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The International Dimension of Regime Change: Economic Sanctions and the 1993 Democratic Transition in Nigeria

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Abstract

Within the context of the Post-Cold War international system, the annulled presidential elections in Nigeria in 1993 and the subsequent hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight members of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) in 1995, the paper examines the argument for economic sanctions as a tool for international regime change. It clarifies the historical impact of colonialism and how that experience continues to constrain the use of traditional strategies of economic sanction to attempt to influence African governments, especially authoritarian governments. It argues that, if economic sanction as a tool of statecraft is to result in regime change, then its efficacy needs to be reexamined as it failed to influence Abacha's administration behavior, because of the absence of a coherent and sustained internal action by indigenous elites that desired an alternative governance structure from authoritarianism. Indeed, the paper suggests that without an internal coalition to counter the impact of authoritarianism within the domestic political space, especially in the case of Sub-Saharan African countries like Nigeria, there is no identifiable external interest for initiating regime change from the outside; therefore, economic sanctions are likely to be minimally supported by western governments who are likely to prefer strong rhetoric in support of free market and democratic principles.

Introduction

As a state, Nigeria is a creation of European colonial powers. The struggle for political independence by Africans was significantly helped by events in the international system—the end of World War II, which significantly weakened Britain, France and other colonialists to hurriedly transfer power to indigenous elites in the 1950s and 1960s. One of the setbacks of the decolonization policies was the absence of effective mechanisms for conflict resolution without violence.

This lacuna was manifested in the national politics of the newly independent territories by the closure of political spaces, especially during the Cold War. Specifically in the case of Nigeria, the civil war (1967-1970) had international implications for the ideologically structured Cold War contest between the United States and the former Soviet Union and their allies. To the extent that the major powers such as the United States and Britain were bogged down by events that directly threatened their influence and credibility, e.g., the Vietnam and the Gulf Wars, they paid less attention to events in peripheral states like Nigeria where their national interests were not directly threatened. However, the major powers have not failed to exploit "peace time" opportunities to advance, albeit, rhetorical principles over expressed national interests.

Thus, the end of the Cold War as well as the 'resolution' of the Iraq-Kuwait conflict offered one of those rare opportunities for countries like the United States to express moral outrage at the hanging death of Pulitzer Prize winning playwright Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Nigerians in November 1995. However, while international attention was focused on Nigeria following this heinous act by Sani Abacha's regime, the responses from the international community, especially the United States and the United Kingdom were mostly muted.

There are several reasons why international attention was focused on Nigeria following the Abacha regime's brutal hanging of Saro-Wiwa and eight members of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP). Nigeria commands international recognition because of its size, brutal civil war (1967-1970), and its vast oil and gas reserves. Although a major player in regional and continental politics, Nigeria's influence remains unstable largely as a result of domestic political and economic instability. Further, as a result of inadequate planning, misappropriation of funds and wasteful spending by successive military/civilian administrations, Nigeria's external debt is well over \$30 billion. Consequent indebtedness to the London and Paris Clubs and other western institutions that require the IMF's Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) as a condition for further lending and rescheduling of outstanding debts continue to constrain Nigeria's options to effectively direct its regional and global foreign economic relations.

Following the hanging death of Ken Saro-Wiwa, some observers of Nigerian political economy argued that the absence of major world conflicts constraining the interests and actions of major states like the U.S. should have resulted in a focused and principled attention on the Nigerian government's disregard of human rights principles and norms. And given that about 10 percent

of U.S. oil imports¹ are from Nigeria and with the emphasis on democratization as a major framework of U.S. global policy under President Clinton, these observers argued that the United States should have lead the western countries to impose effective economic sanctions against the Nigerian military government's anti-human rights actions. One of the rationales for proposing sanctions against the Abacha administration was the legal process adopted in the trial of the *Ogoni Nine*. Western and other sympathetic observers saw the process as a gross violation of human rights and an offense to contemporary civilized culture. Also, the call for sanctions against the military government of Nigeria was aimed at expressing western and pro-democracy movements' disapproval of the Babangida-Abacha administrations' failure to honor its pledge to return Nigeria to a democratic system of governance in 1993. The call for economic sanction was also intensified by the regime's refusal to heed the Pope's plea that General Sani Abacha² release political prisoners after His Holiness' visit to Nigeria in April 1998. While these events may have been ignored under different international contexts, United States' Post-Cold-War politics, which was focused on promoting free market and democratic principles, as well as Nigeria's relative importance in supplying petroleum to the international community made it difficult for the major powers to ignore events in Nigeria, especially following the annulment of Nigeria's 1993 presidential elections.

One of the assumptions of this paper is that within the existing international system, the foreign policies of major states like the United States are motivated more by their societal economic needs (national interest argument) than the ideological (principle) argument for human rights and democracy. Therefore, given the Nigerian context, the United States was not likely to lead the international community to impose costly³ economic sanctions that would change the behavior of the government if such sanctions have a potential for negative impact on the interests of the U.S. and her allies. Further, the use of economic statecraft such as economic sanctions by one state to influence the political behavior in another state is largely successful if other states cooperate with the sanctioning state(s) against the target state. In calling for economic sanctions to be led by the United States against the Abacha regime, a number of advocates of sanctions ignored the global economic policy/interests of industrialized and former colonialist states.

This paper examines how economic sanction as an instrument of statecraft influenced the outcome of the 1993 transition program in Nigeria. It clarifies the historical impact of colonialism and how that experience continues to constrain the use of traditional strategies of economic sanction to attempt to influence African governments, especially military governments. It argues that, if economic

sanction as a tool of statecraft is to result in regime change, then its efficacy needs to be reexamined because of the absence of coherent and sustained internal action by indigenous elites that desire an alternative governance structure from authoritarianism. Indeed, the paper suggests that in the absence of an internal coalition to counter the impact of authoritarianism within the domestic political space, especially in the case of Sub-Saharan African countries like Nigeria, it is almost impossible to identify external interests to enable the initiation of regime change from the outside. Therefore, economic sanctions are likely to be minimally supported by western governments, with strong rhetoric in support of free market and democratic principles.

Structurally, the paper is divided into four sections. The first section presents the argument, which explores economic sanction as an instrument of foreign policy. This is followed by a brief historical account of Nigeria's incorporation into the international capitalist economic system and how that experience remains an obstacle to a viable political and economic development in Nigeria. The third section examines the effectiveness of the argument for economic sanction against Nigeria. The paper concludes with a discussion of the extent to which economic sanction against Nigeria affected the transition to civilian rule.

Economic Sanctions as Instruments of Foreign Policy

According to Margaret Doxey, economic sanctions are "... measures taken unilaterally or multilaterally in response to an unwelcome or unacceptable act by another government..."⁴ In this paper economic sanction as an instrument of foreign policy is defined as one state's action(s) aimed positively or negatively at influencing the behavior and therefore the policies of another state.⁵ The economic effect of sanctions on the Abacha administration (1993-1998) in Nigeria is therefore analyzed in the context of its impact on that leadership's willingness to change its behavior in the expected direction. It is assumed here that economic sanction was a preferred option of influence to other means (for example, direct intervention) for achieving the desired outcome of a more open system of judicial resolution of political differences in Nigeria. Furthermore, I assume that United States' structural power⁶ in the international system at the end of the Cold War is aimed to promote free market principles and democratic transitions.

