communication and interdependence has fashioned the world into a global village. The US emerged from the second world war a super power with an increased international role including European reconstruction, leading to the policies of collective security and deterrence (Smith; 2005). As champion of free trade and the capitalist mode of production which it promoted to a core NI, the US enunciated containment policy to checkmate soviet expansion in Europe and abroad. This engagement more than anything else, "completely subordinated most African and Asian issues to the success of the plan for European recovery and rearmament" (Kolko; 1988). Its role as a major player in European reconstruction and the ensuing cold war with the Soviet Union as noted by Kolko, practically defined the foundation of US-African policy. As anticommunism dictated US-African policy to the end of the cold-war, African states which set independent path to modernization were baptized with irrational foreign policy decisions which resulted into chaos, wars, deaths, destabilization, hunger and misery, all in furtherance of the US NI. The extent to which these policies resolved cold war issues is worrisome. With the demise of the cold war and the emergence of the US as a lonely super power, critics continue to ask questions of the future pattern of American foreign policy. Within the American establishment, the conduct of foreign policies and pursuit of the NI rotates between the executive of the Republicans who favour a more

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aggressive approach and the Democrats whose moderate and liberal internationalist view comes under scathing criticism from the Republicans. As curiosity lingers on the future direction of US foreign policy, acts of terrorism to which the US vowed to extirpate, regional conflicts, drugs, proliferation of arms, dangers of biological and chemical weapons and so on, seem to point to the direction of the new foreign policy. Indeed, as postulated by Carol Berkin et al, (2006),

Because the world was too dangerous to rely on others to protect the United States, and its interest, the Bush administration believes that multilateralism, past agreements and treaty obligation were less important than a strong and determined America promoting its own interest.

The implication of the above postulation is that Bush is working out a modality to remain a lonely superpower and for America to continue a policy that confronts international relations from point of strength. Many unilateral undertakings by the US are deemed to spread the blessings of democracy, perfect human rights, and humanitarian concerns. The pursuits of these laudable principles have not only defied the international order as superintended by the United Nations (UN), it has accentuated political instability of nation states and above all caused misery and uncountable deaths.

In sharp contrast to the US posturing, is Nigeria, purported to be the giant of Africa. The pursuit of some aspects of the NI under President Olusegun Obasanjo since 1999 has not only compromised cherished ideals, it set the stage for future international conflict between Nigeria and its neighbor. The ceding of Bakassi peninsular to a neighbouring country in faithful adherence to international laws and the third term agenda of president Obasanjo, are two notable aspects prompting our examination of the conduct of the NI of Nigeria under president Obasanjo.

The two contrasting paradigms have been juxtaposed to show:

1. the ambiguity in the term National Interest and how it is pursued by nation-states;
2. the nexus between the National Interest and international stability; and
3. the different approaches to the pursuit of the National Interest in the international system.

The paper consists of five sections. The first section is a contextual clarification of terms like the National interest and geo-strategy. The second section anchors this paper on the theory of realism and argues that world powers pursue the national interest from point of power thereby causing international instability. The third section examines the pursuit of the national interest by George W. Bush; and the nexus between this pursuit and international stability. The fourth section interrogates aspects of president Obasanjo's personal interest vis-à-vis the national interest and its implications for national

unity and international stability. The concluding section is a summary of highlights which also underscores the position of the paper.

## II. CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

### i. Geo-strategy

Among academics, the critics and practitioners, a standard definition for geo-strategy is still elusive. Most definitions emphasize the merger of strategic considerations with geopolitical factors. Three definitions of the concepts by theoreticians, and practitioners are considered here.

James Roger and Lius Simon (2010), defines geo-strategy as:

The exercise of power over particular critical spaces on the Earth's surface; about crafting a political presence over the international system. It is aimed at enhancing ones security and prosperity ... securing access to certain trade routes .... Islands and seas. It requires an extensive military presence ... in the region one deems important.

In his most significant contribution to post cold war strategy, Zbigniew Brzezinski (1997), defined geo-strategy thus:

For the United States, Eurasian geo-strategy involves the purposeful management of geo-strategically dynamic states and the careful handling of geopolitically catalytic states, in keeping with the twin interest of America in the short-term presentation of its unique global power ....