Although economic sanction as a tool of foreign policy is a historical fact, some analysts argue that economic sanctions have not been effective in changing the behavior of target states.⁷ The United Nations and powerful states like the United

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States use economic sanctions in bilateral and multilateral strategies in their efforts to communicate disapproval of certain actions of other states. For example, the United Nations imposed economic sanctions against apartheid South Africa, Haiti, Iraq and the Yugoslav Federation on different occasions. Over the years, sanctions have been imposed by the unilateral effort of the United States against Cuba, Libya, Nicaragua, and Iran, and in the 1990s, limited or partial sanctions were imposed or threatened against China and Nigeria. In each case, it is arguable the extent to which the desired outcome from sanction was realized. However, if we broaden the scope and goals of decision makers in imposing economic sanctions, it becomes clear that economic sanctions are used in the same way military interventions are used, i.e., for country A to do something she would not ordinarily do for country B, thereby expressing B's power or influence over A. In that respect, "[n]o other technique of statecraft even begins to approach international trade for effectiveness in promoting this important foreign policy goal."⁸ Consequently, *ceteris paribus*, the United States' importation of about 50 percent of Nigeria's crude petroleum export (a form of international economic exchange) becomes a spectacularly important and therefore effective instrument of statecraft for both states to influence decisional outcomes in the preferred direction.⁹

Clearly, the target states (which sanctions are expected to reward or punish) are not all equally affected by the scope of the instruments as well as the extent to which each country can sustain and adjust to external pressure for domestic change. For example, China is more able to adjust to a United States' sponsored economic sanction against her than could, for example, Cuba. China is both economically and militarily diversified and has more options for imports and exports of goods and services as well as the ability to defend itself within the Asian region. On the other hand, Cuba is a much smaller country located 90 miles off the coast of the United States, depends on a monocultural economy and is much weaker in defending itself than China from external threats. Therefore, although both countries remain sensitive to external pressure for a change in their domestic and external policies, Cuba is more vulnerable¹⁰ than China and therefore more likely to be negatively affected by economic sanctions if her friends do not come to her aid. Also, the anti-apartheid sanctions against South Africa did not initially lead to the desired expectation that the white-dominated South African government would change its policy toward indigenous South Africans. The desired result was not achieved because of the cold war ideological structure that served the interests of the U.S. and those of the now defunct USSR. Consequently, United States' tacit support of apartheid in South Africa delayed the impact of the multilateral sanctions on South Africa. Supporting the pro-sanction argument, some analysts

have argued that Chase Manhattan Bank's decision not to roll-over outstanding short-term loans to South Africa in 1985¹¹ and the unexpected termination of the cold-war in 1989 played a major role in the effectiveness of economic sanctions against South Africa,¹² and the consequent realization of a democratic government based on one-person-one-vote in April 1994.

The effectiveness of economic sanctions in South Africa was also a function of South Africa's economic dependence on foreign markets for its exports. In the case of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Johan Galtung argues that the more a country's economy depends on the export of one product to a specific trading partner or block of partners, the more vulnerable such a country becomes if its trading partners decide to use economic sanctions as an instrument of foreign policy against it.¹³ Galtung's argument is premised on the assumption that the sanction-sponsoring state is indeed willing and capable of applying sanction on the product(s) that the target state is dependent on for its economic well-being.

In the case of Nigeria, for example, effective economic sanction would mean that (a) the Abacha regime did not have viable alternative that would enable it to survive sanction on Nigeria's export of crude petroleum; (b) that the cost of imposing economic sanctions on Nigeria to the United States and her allies are at an acceptable level; (c) therefore, the United States and her allies would actually take the decision to embargo Nigeria's export of crude petroleum until the Abacha regime agreed to the principles of economic and political liberalism as desired by the sponsoring states. Effective economic sanction is also premised on states' ability and willingness to control the behavior of Transnational Corporations (TNC's) whose economic interests sometimes are at odds with those of their home states.¹⁴ For example, the executives and lobbyists for Shell, Chevron and other oil companies tried to persuade Washington that economic sanctions against Nigeria would hurt the Nigerian masses more than it would the Abacha regime. Also, given the massive anti-sanction campaign in the U.S. and the general lethargy about Africa by Americans, the extent to which public opinion will rise in support of economic sanctions against Nigeria was questionable. However, with its professed support for multilateralism and the principles of economic and political liberalism in the world, the Clinton administration could not ignore the grave impact that "doing nothing" would have on pro-democracy movements and human rights activists across Africa, especially in Nigeria.

In that situation, the oil companies were relevant instruments of economic statecraft because the drilling of crude petroleum and its transportation to the west was largely carried out by the TNCs, as remains the case, and therefore, sanctions that affect the oil sector would affect the profits of the oil companies.

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In addition to the oil companies, the Commonwealth of Nations was relevant if effective economic sanction was to be imposed against Abacha's regime. As Klaus Knorr argues, the logic of economic sanctions "prescribes that the enemy suffer a maximum reduction of his economic base relative to one's own ... one's own costs must be taken into account."¹⁵ Given the geographic location of Nigeria and the potential difficulty of other credible instrument of foreign policy, especially military intervention, the cost of "doing nothing" was both political and psychological for the U.S. "Doing nothing" would have questioned U.S. commitment to protecting human rights and promoting democracy in the world at the end of the Cold-War. Psychologically, "doing nothing" entailed demoralizing those in the trenches across the third world who had accepted Washington's battle cry against autocracy, ecological and human rights violations.

In the long run, such neglect would have resulted in U.S. intervention on a humanitarian basis which (though it has not proven effective as illustrated in the cases of Somalia, Rwanda and Zaire) will tend to be more costly both economically and in terms of human lives and therefore further erode outside credibility about Washington's commitment to human rights, democracy and capitalism in Africa. Given that the effectiveness of economic sanctions tend to depend on the availability of alternatives for the target states and the costs to the sponsoring state, cooperation by ideologically similar states and their level of commitment to use economic sanctions to influence the behavior of the target state is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for an effective outcome, especially against a peripheral and undeveloped state like Nigeria. Thus, a historical explanation that emphasizes the need for caution provides a lens to see how effective economic sanction on Abacha's regime, which presided over an intense case of politicized ethnicity, class and religion, would have been, especially in a situation where both the process and content of foreign economic policy was the life-line of the regime.

*Post-colonial Politics and the Nigeria State*¹⁶

As a juridical territory created by the British in 1914, Nigeria remains an ethnically contested state.¹⁷ Generally, it is argued that by integrating the Northern and Southern Protectorates into one, Britain undemocratically created the geographical entity known as *Nigeria*. This amalgamation resulted in various acts of resistance characterized by appeals to primordial interests that reached their highest peak in the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970). While Britain cannot be absolved from its imperialism and social exploitation of many countries including Nigeria, Nigerianists have not fully explored and articulated all the explanatory reasons for the invariable lack of respect and indifference to the legitimacy of the state in Nigeria that seem to run along ethnic lines. The fact is that, individually and collectively, Nigerians have tended not to have allegiance to the *nation-state* imposed by the British. On an abstract level, Nigerians identify with the geographical entity mapped out by the British, but, in practice seem unable or unwilling to associate with the idea of Nigeria. Perhaps the key reason is that the *Founding Fathers of Nigeria are foreigners* and there has not arisen an indigenous elite group in Nigeria to map out what should constitute a Nigerian culture as a basis for nationalism. Hence, most Nigerians, irrespective of their nationalist claims, have the tendency to first identify with their ancestral roots before identifying themselves as Nigerians.

Some Nigerians, of course, seek to overcome that divisive heritage as exemplified by an analyst at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs who complained that civil servants are required to indicate their state and ethnic origins on a Federal form for identification purposes.¹⁸ More typical, however, is the following statement by Ebenezer Babatope (Minister of Transport and Aviation in Abacha's regime):

... And if people think that because I am a minister that I have forgotten the fact that one, I'm an Ileshaman, two, I'm an Ijeshaman, and third, I'm a Yorubaman, then fourth, I am a Nigerian citizen, then such people should really go and examine themselves. I cannot divorce myself from the yearning and aspirations of the people of my roots.¹⁹

Babatope is not the first highly placed Nigerian to articulate his need to be first identified with his ethnic group. Those who argue that Britain is responsible for emphasizing ethnic separatism in Nigeria would find evidence in Her Majesty's Governor to Nigeria, Sir Hugh Clifford's address to the Nigerian Council on December 29, 1920 when he argued that "...a deadly blow would [have been] ...

struck at the very root of national self-government in Nigeria which secures to each separate people the right to maintain its identity, its individuality and its nationality...."²⁰ Clearly, Governor Clifford was speaking for and on behalf of the Imperial government in England. Britain's need for administrative consolidation as a strategy for cutting costs while increasing revenues from Nigeria necessitated the imperialists' divide-and-conquer policies in the infamous "indirect rule" strategy which emphasized ethnic separatism among various groups in Nigeria, but especially between the Northern Hausa-Fulani and the various Kingdoms in the Southern portion of the country. But, it is significant to note that Britain did not create ethnicity in Nigeria. Rather, British colonization and control of the political economy within Nigerian resulted in ethnic rigidification whose effects remain evident in contemporary Nigerian politics.

For example, the leader of the Nigerian People's Congress (NPC), the late Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, during the Constitutional Conference in 1948, stated that: "Since the amalgamation of the north and the south provinces in 1914, Nigeria had existed as one country on paper.... It is still far from being united. Nigerian unity is only a British intention for the country."²¹ Conceptually, the leader of the Action Group, the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo also argued in 1947 that, "Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographic expression. There are not 'Nigerians' in the same sense as there are 'English,' 'Welsh,' or 'French'. The word 'Nigerian' is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not."²²

Thus, while the founding fathers of Nigeria established for themselves a congruent relationship between their own nation and the newly created state, the idea of *state* was imposed on the several nations within the geographical territory called Nigeria. While the founding fathers of Nigeria's eventual political independence from Britain articulated and resented the idea of Nigerian unity, these "nationalists" were enticed by the political imaginations and control of the instrument of power offered by the western imposed state. But the nationalists accepted the new state structures as a framework for constructing economic growth and political stability for uniting the polity to transcend their ethnic loyalties, and therefore authenticate the new nation, and legitimize the authority of its new national leadership.

As Sheth argues, those third world leaders who accepted the western state model largely interpreted the problem of ethnicity as a larger problem emanating from nation building. Consequently, they sought to reconcile the centrifugal forces of ethnicity with nationhood by assigning the state the central role of nation-building. However, according to Sheth, the Peace of Westphalia ended all

ambiguities in the status of existing nation-states in Europe by establishing the principle of territorial existence for emerging societies in the face of conflicting but overlapping religious and denominational identities of the peoples.²³

In essence, then, the *state* as originally established in Europe was the center of social relations, which enforced allegiance to *national identity* above religious loyalty. The organizational structure of the state therefore made it possible for the state to act as a unifying factor for national integration and development through the establishment of national institutions such as the civil service and academic and industrial foundations for the development of the country. "Such a state [is] not merely the means of keeping political order within the national society,"²⁴ its survival depends on the state's capacity to accommodate the creation and maintenance of civil society, viable educational and scientific institutions, as well as providing a platform that encourages all its citizens to participate in the project of building and sustaining *their state*.

While the state performs its function as a platform for integration, it paves the way for all citizens – irrespective of ethnic or religious identities – to participate in the process of nation-building without obstacles. In the process, the state will demand the highest quality of input from its citizens by institutionalizing the concept of *merit* as a criterion for employment, which ensures that competent and qualified citizens are attracted and retained to serve the national interest without undermining the integrity of the citizens' humanity—irrespective of capabilities.

For Nigeria, the state as one of the legacies of colonialism, is a non-hegemonic entity unlike its western counterpart that enjoys both abstract and real stature, with the capacity to affect citizens, domestic and external policies, and the ability to promote cohesion and unity among its constituent parts. Nigerian politicians and military generals have demonstrated time and again that rather than a unifying platform for a diversity of peoples, the Nigerian state is a contested framework for wealth accumulation. In this respect, neoliberal viewpoints that states like Nigeria require further integration into the international capitalist economic system to ensure sustained economic growth and therefore a more peaceful coexistence of the polities that make-up Nigeria requires reevaluation. If anything, Nigeria does not inherently lack capitalism and democracy *per se*; it has both in excess, but lacks transparent, competent and benevolent leadership and industrialization. Rather, capitalism, which is inherently anti-political freedom, especially freedom of the state to constrain capitalist methods of accumulation has found a fertile ground in Nigeria because the state is weak and incapable of protecting its own interests against domestic and international capitalism. As a result, the weak Nigerian state becomes a free-for-all forum for sectional

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exploitation, class and ethnic fragmentation, collusion between government officials and foreign and domestic business executives. It is this corporatization of Nigeria that made the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the other eight *Ogoni* agitators possible. In a fragmented society with disorganized labor and student unions, the Leviathan easily defeats civil rights and civil liberty organizations. And, as long as corporate profits and personal/class wealth accumulation continues, arguments based on moral principles are checkmated by realpolitik. According to Robert Heilbroner,

The normal relation of capital to state power is therefore pragmatic, gladly accepting the use of military, bureaucratic, legislative, or other state interventions when they favor accumulation, resisting them when they do not. To put it differently, capitalists have no interests as *capitalists* in promoting the cause of freedom. They are indeed more likely to have opposed interests, insofar as freedom may create subversive attitudes toward the regime of capital....²⁵

In this regard, the 1995 hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa that drew severe international condemnation was an act that made it possible for a grotesque mediocrity of international capitalists and human rights advocates to play the hero's part. Consequently, rather than promote the general welfare of all people, Multinational Corporations continued to maintain alliances with the foster and extractive elites in Nigeria at the expense of the masses. The suffocation of civil society and the glaring environmental devastation that Shell has been associated with in Nigeria is simply too obvious to repudiate.²⁶ However, the hanging of the *Ogoni Nine* was also a consequence of the internal arrangement of power and the nature of economic production that tends to rely solely on oil for the design, development and maintenance of the Nigerian political, economic and social experience. The current economic and political crises under President Obasanjo are rooted in the history of the initial political and economic design introduced by the British, which so far remain unchallenged by Nigeria's indigenous leaders. That design supports governmental structures like the Abacha's regime and President Obasanjo's civilian administration, which does not find human rights violations, extra-legal measures of dealing with opposition and a transition to and consolidation of a constitutional democratic government salient to its existence. To the extent that such regimes do not find these issues salient, the threat of economic sanctions or actual impositions of sanctions for their behaviors will not result in a change of policy or a viable process for democratic transition and consolidation. The political instability in the country since independence is a consequence of this

indifference to the nature of the nation, which Nigerians inherited from colonialist practice in exchange for individual and ethnic rights and freedoms.

The Nigerian civil war resulted in the internal rearrangement of power and brought to the forefront a coalition of the northern oligarchy and the southern and middle belt civilian predators, in alliance with army generals as a ruling class which has demonstrated its disregard for the peasants, political and human rights and a general lack of commitment to economic development in Nigeria. While the civil war, the various coups and counter-coups in Nigeria, religious riots and demonstrations continue to claim the lives of millions of Nigerians; there persists a glaring absence of international mobilization against successive repressive regimes in Nigeria. The hanging of Saro-Wiwa and his compatriots attracted some reaction because western governments and institutions felt slighted by the Abacha regime's indifference to all threats and pleas for clemency.

The hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the other members of the *Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People* (MOSOP) can only be understood as a symptom of two related dilemmas that the ruling coalition faced in Nigeria. First, given the fact that the Abacha government lacked legitimacy with the citizenry and had to resort to the use of force to govern, any indication of weakness would only have encouraged younger military officers to overthrow the government. Secondly, given that "oil is everything" in Nigeria and that the ruling coalition failed in the implementation of its Machiavellian strategies to further fragment the various ethnic groups, especially in the oil producing areas of the Delta region, the regime left itself with no option but to discourage any type of minority or broad coalitions against the government by hanging the *Ogoni Nine* as an example to all. A lack of concern about the regime's image abroad or the condition of the masses in Nigeria was also demonstrated by the murder of Kudirat Abiola, the prison death of Shehu Yar'Adua, political imprisonment of several Nigerians, and trial and death sentences for Oladipo Diya and other alleged coup plotters. The most salient issue to the regime was oil revenue, and as long as Nigerian oil revenue continued to be deposited in the banks by the multinational oil corporations like Shell, Chevron and Mobile, the regime saw no need to change its behavior.

The externally weak state had to prove to Shell and other multinational corporations "how stable" the Nigerian environment is to capitalist ventures. However, as a largely non-hegemonic structure lacking an internal legitimizing mechanism and whose economic policies are largely based on 90 percent oil revenue, the Nigerian economy is both sensitive and vulnerable to external market fluctuations. Furthermore, it consistently failed to address the internal conditions that resulted in the neglect of agricultural production, the major income

revenue for the majority of Nigerian citizens before the civil war. The current monocultural nature of the Nigerian political economy has led to a situation in which even decisions for the location of industries are based on political rather than economic logic. A predictable consequence of politicized logic within the state is the infliction of physical violence against citizens. Such violence, inherent to the original colonialist design to divide-and-conquer, encourages Nigeria's underdevelopment by an indigenous ruling class through blatant corruption and abuse of state powers.²⁷ It is a design that needs to be consistently challenged by international and domestic coalitions interested in the restoration of stable political institutions in Nigeria. Referring to the politically driven decisions for the location of industries, the former governor of Kaduna state, and a member of the ruling coalition from the north in 1982, observed that:

Instead of a *democracy* in which you have in operation, government for the people, by the people, and of the people, you have a *contractocracy* in which government is for contractors, by contractors and of contractors. Politics is being reduced to a fight between ... gang[s] of greedy tycoons, each backed by their foreign business masters and others: and each waving some tribal or sectional banner to confuse and divide our people.²⁸

By manipulating ethnic, religious and sectional sensitivities, the ruling coalition continued to articulate its specific interests. This is usually manifested in terms of embezzlement of public funds rather than the extent to which public funds can be re-invested to further national economic development. As each successive ruling coalition's expertise in awarding contracts developed, based on what cash benefits such contracts held for them as state officials, it became increasingly easy to ignore fundamental questions such as: What is the nature of the product that Nigeria is investing in? What exactly is Nigeria producing? To what extent are the projects viable? How can the contractors' and products' efficiency and relevance for Nigeria be evaluated? Questions like the above have largely remained irrelevant since independence because each coalition's interest has been vested in its own internal dynamics rather than on national economic development. Consequently, the difficulty or indifference regarding the articulation of policies that serves the interests of the general welfare has persisted.

Although the Nigerian state is relatively weak to states outside its borders and strong at the domestic level, it remains incapable of providing for the cohesion and unity of the complex social formations inherited at independence. For the new nation at independence, the only organized institution or class was the inherited

colonial British-style military, which lacked respect for civil society and democracy. However, because it was the most powerful means at its disposal the post-independence leadership used the military to protect and promote the interests of its members, ignoring and suppressing the interests of those it defined as radicals or "enemies" of the state. Exploring issues that were salient for the Abacha regime and how it defined its "enemies" and "friends," will enhance our understanding of the extent to which economic sanctions as an instrument of foreign policy could have been effective in changing that regime's behavior. The next section examines the effectiveness of the arguments for economic sanction as a foreign policy tool that influenced the politics of transition in Nigeria under Abacha.

Economic Sanctions and Transition Politics in Nigeria

Analyzing economic sanctions as an instrument of foreign policy, Morgan and Schwebach argue that economic sanctions generally tend to be an ineffective instrument of foreign policy. The authors however assert that under certain conditions economic sanctions could be effective.

When the sanctions are costly to politically powerful segments of society, who are relatively unconcerned about the issue under dispute, and whose preferences on the issues diverge considerably from those of the sanctioner, sanctions can produce a large effect on the target's policies.²⁹

Further, Morgan and Schwebach state that although sanctions tend to be costly to the regime in the target state, "in some absolute sense" relative to the "value of the issues at stake," such sanctions are not costly to the political actors in the target state. The authors assert that "[t]he powerful political actors (generally the military) did not violate the rights of the citizenry simply for the sake of doing so. Rather, the rights violations were seen as an essential means for maintaining political power."³⁰ For such a regime, holding on to power becomes the most desired outcome and the most salient issue for which the regime in the target state is willing to pay severe economic costs, thereby rendering sanctions ineffective.

For Nigeria, the salient issue for the Abacha regime was not so much international humiliation or ostracism but the possibility of losing political power and therefore the loss of control of the Nigerian state by the regime, which was dominated by Hausa-Fulani ethnic groups. Given that for the regime, the state was a framework for wealth accumulation; its control was preferred to any accolades that

could have come from international groups such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and other international and domestic pro-democracy groups.

Besides, the control of the Nigerian state was not merely of interest to the Abacha's regime; it was of interest to the predatory/extractive elites, northern oligarchy and the military cabals that formed the ruling coalition since Nigeria's independence. For example, since political independence in 1960, the Hausa-Fulani as a group has ruled Nigeria approximately 35 of her 44 years since independence, while the Yoruba as a group has ruled for 8 of the 44 years and the Igbo as a group ruled for only 1 year (or seven months to be precise). It is equally significant to note that out of the 44 years since independence, the military as a class has ruled Nigeria 29 of the last 44 years. Olusegun Obasanjo³¹ has ruled both as a military officer and now as a civilian head of state following the Abacha/Abubakar³² 1999 transition. The foregoing is important because the major states (U.S. and U.K.) have consistently from independence, preferred stability and order to constitutional democracy in Nigeria, and have thus preferred to deal with the autocrats that have ruled Nigeria without regard to the masses. Therefore, these major states have remained reluctant to impose any serious sanctions on successive regimes in Nigeria—preferring rhetorical support for democracy and transparency than performance. And, while this knowledge was not lost on the Abacha administration, the domestic prodemocracy movement's reliance on the international community to aid its cause was sorely disappointed as the hanging death of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the other members of MOSOP was merely greeted with rhetorical condemnations while Abacha and his cronies continued to enjoy the revenue from crude petroleum exports by Shell, Chevron and other companies.

And, with the 1999 transition from military autocracy to civilian administration, many observers had hoped that President Obasanjo's experience as a former political prisoner under the Abacha regime would lead him to institutionalize a liberal constitutional democracy such that the extra-judicial methods of conflict resolution under Abacha would give way to a constitutionally transparent protection of citizens' civil rights and liberties. As any astute observer of Nigerian politics can attest, the political structure necessary for sociopolitical stability as a condition for economic growth within the framework of liberal constitutionalism has yet to materialize in Nigeria. In fact, despite of the overwhelming evidence of instability and state-implicated violations of civil rights and liberties in Bayelsa, Anambra, Delta, and Plateau states, no international outrage is evident because there is no direct threat to the interests of the United States, France or Great Britain.

However, even if the international community were to have decided that

economic sanction against the Abacha regime was a preferred tool for expressing its outrage of the regime's violations of human rights, the question is: what would the Abacha regime have gained by changing its behavior in the preferred direction? How would the ruling coalition composed of predatory extractive elites, army generals and oligarchs from the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group benefit from changing its behavior and policy in the direction suggested by the pro-sanction argument? Were the arguments for imposing economic sanctions based on a realistic assessment of the issues that were most salient to the ruling oligarchy? Even if such salient issues were identified, how effective would consequent economic sanctions have been? Specifically for the United States, would economic sanctions have had the desired outcome?