Geo-strategy as defined by Jakub J. Grygiel (2006),

is the geographic direction of a states foreign policy. More precisely, geo-strategy describes where a state concentrates its efforts by projecting military power and directing diplomatic activity ... A state may project power to a location because of ideological reasons, interest groups, or simply the whim of its leader.

A common denominator in all of these definitions is that the geo-strategist approaches international relations from a nationalist point of view and usually advocates aggressive strategies in advancing their interest. In actualizing their geostrategic interest, great powers plan and assign means to achieving their economic, military or political goals; it is an expression of hegemonic aspirations overresources abroad.

### ii. The National Interest (NI)

The national interest, as noted by Ojo and Sesay (2002), is perhaps one of the most controversial concepts in international relations. The concept, over the years has been subjected to many interpretations and misinterpretations. This situation has been compounded because there is yet no agreeable conceptual clarification of the term among its numerous users including policy makers and politicians. It is perhaps for

this and other reasons that critics have argued that the NI is more or less what policy makers say it is at any point in time. (Ojo and Sesay 2002; 87). Three definitions of the concept will also illustrate this further.

Joseph Frankel (1973), has defined the NI from the aspirational, the operational and the polemic perspectives. According to Frankel, at the aspirational level, the concept refers to "the vision of the good life, to some ideal set of goals which the state would like to realize if this were possible ...." At the operational level, the NI is "the sum total of interest and policies actually pursued". Accordingly, at the polemic level the NI refers to "the use of the concept in political argument in real life, to explain, evaluate, rationalize, or criticize international behavior".... H. Assisi Asobie (2002), has presented three contending paradigms within which the concept of NI may be defined. These are the Realist paradigm, ...the Behavioral or decision making approach and lastly, the Marxist political- economy approach. The Realist theoreticians, among who are Hans Morgenthau and George Kennan conceive NI in terms of national security. As noted by Asobie, "some of them (e.g Hans), maintain that the pursuit of NI demands that a statesman should focus on those essential, concrete (and where necessary selfish) objectives which national power dictates ..." Kenan qualifies this position further when he argues that a nation should try to conduct its foreign policy in accordance with both its concrete NI moderated by the moral or ethical principles inherent in the spirit of its civilization (Asobie, 2002: 50-57). The behaviorist conceives NI to be what the decision makers decides it is. In their view, the NI is not fixed but constantly changing. The third paradigm which is also the political economy approach view the NI as more or less the interest of the dominant class in society. This class interest, Asobie has noted, may not be necessarily that goal which it claims to pursue; rather, it is that goal which is essentially for the continued reproduction of the dominant class.

Tunde Adeniran (1983), asserted that

When statesmen and bureaucrats are expected or are required to act in the national interest... they are being called upon to take action on issues that would improve the political situation, the economic and social well-being.... They are being urged to take action that will improve the lot of the people rather than pursue policies that would subject the people to domination by other countries ....

The NI as postulated by Adeniran clearly put theory and practice at variance as this paper would show. Arnold Wolfers in Ojo and Sesay (2002:88) has cautioned that the NI as formulated by makers of national policy should rise above the narrow and specific economic interest of parts of nation to focus their attention on more inclusive interest of the whole nation.

### III. FROM POINT OF THEORY

The actions and inactions of world powers and nation-states can better be understood from their perception of the international system. This paper therefore anchors on Realism and Idealism as concepts that best explains the behaviour of states in the international arena. The concept of realism whose proponents include Hans Morgenthau, George Kenan, Reinhold Niebuhr among others believe in the use of force (power), to secure or advance the NI of states. This presumption is anchored on the premise that in a world of opposing interest and conflicts, moral principles cannot be fully achieved. As neither international law nor international organizations provide adequate restraints on states behavior, they contend, the only effective regulatory mechanism for the management of power in the international society is the "mechanism of balance of power". The realists also presume that the nation-state is the principal actor in the international system (Enor; 2013: 10). As NI continues to dominate the foreign policies of nation states, the concern is how these interests are pursued by the different sovereign states which occupy the global space. The pursuit of the NI from point of power has exposed many nation states to security threats, instability and political crises, underdevelopment, poverty and famine since the bipolar international system of the post-cold war era. Sovereign states have a variety of goals or objectives to promote via a vis the goals of other states. To this end, the various interests of states can be categorized into vital or core interest, secondary or middle range interest and long range or general interest.