A careful analysis of the dynamics of Nigeria's domestic politics is essential to determining the significant variables necessary for assessing the effectiveness of sanctions. In hanging the *Ogoni Nine*, the Abacha regime showed that it had nothing to lose—politically and diplomatically—within the international community. The hanging of the *Ogoni Nine* was a classical Machiavellian political strategy of dealing with those the regime considered its “enemies.” At the domestic level, the hanging effectively served to frighten, fragment and disorganize opposition groups that could have mobilized against the regime. As a result, and unarguably, the absence of an effective domestic opposition led the external team of human rights delegations from the Commonwealth of Nations that went to investigate Abacha's regime to conclude that further sanctions against Nigeria should be deferred in preference of some form of political transition.³³

The Commonwealth of Nations' decision to defer the imposition of economic sanctions consequently left the United States with the burden of sponsoring economic sanctions against the Abacha regime. For economic sanctions to be effective, the saliency of the issues to the political actors in the target state as well as the costs and alternatives forgone for the sponsoring state(s) has to be part of the calculus. Testifying before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1995, Ambassador Moose acknowledged the complexity of the Nigerian situation detailing U.S. interests and how those interests could serve as a basis for influencing the behavior of the military regime in Nigeria.³⁴ According to Ambassador Moose, due to the size and regional importance of Nigeria, U.S. interests in the country were necessarily diverse. The main U.S. interest was identified as “a stable, democratic Nigeria” amenable to productive and cooperative relations. Ambassador Moose testified that the U.S. has “significant economic interests in Nigeria, with \$3.9 billion invested mainly in the petroleum sector,” and “a specific interest in curbing narcotics trafficking”³⁵ by Nigerians.

Given the specified interests of the United States in Nigeria and its disapproval of the hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the other members of MOSOP, the aborted return to a democratic system of governance in 1993 and the continuous incarceration and fractionalization of some pro-democracy and labor union activists at that time,³⁶ some options that were open to the U.S. included: (a) verbal condemnation of the military regime's policies. This would have been symbolic rhetoric not aimed at changing the behavior of the regime. (b) The U.S. could simply have done nothing. Given that both Chevron and Mobil are U.S.-based oil companies and that Nigeria's crude petroleum is largely refined in New Jersey, it would seem that America's more tangible and specific interest was not threatened. In the eyes of pro-democracy and human rights activists it became *particeps criminis*.³⁷ (c) The third option was to do something beyond rhetorical expression of displeasure at what some analysts have called "outrageous behavior" by the ruling oligarchy and their gatekeepers in Abuja. Ambassador Moose's testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee suggested that the U.S. chose the third option and consequently

- canceled \$11 million in assistance to Nigeria's Ministry of Health,
- terminated development assistance, except for humanitarian aid,
- ended government to government military assistance, except for counternarcotics-related training,
- instituted a case-by-case review for all new license applications for commercial export of defense articles and services to Nigeria.
- [Further, the U.S.] ... requested the withdrawal of the Nigerian military attache from the U.S.,
- withdrew its Security Assistance Officer, and suspended travel to Nigeria by the new Defense Attache. [And, finally, under Section 212-(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act,] ... the Clinton administration issued a proclamation that restricted the entry into the U.S. by Nigerians who formulated, implemented or benefited from policies [that] hindered Nigeria's transition to democracy, as well as members of their immediate families.³⁸

For a number of reasons, the above measures were not effective as instruments of foreign policy against the Abacha regime. The measures did not target the salient issue for the regime -- staying in power at all costs. Thus, the cancellation of \$11 million assistance to the Ministry of Health or the ending of government to government assistance and denial of entry visas for the regime and their families were measures that could attract a small country without *petrodollars*. Thus, while

the content of the policy suggested that the Clinton administration was "doing something," it grossly underestimated the policy outcome and therefore paid more attention to the process rather than the content that sends the message. The predatory/extractive elites' alliance with the military officers who benefited directly from the lack of accountability in oil revenues showed the military regime's rational choice approach based on its decision to play the game simultaneously at two-levels³⁹ – the domestic and the international diplomatic levels.

At the international level, national governments seek to maximize their ability to satisfy domestic pressures, while minimizing the adverse consequences of foreign developments, especially in their relationship with important allies. Similarly, at the national level, domestic groups pursue their interests by pressuring the government to adopt favorable policies and politicians or army generals seek power by constructing coalitions among the various economic and political groups. As Putnam argues, "neither of the two games can be ignored by central decision-makers, so long as their countries remain interdependent, yet sovereign."⁴⁰ Assuming a two-person game or coalitions (for instance, the Abacha regime versus the Clinton administration on behalf of pro-sanction groups), each negotiator or decision-maker sits at both game boards. Across the international table sits his foreign counterpart, and across from the domestic table sits representatives of various domestic coalitions and advisors. Although, moves that are rational at one game board (for example, releasing all political prisoners and disbanding all political activities and thereby allowing Moshood Abiola, the presumed winner of the 1992 election, who was subsequently imprisoned by the Abacha regime, to claim his mandate which will tend to please the pro-sanction domestic and international groups) may be unwise for the same player at the (domestic) board where those who are likely to be negatively affected by a democratic and accountable civilian government will mobilize in opposition and potentially delay and/or prevent the implementation of the transition to democracy program. According to Putnam, "there are powerful incentives for consistency, and ultimately differences in rhetoric between the two tables may be tolerated."⁴¹ But in the end, either political prisoners are released and democratic transition takes place or, the regime will further consolidate its hold on power in spite of sanctions. While the latter was the case for Nigeria, there are political and economic costs, which will tend to factor into the final decision. Ultimately, the interests of the dominant economic and political coalitions clearly featured in their preferred policy implementation.

Consistent with the two-level game metaphor, the Abacha regime, even though it could not negotiate directly with Washington, still behaved *as if* it sat

at the bargaining table to persuade the Clinton administration against effective economic sanction on Nigeria. For example, aware that Nigeria supplies about 600,000 barrels of crude petroleum a day to the United States,⁴² and that two major oil companies – Mobil and Chevron are based in the United States, the regime set out to use the effective lobbying structure permitted within the United States' democratic system of governance to persuade the Clinton administration of the potential costs Americans will suffer if sanction was imposed against Nigeria. However, Frankel reported that after the hanging of the *Ogoni Nine* and the threat of punitive sanctions seemed to gather support,

Nigeria fought back. The [Abuja] Government employed the services of nine U.S. public relations and lobbying firms spanning the American political spectrum. Among them were the law firm of Washington & Christian, run by liberal black Democrats, which reported receiving \$600,000 from Nigeria for the first six months of the year, and Symms, Lehn & Associates, an Alexandria firm headed by former Idaho senator Steve Symms (R) and Alfred Lehn, former aide to Bob Dole, which reported receiving about \$300,000.⁴³

Beyond the retention of lobbying firms, arguably the Kassebaum-Payne bills aimed at severe economic sanctions including, possibly, oil embargo did not come to a vote in either house because of the effective strategy of coalition politics employed by the oil companies and the Abacha regime. The bill failed to come to a vote because of the lobbying "... effort by major oil companies such as Mobil Oil, Amoco and Chevron, as well as several non-oil firms with involvement in a \$3.8 billion liquefied natural gas project in southeastern Nigeria."⁴⁴ Equally significant was the lobbying by the 107 members of the Corporate Council on Africa who were reported to have received \$10,000.00 each to lobby Washington against economic sanctions.⁴⁵ Given how important campaign contributions are to elections and re-elections in the United States, the lobbying efforts by the Abacha regime who used the oil companies and lobbying firms to represent it at the international bargaining table outmaneuvered the pro-sanction and pro-democracy groups, at home and abroad.

At the domestic table, the game was simple and effective. The government resorted to suffocating civil society, arresting and imprisoning journalists, union leaders, pro-democracy groups, students and members of academic staff unions. And, in response to what appeared to be random acts of violence, the regime charged the Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka and other critics of the government with treason. Consequently, a reasonable number of educated Nigerians fled the country, were in

prison and/or simply resorted to self-imposed cocoons of silence and indifference for self-preservation. The effectiveness of the junta's control of the domestic game board was further illustrated by the imprisonment of prominent Nigerians that Abacha considered a threat to his regime. For example, former military head of state, Olusegun Obasanjo, the winner of the 1993 presidential election Chief Moshood Abiola and General Shehu Yar' Adua among others were imprisoned for alleged treasonable offences. Indeed, the Abacha regime so intimidated the domestic opposition groups that Shehu Yar' Adua's prison death occurred without much serious protest by any one in Nigeria. Similarly, the regime intimidated, fragmented and/or co-opted the leadership of the Nigerian Labor Union, the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) and the Petroleum and the Natural Gas Senior Staff Association (PENGASSAN) into complacency. Also, the junta effectively silenced and seriously weakened various pro-democracy groups such as the Academic Staff Union of Universities and the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS). To further consolidate its power under Abubakar, the ruling coalition arrested a number of pro-democracy demonstrators marking the fifth anniversary of June 12, including the wife of then jailed Chief M. K. O. Abiola. And with the sudden death of Abacha in mid-1998, Chief Abiola also died later in prison under suspicious circumstances.

Thus, the issues that the external pro-sanction camps identified were not salient to the military regime and the northern oligarchy. Likewise, the strategies of consulting with allies to allow for a multilateral approach to sanctions against Nigeria was not effective because the ruling coalition had the money to make economic sanctions seemingly more costly for the sponsoring states, but especially for the U.S. On its part, the U.S. had the option of *military intervention* – a foreign policy instrument the U.S. has neither the economic nor the security interests to employ in the case of Nigeria or other sub-Saharan African states. Thus, U.S.-sponsored sanction against Nigeria was a rhetorical foreign policy decision based on *moral principles* designed to support international norms and values governing human rights. This rhetorical device remains the U.S. modus operandi as evident in the case of U.S.-identified genocide in Darfur region of Sudan without triggering the necessary international action as required by the United Nations Genocide Conventions.

Contrary to Ambassador Moose's testimony, the more specific interest of supporting the economic interests of U.S. corporations and other domestic coalitions was more persuasive an influence on U.S. relationship with Nigeria than the stated interest of a democratic and an open political system of governance in Nigeria. The foregoing assertions are based on simple geopolitical logic. The U.S. was not a colonizer in Africa and the region is not within its geopolitical sphere of influence,

and thus, has limited (oil) interest in the West African region. Also, she currently does not have a great number of its citizens going to Nigeria either for investments or for tourism. Consequently, U.S. foreign policy in the region is largely based on a multilateral consultation with Britain and France whose economic and security interests are more evident.⁴⁶ As a result, there is no direct basis for U.S. influence attempt in Nigeria that does not cost Washington more than the target regime. Generally, U.S. public opinion has been influential in supporting humanitarian missions into Africa, and economic sanctions do not qualify. Consequently, the two-level games played by Washington maintains balance between the economic interests of the powerful and influential oil corporations in the U.S. and its professed global support for liberal democracy and free market economy. When a well constituted domestic coalition objects to economic sanctions or support of a foreign regime, as was the Nigerian case, Washington can be expected to project a more realistic foreign policy devoid of global idealism.

Conclusion:

Assessment of the Impact of Sanctions

The punitive sanctions threatened by the international community after the halting of the democratic transition program in 1993 and the hanging of the *Ogoni Nine* in 1995 were as solid as a hot air balloon in a tornado. As argued above, the most salient issue for the ruling coalition was staying in power for the interest of army generals in alliance with predatory/extractive elite coalition. The misidentification of the salient issue for the Abacha regime was consistent with the realist foreign economic policies of the United States and her western allies towards sub-Saharan African states. However, for the pro-sanction groups, the prize was the vast revenue from crude petroleum, which coincided with the economic interests of the oil companies. Thus, while most internal pro-democracy movements and pro-sanction groups considered *oil embargo* a punitive measure against the military regime, the external constituency consistent with their economic interests in Nigeria's crude petroleum preferred caution.

Although, Nigerian opposition groups perceived oil embargo as a mechanism that would have crippled the regime, the Corporate Council on Africa's views that the concentration of wealth is already in the hands of the few and therefore can only be further concentrated, led to the suggestion that oil embargo would be ineffective in changing the behavior of the regime. In the long run, the external constituency hoped that the regime could become unable to pay its loyal foot soldiers and would either suffer internal dissension and complete break down or

bargain for a more inclusive and open governing system that is accountable to the citizens. However, with the sudden death of General Abacha in 1998, the expectations of both the internal and international pro-sanction and democracy movements were checkmated by General Abubakar's commitment to implement the fraudulent transition program to its fullest. The contrived transition politics resulted in the release from prison, election and assumption of office by retired General Olusegun Obasanjo to the Presidency on May 29, 1999.

Indeed, it is not clear that the U.S. and its allies have adequate economic or security interests in Nigeria to impose economic sanctions on a recalcitrant regime bent on implementing an authoritarian governance style, especially if such autocracy were to occur within a democratic political system. Also, the United States has yet to make a major foreign policy decision towards Nigeria or any African country without consultation with Britain and France, both of whom have vested economic interests in Nigeria and are therefore more reluctant to support policies that do not advance their interests. From that standpoint, the Commonwealth of Nations, led by Britain, voted to defer sanctions on Nigeria before any realistic evidence of democratic transition was in place.

Thirdly, United States' foreign economic policies have remained consistent from Latin America to Asia and Africa. Especially in Central and Southern Africa, the economic interests of U.S. corporations have consistently taken precedence over global idealism, especially, at the end of the Cold War. Consistent with corporate U.S. interests in Africa, the Clinton administration was aware that:

Twenty percent of U.S. oil imports come from Africa, and America relies on Africa for supplies of strategic minerals. Africa possesses 54 percent of the world's cobalt, 32 percent of its bauxite, 52 percent of its manganese, and 81 percent of its chromium stocks.... [And] that American investors are finding Africa highly profitable: the average annual return on the book value of U.S. investments in Africa in the 1990s was over 25 percent, compared to less than 10 percent worldwide.⁴⁷

Therefore, given the size and importance of Nigeria in Africa in general and specifically in the West African region, Washington was unlikely to impose effective economic sanctions that would have crippled the Abacha regime and the ruling coalition. To do so would seriously have undermined western economic interests and the stability of the region with consequences far beyond the West African region. In that respect, the Nigerian pro-democracy movements in the United States and other western countries learned a useful realpolitik lesson on the values the western governments place on global principles and national interests. When

the two collide, national interests take precedence over global principles as evident in Sudan and other areas in Africa.