The vital or core interest as the name implies refers to principles or basic objectives of a nation's foreign policy which can drive a nation into war; as for example a nation's vital resources area, territory, lives of citizens and so on. The secondary or middle range interest are goals geared towards meeting public and private demands of citizens through international action like foreign aid, the protection of citizen's interest, investment and so on. Finally, the long range or general interest involves the pursuit of idealistic foreign policy objectives like maintaining world peace, respects for international laws and conventions, and so on. In the pursuit of these objectives, it does appear that world powers are assertive, proactive and realistic in their approaches compared to post-colonial states of the third world including Nigeria which appears rather beggarly, conventional and idealistic (Enor; 2013). The point made above however, does not in any way suggest that the misuse of the NI is a monopoly of world powers. Weaker nations, as history has shown are not free from the misuse of the NI in corruptly enriching their class and cronies, members of the ruling party and so on. Their action only destabilizes the domestic economy





falling short of flexing power in the international arena as the world powers do.

Maintaining good neighborliness, world peace, observing international laws and conventions seem to rank high in Nigeria's foreign policy agenda to the extent it could compromise its vital interest, as it did when it surrendered the Bakassipeninsular to Cameroon in a landmark judgment by the Hague in 2002. This is in sharp contrast to the actions of world powers that are strategic, pragmatic, and assertive on matters of their NI. The US involvement in the Latin America and the interest of its multi-national corporations' operative there led to the brutal overthrow of the regime of President Allende of Chile in 1973, and the deaths of about three thousand persons. The regime of Allende was perceived to be unfriendly to the economic interest of the US (Ojo & Sasey 2002: 90)

Economic prosperity of the US was a vital interest and in their realization of those interests any state that was not with US was perceived to be against the US NI; such states, numerous in the third world categorization were marked out and labelled as communist, and in the containment strategy of the bipolar world system, these states suffered destabilization, neglect, and isolation. The consequences of these unfriendly and irrational foreign policy behaviours from the weaker states were unpredictable. While some collaborated with the forces of imperialism and maintained their orbit as patron states, others in the opposite were "rogue states" who nursed bitter resentment towards US foreign policy. It is not surprising that most of the terrorist activities are bitter expressions and "blowback" on the US foreign policies.

#### IV. GEORGE W. BUSH (2000-2007) AND THE PURSUIT OF THE NI

The Republicans, whose ticket George Bush rode to the White House, had blamed Bill Clinton for being too cautious and too interested in international cooperation, a policy "which had weakened the nations power and failed to promote NI" (Berkin, 1006: 1015). Bush meant to reverse the direction and pursue a unilateralism characteristic of the Republican party. This naked pursuit of the NI, opinions maintain, was inherited from George Bush Snr. Bush Snr., had considered the importance of asserting unilateral American power after the cold war; Bush Jnr's grand strategy for the new era therefore, is to prevent any other nation or alliance from becoming a super power (Hertsgaard, 2002:72). Bush's foreign policy approaches have been described as "go-it-alone". The policy induced varying responses from the academia and the international community.

In his analysis of the inter connections among politics, religion, public discourse, and the press, in US, David Domke (2004), for instance, lambasted Bush's

administration disregard for democracy. Domke noted that Bush had capitalized on September, 11, 2001, (9/11) terrorists attacks, "to put forward its own blend of conservative religion and politics", what Domke referred to as political fundamentalism. To Domke, the administration political fundamentalism "Subverted many of the country's most precious democratic ideals". Communication approaches "that merged a conservative religious world view and political ambition in pursuit of controlling public discourse, pressurizing congress (and the United Nations), to rubber stamp its policies, ... its actions as divinely ordained, resulted in a dominance of a political agenda unparalleled in American history (Domke, x ) Indeed, the world sympathized with the US after the 9/11 attacks and condemned terrorism out rightly, even as many were concerned with establishing the root causes of these acts. Fighting terrorism therefore became a NI for Bush's administration which preferred a military option to many other options that were advanced to confront terrorism.

In furtherance of its war mongering, empire and bullying tendencies, the US deliberately perfected a pseudo-scientific lie *ascassus belli* for the invasion and aggression on the Iraqi state in 2003. The Iraqi case is the bases for our examination of the NI pursuit by George W Bush. That other approaches can be followed in combating terrorism has been expressed by Boyer Clark et al (2004), who noted that ending terrorism not only involved military operations; long term diplomatic, political and ideological efforts short of military adventurism and its subsequent chaos, could as well yield better results. In support of the alternatives, Bush's Secretary of State Collin Powell and most of the international community favoured diplomacy and the use of sanctions. But in keeping with the Republican tradition, Condoleezza Rice, Bush's National Security Adviser remarked "We don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud" (Carol, et al 2006:1020). The same way "Voters trust the Republican party to do a better job of protecting and strengthening America's military might and thereby protecting America" (Rich, 2006:215). These high handed foreign policy approaches confounds the sensibilities of foreigners who find it difficult to explain America's domestic freedom with its pursuit of the NI. These paradoxes have given vent to many unanswered questions such as: How often does America's conduct overseas corresponds to the values of democracy and freedom that they regularly invoke?, how important it is if America practices what they preach?, would bin laden launch his attack if the US were not financing Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories and stationing troops in Saudi Arabia?; how can America be so powerful ... yet so ignorant of foreign nations, people and languages, yet so certain it knows what is best for everyone?; how can its citizens be so open and generous but its foreign policy so domineering?; and why is it shocked when the objects

of its policies grumble or even strike back? (Hertsgaard 2002).

These and many more questions continue to task the imagination of admirers who wish Americans would persuade America to balance its global behavior with its domestic principles. The US believes in the use of force to arrest injustice and protect freedom around the world "for ourselves and for others", it is this overt use of power over others that critics regard American foreign policy as imperialistic and resent its tendency towards unilateralism. America, writes, Mark Hertsgaard (2002), "can be shamelessly hypocritical, siding with treacherous dictatorships that served our perceived interest and over throwing real democracies that do not" This it has done especially to less powerful nation-states of Latin America, Asia and Africa. The Arab spring in the Maghreb and the Middle East in 2010-2011 is partly the result of this hypocritical behavior (Enor; 2013) Virtually, all its allies in the Middle East are dictators where human rights and democracy are alien concepts, but the US closes its eyes because of oil. The UN charter to which the US is a significant signatory declares that the UN was formed inter alia, "to promote international cooperation and to save succeeding generation from the scourge of war ... and to maintain peace and security" (Smith, 2005). However, in the face of unilateral approaches to world affairs, the UN remains barren as a conductor of international peace.

In 2001, the UN voted the US off from the Human Rights Commission which she had served since 1947 resulting from United State "strong arm tactics in refusing to discharge its financial obligation to the UN (Clark, 2004:1012). In the same year, Bush's administration refused to sign the Bonn treaty "specifically designed to meet Bush's objection to Kyoto protocol". Bush had repudiated the Kyoto protocol produced at the 1997 UN sponsored International Environment Conference. The conference set strict emission standard for industrialized nations aim to reduce global air pollution. American responded that, Kyoto jeopardized America's economic growth and standard of living. "We will not do anything that harms our economy". (Smith, 2005, 1016, Clark et al 2004: 1014). Still in 2001, Bush's administration refused to join the accord against Bioterrorism, aimed to control the use of biological and chemical weapons. This accord could hinder future anthrax attacks; ironically, Bush rejected the same values it demands for Iraq and other "rouge states", and international inspection of potential weapons site. He rekindled the anti-ballistic missile defense system which decision violated the 1972 antiballistic missile pact with the Soviet Union. The Anti-ballistic missile treaty was a cornerstone of nuclear arms control which Bush opted to withdraw from in assertion of unilateralism. Withdrawing from SALT 1 jeopardizes the international system of arms reduction and control.

This "go-it-alone", policy undermined national security and international stability.

In 2003, President Bush invaded Iraq "without UN imprimatur", rallying support from Gt Britain and three other countries. This act of aggression drew strong condemnation from political leaders from the US and outside. According to an opinion, unilateral action by the US makes one country a clear aggressor, a likely target of retaliation (Rourke, 2005:164). Earlier, in 1991, President George H.W. Bush obtained congressional approval to dislodge Iraq out of Kuwait, protect Saudi Arabia's border and America's oil interest in the Middle East. Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991 placed Iraq in a vantage position to dictate the oil politics, a development which may hamper energy consumers in Europe and Japan. The Persian Gulf War was therefore necessary to liberate Kuwait and gain unhindered access to Middle East oil. If the first Persian Gulf war could be justified on the above grounds, how can one explain the second invasion of Iraq? the Republicans perhaps have the answer.