Similarly, the history of political leadership in Nigeria since independence suggests another lesson for both the Nigerian pro-democracy movement overseas and their external supporters. As demonstrated by the historical account above, Nigerian politics is fraught with ethnic, religious and class biases. The ethnic imperative in Nigerian politics is complicated by the alliance between the Hausa-Fulani ethnic groups, southern predatory elites and the army generals that have ruled for most of the country's political independence. One obvious impact of the ruling coalition on ordinary Nigerians is evident in the docility of the masses whose solution to their problem has been largely self-imposed silence and/or indifference. To the extent that the majority of Nigerians find the state irrelevant to their daily lives and have chosen isolation over involvement, externally sponsored economic sanctions on an undemocratic regime will not have a serious impact on the Nigerian masses. Thus, while external support is necessary for resolving the political and economic crises in Nigeria, effective and sustainable efforts must originate from integrated and sustained internal action. External support of foreign governments, NGOs and other interested organizations can only enhance such action to restructure, build and sustain an effective civil society that is capable of ensuring a consolidated liberal democracy in Nigeria. Indeed, while the authoritarian policies of the late Abacha and his collaborators led to the formation of various domestic prodemocracy coalitions (NADECO, UAD, CD, UDFN, GNNO and NDM) in Nigeria, it is clear that undemocratic governments, especially military regimes are less likely to be overthrown by appeals to external constituencies without sustained internal efforts. On their part, the Nigerian democracy movements were mistaken in their reliance on the goodwill of international actors without first building a strong domestic coalition. The ineffectiveness of such goodwill in the cases of countries like Nigeria serves a useful lesson for future mobilization against autocratic governments across the continent. In the end, if freedom cannot be bought and if democracy cannot be imposed from the outside, and can only therefore be fought for and earned by those who desire it, then members of prodemocracy movements, civil society organizations and disaffected but patriotic elites must be at the frontlines of regime change with their resources and lives, without which, external support for democratic transitions and consolidation will remain rhetorical and theoretical for sub-Saharan Africans.

Notes

¹Although 10% import would appear insignificant on the surface, it is significant in terms of the volume this quantity represents for Nigeria. The 10% import by the United States constitutes approximately 50% of Nigeria's total crude petroleum export.

²General Sani Abacha died of a heart attack on June 8, 1998. He was replaced by the number three officer in the Military government, General Abdulsalam Abubakar. The number two man, General Oladipo Diya was implicated in a coup attempt against Abacha, tried and sentenced to death.

³The concept of *cost* here is relevant for understanding and explaining United States' rational calculations for imposing economic rather than other forms of sanctions against Nigeria. Some analysts calculate the costs of sanctions of both the sponsoring and the target states. This is largely irrelevant because such calculations do not take into account the alternative costs to the sponsoring state of not imposing a particular form of sanction. For example, with the end of the Cold-War, liberal democracy and capitalism have become part of the variables for calculating costs of alternatives foregone if one foreign policy action is supported against another. Thus, if a state like Nigeria should behave in ways that negate those international norms and values supported by the U.S. without adequate and immediate response, the cost to the United States is both a loss of credibility for her ideological positions as well as the possibility that more immediate economic and military costs might be needed at a much higher cost later. For further discussion on the concept of cost, see David Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985.

⁴Margaret Doxey, "International Sanctions," in David G. Haglund and Michael K. Hawes, eds., *World Politics: Power, Interdependence & Dependence*. Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990, p. 254. Doxey argues that the intent of the sponsoring state(s) varies from desiring a change in the conduct of the target government or even a change in the regime in power. Depending on the intent of the sending state(s), compliance and therefore effectiveness of economic sanction becomes a function of whether the intent is to "administer public rebuke" which does not result in policy shift by the target state, or the intent can be "symbolic" aimed at demonstrating support for existing international values and norms like liberal democracy and free market economy. Applied to the case of Nigeria, it seems clear that the pro-sanction camp desires both a change in the conduct of the Abacha administration and ultimately a change from military to a democratic system of governance. The question then becomes: what was the intent of the Clinton Administration and the Commonwealth of Nations in threatening economic sanction against the Abacha regime?

⁵For different meanings and uses of economic sanctions as instrument of statecraft, see for example, David A. Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft, op. Cit.*, and David Cortright and George A. Lopez, eds., *Economic Sanctions: Panacea or Peacebuilding in a Post-Cold War World*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995.

⁶In this work, structural power is defined as a state's or a coalition's control over policy outcomes in a given context. Thus, the aim of the United States and its western allies in imposing economic sanction against autocratic government in Nigeria would be to change the behavior of the regime in the direction of holding free and fair democratic elections as well as ensuring a free market economy.

⁷Baldwin argues that often the judgment whether economic sanction is effective or not is based on a faulty logic that assumes other forms of influence attempts, like military intervention, would have been more successful than economic sanctions. He insists that it is not so obvious that economic sanctions are not effective if the alternatives are not shown to have been more effective. For instance, to what extent was military sanction effective in bringing about a change in

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the behavior of the North Vietnamese even though it seems to have been more costly monetarily, in human lives lost and credibility for the U.S.?

⁸David Baldwin, p. 116.

⁹The argument here presupposes that Nigeria's monocultural economy is likely to experience enough pressure to compel the regime to adjust its behavior in line with the expectations of the sponsoring state(s). However, I acknowledge the probability that the issue of human rights and democratic governance may not be salient for the regime, which therefore may not be likely to respond in the desired manner. Thus the use of economic sanctions rather than result in a change of behavior will tend to lead to an increase in repression of human rights and democracy advocates. In that sense, such a reversal may actually hasten the desired policy outcome if repression leads to the consolidation of the opposition against the regime rather than a "rally-around-the-flag" as suggested by Galtung. Also, given the significance of crude petroleum to both states, one would think that Nigeria is also able to influence decisional outcomes in the United States, especially where Nigeria expects certain outcome in U.S.-Africa relations. But given more alternative sources of crude petroleum available to the U.S., it is plausible to expect the bilateral influence will consistently favor the United States over Nigeria because of Nigeria's reliance on crude petroleum for over 90% of her foreign earnings.

¹⁰For a discussion on the nature and scope of *sensitivity* and *vulnerability* of nations under such pressure, see the seminal work by Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, 2nd ed. Glenview Ill.: Scott, Foresman/Little Brown, 1989.

¹¹See Pearl-Alice Marsh, "The Case For Economic Sanctions against South Africa," *The World & I* (February 1990), pp. 595-603.

¹² It is important to note that apartheid as an ideology in South Africa may not have lasted as long as it did without the Cold War-induced ideological division of the international system into democratic/capitalist against socialist/communist states. The United States-led western coalition's global strategy of containment provided a more effective support for the apartheid regime against the African National Congress guerrilla war that was supported by the Cubans, the USSR and other African states. And, following the end of the Cold War, the convergence of both the absence of western support and therefore support for economic sanctions against the white minority regime, the withdrawal of the Cubans and the effective organizational opposition of the ANC forced a negotiated end to apartheid in South Africa.

¹³See Johan Galtung, "On the Effects of Economic Sanctions with Examples from the Case of Rhodesia," *World Politics*, 19 (1967), pp. 378-416.

¹⁴In "Bargaining with the Instruments of Statecraft: Multinational Corporations and U.S. Economic Sanctions Against Nicaragua and Libya," *Business in the Contemporary World* (Summer, 1990), pp.66-78, Kenneth A. Rodman argues that in the case of Nicaragua and Libya, the Reagan Administration was able to effectively increase the uncertainties felt by the Transnational Corporations in the two countries which resulted in the TNCs' acquiescence with economic sanctions and thereby became themselves instruments of economic statecraft for advancing U.S. foreign policy goals. It should be noted that the TNCs may have gone along with the Reagan Administration on sanctions against Libya and Nicaragua because public opinion in the U.S. were perceived both by the Administration and the TNCs as supportive of economic sanctions. Therefore, the TNCs may have feared a possible boycott of their products in the U.S. and elsewhere.

¹⁵Klaus Knorr, *The Power of Nations*. New York: Basic Books Inc., (1975), p. 140.