It will be recalled that on September, 11, 2001, nineteen terrorist hijacked America's domestic airlines and used them to attack the world trade centre in Newyork and the Pentagon in Washington D.C. The attacks claimed over three thousand people. The Al Qaeda terrorist organization was fingered as responsible for the attacks. The Al Qaeda is believed to be led by Osama bin laden, a Saudi Arabian extraction, and son of a wealthy Arabian family, who fought against Soviet Union forces in Afghanistan. It is believed that bin laden directed 9/11 from Afghanistan. The US appealed to the global community to war against terrorism and demanded that the Taliban government in Afghanistan surrender bin laden and other Al Qaeda leaders. When the Taliban government refused to hand-in bin laden, the US and allied forces invaded Afghanistan with the intent to destroying Al Qaeda network and overthrowing the Taliban government (Berkin eta al 2006:992). The war in Afghanistan attracted the sympathies of onlookers who urged the US to punish the guilty not the innocent women and children, many of who lost their lives in the air strikes by the US air force.

As noted by Hertsgaard (2002), international opinion was opposed to military option on 9/11 terrorist, drawing a connection between the attacks and America's foreign policy and alluding to its perceived favoritisms towards Israel. It urged attention to the root cause of terrorism; "bring the murderers to justice but tackle the cause of these outrages". Leaders of the Christian right, Jerry Farwell and Pat Robertson, admitted "on TV that the attacks had been punishment for America's supposed descent into homosexuality and godless decadence" (Hertsgaard, 2000: 50).

In his attempt to broaden the war on terrorism beyond Afghanistan and AlQueda, Bush identified Iraq,

Iran and North Korea as “axis of evil” hostile to America and represented threat to world peace. These nations according to Bush, intent on developing weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including chemical and biological weapons. Bush enlarged his list with the addition of Cuba, Libya and Syria (Clark, 2102: 1017). During the Persian Gulf War with the coalition, the US expanded the policy of deterrence to include the “doctrine of preemptive war”; the doctrine holds that the US has a right to conduct a preemptive war- first strike war against any power that it believes poses a significant threat to the security of the US. The nation would not wait until it was attacked but must strike first (Smith, 2005:403).

On Iraq, the charges on Saddam Hussein included the use of chemical and biological weapons against his enemies and citizens of his own country; possession of weapons of mass destruction and was also trying to obtain nuclear weapons; Saddam according to the allegations, represented a direct threat to American interest in the Middle East, and that he had links to Al Qaeda. Saddam’s case by US judgment, defied all other approaches but military option. By 2002, Congress agreed that president Bush should “take whatever measures were necessary and appropriate to eliminate the threat posed by Saddam Hussein and his Iraqi dictatorship”. It was widely orchestrated that Saddam “had amassed huge stores of chemical and biological weapons and was seeking to become a nuclear power”, all in violation of the Gulf war ceasefire agreement. An international coalition led by the US launched operation Iraqi freedom, a campaign that dislodged Saddam Hussein and his government from power (Smith, 2005:402). The US purported to establish a democratic and prosperous Iraq.

By 2004, Americans were questioning the rationale for war especially when it became obvious that American intelligence exaggerated Iraqi capabilities. No weapons of mass destruction had been found in Iraq. Some Republicans, as noted by Frank Rich (2006) claimed that they supported war in Iraq only for the liberation of Iraq and not because Saddam had weapons of mass destruction. An analyst from the Middle East contended that US invasion of Iraq was actuated by oil, and to do with empire, getting control of Iraq’s enormous oil resources. Accordingly, the US intends to control, undermine OPEC, take controlling access to oil for Japan, Germany and the rest of the world (Rourke 2008:293). Frank has however, argued that Bush’s administration never had any nation building plan for Iraq. He contended that Iraq was not invaded for humanitarian reasons. The war on terror, as noted by Frank, was the path to victory for the November midterm election. Election victory and ideological reasons predating 9/11 were more plausible reasons for US invasion of Iraq (Rich, 2006:215-216). The purported connection between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda

and Saddam’s imminent nuclear attack on the US were all saleable lies and cover ups according to Frank. The Iraqi war was an invented war; the same way weapons of mass destruction were an invention. The real war, Frank maintains, was Al Qaeda. Frank argues that in-terms of radical Islam and terrorism, Saddam was “manifestly not the most imminent threat to America than Syria, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Iran”. Equally debunked was the argument that primarily, rebuilding post Saddam Iraq as a shining example of liberal democracy with a domino effect in the Middle East was a humanitarian concern of the US. Frank maintains that Bush’s administration had no such plans for Iraqi nation but regime change that would leave Iraq to “build their own democracy by spontaneous civic combustion like Eastern Europeans after the fall of the Soviet Union”. (Rich, 2006:212). Frank’s analysis shows clearly how personal interest or ambitions of a Chief Executive can be adumbrated to the NI which naked pursuit causes international crises.

The head of the UN humanitarian aid to Iraq, Dennis Halliday passionately stated thus;

If Americans understood that Iraq is not made up of 22 million Saddam Hussein, but 22 million people, of families, of children, of elderly parents, families with dreams and hopes and expectations for their children ... they would be horrified to realize that the current killing of innocent Iraqi civilians by the US air force is being done in their name (Hertsgaard, 2002:88)

As asserted by Halliday, Bush’s administration was flagrantly violating international law and moral decency by maintaining economic sanctions that were punishing Iraq’s general population and by bombing Iraq while patrolling the “no fly zone”, established after the Persian Gulf War of 1991. America enforced sanctions on Iraq since 1991 caused the death of at least 350,000 Iraqi children and impoverished the middle class. By destabilizing Iraq and abandoning it to its devices, George W. Bush missed the golden opportunity of laundering his image and history would have noted the visionary American President whose invasion of Iraq triggered a concatenation of democratic reactions that replaced autocratic regimes in the Middle East; this was not to be.

America’s harsh and aggressive tendencies “create endless enemies around the world”. Its tendency to bully, warns Chalmers Johnson, in Hertsgaard (2002), will build up reservoir of resentment against all Americans -tourist, students and businessmen as well as members of the arm forces that can have lethal result. Chalmers titled his book “Blowback”, a CIA term for how foreign policy can come back to hunt a country years after, in unforeseen ways, especially after cases of secret operations (Hertsgaard 2002:80). A 1997 report by the Pentagon Defense Science Board noted “Historical data show a strong correlation between US

involvement in international situations and an increase in international attacks against the US" (Hertsgaard 2002: 80-81). The Iranian hostage crisis of 1979 is a clear example where the CIA overthrew the elected government of Iran and installed Shah Reza Pahlavi, to protect America's oil interest. The dictator was forced out of power in 1979. Iranian blowback was the attack on the US embassy in Tehran and the seizure of 54 hostages.

On September 11, 1973, the CIA overthrew the elected government of Chile in a bloody coup killing 3, 197 citizens including children, and imposing a dictator Augusto Pinochet. Chile's crime was Marxism which the US swore to contain since 1947. One can note the striking congruence in date between that coup and the attack on the world trade centre masterminded by Osama bin laden who was angered by the US stationing of troops in Saudi Arabia, the Holy land, to prop up the authoritarian regime. As a fundamentalist, bin laden believed that US forces (infidels) in Saudi Arabia defied the holy ground of Islam. The CIA, as noted by Hertsgaard (2000), supported Osama bin laden in funding the Mujahedeen, the Islamic resistance during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Assistance from the CIA ranged from building the complex where bin laden trained some 35,000 followers through Pakistan International Service. Bin laden turned against the US after the 1991 Persian Gulf war when infidel American troops were stationed in the Islamic holy ground of Saudi Arabia as stated above. The attacks accordingly could be interpreted as "blowback" on America's covert operations in Afghanistan.