¹⁶See Kelechi A. Kalu, "Political Economy in Nigeria: The Military, Ethnic Politics and Development," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, vol. 10, No. 2, 1996 pp. 229-247 and "Dimensions of Ethnic Politics and Development in Nigeria," *Journal of Nigerian Affairs*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (March 1996), pp. 23-34 as well as Kelechi A. Kalu, *Economic Development and Nigerian Foreign Policy* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000): 35-47,

¹⁷See, for example, J. Isawa Elaigwu, "Ethnicity and the Federal Option in Africa," *The Nigerian Journal of Federalism*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (June 1994), pp. 69-85, Ike Udogu, "The Allurement of Ethnonationalism in Nigerian Politics: The Contemporary Debate," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 29, Nos. 3 and 4 (July 1994), Julius O. Ihonvbere, "Irrelevant State and Ethnicity in Nigeria," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 17, Issue No. 1 (1993).

¹⁸One of several interviews granted the author during visits to the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Victoria Island, Lagos, in March and August 1995.

¹⁹Nduka Oriono, "No Regime should take the people for a ride," *Sentinel*, Vol. 1, No. 16 (June 13, 1994), p. 12.

²⁰Cited in E. Ike Udogu, op. cit., p. 163.

²¹See Ayeni Olugbenga, "Which way forward," *West Africa* (February 14-20, 1994), p. 255. Also cited in E. Ike Udogu, op. cit.

²²Obafemi Awolowo, *Path to Nigerian Freedom*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), pp. 47-48. See Udogu, op. cit., p. 164.

²³See Sheth, op. cit., p. 620.

²⁴Sheth, op. cit., p. 621.

²⁵Robert L. Heilbroner, *The Nature and Logic of Capitalism*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985), pp. 127-128.

²⁶For recent discussions on these issues see Bob Herbert, "Unholy Alliance in Nigeria," *The New York Times*, (Friday, January 26, 1996), p. A15, Paul Lewis, "Nigeria's Deadly Oil War: Shell Defends Its Record," *The New York Times*, (Tuesday, February 13, 1996), pp. A1-A4. Jean Damu and David Bacon, "Oil Rules Nigeria," *The Black Scholar*, (Winter and Spring 1996), Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 51-54.

²⁷Unlike the caste system in India, the colonial powers did not create the various ethnic groups in Nigeria, but rather they exploited the ethnicity of the inhabitants, a practice that the indigenous elites in Nigeria have failed to eradicate, but have instead intensified the colonial patterns of exploiting ethnic identities. I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for this insight.

²⁸Cited in Yusufu Bala Usman, "Middlemen, Consultants, Contractors and the solutions to the current Economic Crisis," *Studies in Politics and Society: Journal of the Nigerian Political Science Association*, Issue No. 2 (October, 1984), p. 23.

²⁹T. Clifton Morgan and Valerie L. Schwebach, "Economic Sanctions as an instrument of Foreign Policy: The Role of Domestic Politics," *International Interactions*, Vol. 21, No. 3, (1996), pp. 247-263.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 259-260.

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³¹The nature of the Abubakar transition through a contrived 1999 Nigerian Constitution without public debates and the extent Generals Abubakar and Babangida (rtd) gave blatant support to the Election of Retired General Olusegun Obasanjo to the presidency in 1999 is consistent with the argument of this chapter. Thus, it might be too early to celebrate Nigeria's transition from dictatorial to civilian regime.

³²General Sani Abacha died of sudden heart attack on 8th June 1998; and, General Abdulsalam Abubakar, a Hausa Muslim was promptly appointed Head of State and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. In his maiden address to the nation on June 9th, 1998, General Abubakar said, "Fellow Nigerians, we remain fully committed to the socio-political transition programme of General Sani Abacha's administration and will do everything to ensure its full and successful implementation."

³³See "Commonwealth won't sanction Nigeria," *Nigeria Today* (March 1997), p. 4. As most analysts familiar with post-colonial politics are aware, the Commonwealth of Nations under the general guidance of Britain could not have been expected to impose economic sanctions against Nigeria on a scale that could be effective. In the first instance, Britain as a major power has demonstrated a remarkable capacity to consistently think in terms of its national economic interests in dealing with Nigeria. Secondly, on the issues of economic sanctions, Britain has not been an ardent supporter of sanctions as illustrated by the sanctions against Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and the former apartheid regimes in South Africa. Shell, a British concern has most of the oil drilling contracts in Nigeria as well as the new contracts on liquefied natural gas exploration. The decision not to pursue effective economic sanctions against the Abacha regime was consistent with previous British reaction in similar situations.

³⁴Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Ambassador George E. Moose's testimony before the U.S. Foreign Relations Committee on "U.S. Policy Toward Nigeria," Washington, D.C. July 20, 1995. The discussion here on U.S. interests in Nigeria is derived from Ambassador Moose's testimony.

³⁵*Ibid.* According to Ambassador Moose, "... of central importance to all these goals, however is [U.S.] interest in seeing Nigeria establish an open, democratic system. It is our firm belief that a democratic Nigeria that respects human rights and resolves issues of governance through the democratic process will create a context within which our other interests can best be pursued."

³⁶As a gesture of goodwill towards the opposition, General Abubakar released several political prisoners, including former Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo. However, leaders of pro-democracy movements in and outside of Nigeria remained skeptical of Abubakar's gesture until all political prisoners, but, especially Chief M. K. O. Abiola, the winner of the annulled 1993 presidential election in Nigeria was released. The skepticism of the pro-democracy groups was confirmed when shortly before he was due to be released from prison, Chief Abiola died under suspicious circumstances.

³⁷For a similar argument in the case of Canada, see Kim Richard Nossal, "Canadian Sanctions against Nigeria?" A Brief submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa, 14 December, 1995.

³⁸See Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Ambassador George E. Moose's testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on U.S. Policy Toward Nigeria, Washington, D.C., July 20, 1995. For further background on U.S. interests in Nigeria, see "1995 Country Reports on Economic Policy and Trade Practices," a Department of State report submitted to

the Senate Committees on Foreign Relations and on Finance and to the House Committees on Foreign Affairs and on Ways and Means, May 1996.

³⁹For the relevance of the two-game metaphor, see Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," in Peter Evans, et. al., *Double-Edged Diplomacy: International Bargaining and Domestic Politics*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 363-394.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 436. Also see, Kelechi A. Kalu, *Economic Development and Nigerian Foreign Policy* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), especially chapter 4.

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴²See Glenn Frankel, "Nigeria Mixes Oil And Money: A Potent Formula Keeps U.S. Sanctions at Bay," *Washington Post*, (Sunday, November 24, 1996), pp. C1-4.

⁴³*Ibid.* Frankel also reports that among the more influential representatives of the Abacha regime were Maurice Dawkins, a former Republican senatorial candidate in Virginia who recruited prominent American Blacks for a fact-finding mission to Nigeria, and placed ads against sanctions in every prominent Black newspaper, all paid for by the Abacha regime. The Black senator Carol Moseley-Braun (D-Ill.) and Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan returned from their trips to Nigeria to argue against sanctions suggesting instead that the Abacha regime should have been given time to move Nigeria towards a democratic system of governance.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵*Ibid.* The statement by the council's executive director is apt. He argues that, "[w]e honestly don't believe a unilateral oil embargo against Nigeria would accomplish much except to further concentrate power and wealth in the hands of a few It's a great press release but it would be counterproductive."

⁴⁶For most observers of the political economy of Nigerian foreign relations, fearing a loss of economic influence, Britain and France were not likely to support economic sanctions against Nigeria, especially if such sanction involved the oil sector to which both countries are heavily invested.

⁴⁷David F. Gordon and Howard Wolpe, "The Other Africa: An End to Afro-Pessimism," *World Policy Journal*, Spring 1998, pp: 49-59.

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