The free and unilateral exercise of the NI so called by the US, can be partly traced to the ambiguity surrounding the use of war powers. While it is pertinent for the Chief of state to respond rapidly, and effectively to national and international security threats, "there is a danger in involving the country in undeclared wars". In the US, the power to declare war, rest with Congress. The executive however, abuse this constitutional provision in preference of unilateralism. If only America can underscore its rhetorical support of human rights and democracy with its pursuit of the NI, it has the potential of doing a lot of good to the modern world. America, today, is the strongest and richest nation in the world with military bases all over Europe, Asia and the Middle East. The rules of international trade and finance were favourably rewritten to encourage the expansion of American companies oversea yet the US demands that poor countries honour the rules of the world trade organization (WTO), against subsidizing domestic famers or industries even when it does the needful to its own farmers. WTO rules enables US based multinational companies to invade less endowed economies (Hertsgaard, 2000). These inconsistencies had caused Congress to demand that the US match theory and practice.

In 2004, after his re-election, President George W. Bush declared to Congress that "the nation was entering a season of hope, and the people have given him a mandate to finish the job in Iraq ..." (Berkin et al, 2006:994). The reality on ground however is that Iraq, as frank Rich rightly articulated, has remained unfinished business because nation building was never on the agenda. The combustion currently in Iraq clearly debunks the humanitarian thesis orchestrated by the US as casus belli for its invasion. The bug has now passed to the rhetorical democrat whose demagogic action or inaction would clearly define the theory and practice of the NI as pursued by the lonely super power.

In a sense, writes Hassan Saliu (2006), interference/intervention is a crucial element in contemporary global relations. Saliu has noted that issues that fall under domestic bracket may generate some external interest. However, interventions in most cases do not resolve regional conflicts. By advancing democracy, human rights, humanitarian assistance and all of such idealistic principles, the West including the US is covering up for advancing or strengthening its economic base. Barbara Conry (2007) has also argued that "in the absence of a clear and defensible strategic rationale for intervention in regional conflicts, a smattering of idealistic justifications has emerged". As noted by Conry, idealism sometimes serves as "a fig leaf for more mundane motives like protecting the economic interest". She argues that US military intervention in regional conflicts is not a viable solution to regional conflicts. In the first place, she argues, majority of cases of such interventions do not work because the altruism of those intervening cannot outlast the nationalism or self-interest of the parties in the conflict. Such interventions cannot be impartial and drain the resources of the US. Interventions, she claims, give rise to anti-American sentiments and puts American credibility at stake. In most cases, the vital interest it claims to protect is jeopardized. Fear of hegemony and other reasons makes intervention resentful Conry (2007: 590-591). The pursuit of the NI as demonstrated by the US for hegemonic and other reasons has contributed to international instability.

## V. ASPECTS OF NIGERIA NATIONAL INTEREST EXAMINED UNDER PRESIDENT OLUSEGUN OBASANJO OF NIGERIA (1999-2007)

The reemergence of Olusegun Obasanjo as Nigeria's democratically elected Head of State in 1999, opened a new chapter in Nigeria foreign policy literature. It will be recalled that the regimes of General Ibrahim Babangida which culminated into the annulment of June 12, 1993 presidential election, and General Sanni Abacha's judicial murder of Ken Saro Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activist, marred the relationship between the West and Nigeria. The return of democratic rule in 1999



was a welcome opportunity to reverse the pariah status to which Nigeria became known. President Obasanjo warmed up to this and before long, some ray of hope sprang in the area of activating Nigeria's foreign relations. However, some aspects of Obasanjo's foreign policy concerns are difficult to comprehend and further confirm Obasanjo as antidemocratic.

This section does not pretend to review Obasanjo's domestic and foreign policies; it essentially aims to show that personal interest/ambition clad in the garb of NI can produce antithetical results to national unity and international stability. The unwholesome ceding away of the nation's territory, the Bakassi peninsular to Cameroon and his "unsuccessful and undignified" attempts to manipulate the Nigerian constitution to respond to his third term bid are not only strategic blunders but antithetical to the NI. At a period when nation states fight or warm up for eventual bellicosity to defend empty Islands in a geostrategic world, Obasanjo rather surrendered territory to a foreign country. Such idealistic policy postures can only be understood from a political economy approach i.e maintaining class relations with international capital. This approach also helps an understanding of the President's third term bid to hold on to the class structure and maintain his league with imperial capital. Instead of advancing the NI of Nigeria, this policy posture reinforces the countries' ties with imperialism and perpetuates the dependency status. The implications as shown above are clear; widening gap between the power holding rich class and the pauper working class; dominant influence of international capital; increase tension and ethnic crisis; phony democratic experiments without democracy dividends; frequent border crises; insurgency and so on. Although the president failed to achieve his third term agenda he succeeded in ceding away the Bakassi peninsular to Cameroon. The implication of Obasanjo's handling of the Bakassi matter have been documented elsewhere see (Enor, 2011)

The foreign policy objective of maintaining world peace has been argued in some quarters as a price which Nigeria must pay to achieve security in her own country (Saliu: 2000: 45). Our examination of other foreign policies as shown in the previous section reveal clearly, that maintaining world peace does not rank high unless there was a threat to their security. Moreover, a nation's territory fall within the vital or core interest of a nation's foreign policy which most nations have gone to war to defend.

In "the impact of domestic environment on foreign policy", Jibrill Aminu, a one-time Chairman, Senate Committee on foreign affairs stated thus;

Bakassi is one of those unfortunate accidents of History. It is one of our messy situations where a court ruling is not enough to settle .... The culprits, the colonialist Germans, French and British, are today,

curiously not at all concerned. They left the conundrum to the post-colonial countries (Aminu; 2005:64)

It is rather unfortunate that our leaders inherited a conundrum from imperialist exploiters whose stock in trade among other tactics was divide and rule; they did nothing to ameliorate the situation fifty or more year after political independence because it favoured them. Clearly therefore, these ex-colonial masters still hold the levers of progress of their former colonial territories and now work closely with the leadership of those countries, some of who care to maintain the league with imperialism, to advance and maintain their interest in the orbit of capital. Economic, cultural and political imperialism have so brain washed and blind folded the African not to see the need for a pan-African unity beyond artificial territorial creations of imperial factotums; until this is realized neocolonialism will remain with us for a long time to come. The NI pursuit from parochial angles do not promote the welfare nor advance the aspirations of any nation as the third term agenda of president Obasanjo was purely a personal interest to perpetuate the dominance of that class in power at the expense of the Nigerian nation. Indeed, as Olu Adenji rightly noted,

Foreign policy successes in which Nigerians are not directly beneficiaries are not likely to enjoy the support of the people. This is why Nigerian foreign policy needs a new direction to focus on the Nigerian.

Olu's assertion is underscored by Adebayo Adedeji (2005), who cautioned that

Nigeria's national interest, in the post-cold war unipolar world, demands a focus upon... internalizing the culture of popular participation and democracy; of achieving socio-economic transformation and development; and of putting in place a system of governance that has ethically sustainable foundation that is accountable and transparent and that promotes the common good and solidarity

"Until we can achieve this", according to Adebayo, "our ship of state would continue to flounder and wobble". Some aspects of president Obasanjo's pursuit of the NI draws comparison with Bush's political fundamentalism. His seeming claims to a divine mandate for his third term bid: "I believe that God is not a God of abandoned projects. If God has a project he will not abandon it"(Adebajo.2008:7), can be likened to Bush's "explicitly religious language" in political discourses, on one hand, and the push for war in the Holy land of the Middle East on the other, which only serves to obfuscate a personal agenda, clad in the robes of the NI. Obasanjo's military campaigns in Odi and Gbeji in 2000, and his suggestion in 1989 that Nigeria, adopt a one party system clearly marks him as undemocratic. His willing collaboration with the forces of international capital to cede away the Bakassipeninsular

distinguishes him as an example of “an incompetent leader who will sacrifice the national interests on the altar of a fictitious international morality” (Jinadu, 1979).

## VI. CONCLUSION

The pursuit of some aspects the NI of the US under President George W. Bush and President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria has been juxtaposed to show the nexus between the practice of the NI by states and their implications to national and international stability. The examination has shown two contrasting approaches: the US during Bush resented international cooperation in preference of unilateralism and conducted international relations from the realist viewpoint; Obasanjo on the other hand, could sacrifice vital interest on the altar of global peace and good neighborliness, approaching the international system from the idealist perspective. The two leaders' converge in their misuse of the NI by pursuing personal goals which do not meet the aspirations of their countries. What emerged was resentment, national disunity, hostilities, international instability, militarization of global space all which constitute bottleneck to sustainable development.

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