

# 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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8 **Abstract**  
9 Foreign policies of nation states are driven by their National Interest which conduct have  
10 implications for domestic growth and international stability. This paper attempts an  
11 examination of some aspects of the pursuit of national interest of the United States under  
12 George W. Bush and Nigeria under President Olusegun Obasanjo. The paper posits that  
13 there is a nexus between the pursuit of national interest and international stability and  
14 development which world powers have undermined. The consequences are the militarization of  
15 the world's space, destabilization of nation-states and treat to world's peace among others.  
16 The paper cautions that peace and stability as sine qua non to sustainable development can  
17 only be sustained if world powers exercise restraint in their pursuit of the national interest.

**Index terms**— nation-states, international stability, world peace, geostrategic interest, national interest.

## 20 1 Introduction

he 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".

27 The debate as to whether the United States (US), upholds the spirit of '76 has long been overtaken by the  
28 overwhelming developments in the international arena and by the US involvement in world affairs after the  
29 two world wars. The world wars terminated America's traditional policy of isolation and translated it from a  
30 regional player to a full participant of international affairs. It will be recalled that the Monroe doctrine of 1823  
31 restated the principles of isolation and nonentanglement in international affairs earlier expounded by President  
32 Washington in 1793 and 1796 respectively during his farewell speeches ??Ritche, 1985). Monroe had inter-alia,  
33 warned European nations to hands off the American republics (Latin America and the Caribbean), and equally  
34 reassured European powers that the US would not participate in purely European affairs; this explains partly  
35 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;. 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

### 3 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS I. GEO-STRATEGY

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43 European recovery and rearmament" (Kolko;1988). Its role as a major player in European reconstruction and  
44 the ensuing cold war with the Soviet Union as noted by Kolko, practically defined the foundation of US-African  
45 policy. As anticomunism dictated US-African policy to the end of the cold-war, African states which set  
46 independent path to modernization were baptized with irrational foreign policy decisions which resulted into  
47 chaos, wars, deaths, destabilization, hunger and misery, all in furtherance of the US NI. The extent to which  
48 these policies resolved cold war issues is worrisome. With the demise of the cold war and the emergence of the  
49 US as a lonely super power, critics continue to ask questions of the future pattern of American foreign policy.  
50 Within the American establishment, the conduct of foreign policies and pursuit of the NI rotates between the  
51 executive of the Republicans who favour a more aggressive approach and the Democrats whose moderate and  
52 liberal internationalist view comes under scathing criticism from the Republicans. As curiosity lingers on the  
53 future direction of US foreign policy, acts of terrorism to which the US vowed to extirpate, regional conflicts,  
54 drugs, proliferation of arms, dangers of biological and chemical weapons and so on, seem to point to the direction  
55 of the new foreign policy. Indeed, as postulated by Carol Berkin et al, (2006),

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

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

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

70 The two contrasting paradigms have been juxtaposed to show:

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

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

## 81 2 II.

### 82 3 Clarification of Terms i. Geo-strategy

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

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

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

90 In his most significant contribution to post cold war strategy, Zbigniew Brzezinski (1997), defined geostrategy  
91 thus:

92 For the United States, Eurasian geo-strategy involves the purposeful management of geostrategically dynamic  
93 states and the careful handling of geopolitically catalytic states, in keeping with the twin interest of America in the  
94 short-term presentation of its unique global power ?. Geo-strategy as defined by Jakub J. Grygiel (2006), is the  
95 geographic direction of a states foreign policy. More precisely, geo-strategy describes where a state concentrates its  
96 efforts by projecting military power and directing diplomatic activity ?. A state may project power to a location  
97 because of ideological reasons, interest groups, or simply the whim of its leader.

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

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## 102 4 ii. The National Interest (NI)

103 The national interest, as noted by Ojo and Sesay (2002), is perhaps one of the most controversial concepts  
104 in international relations. The concept, over the years has been subjected to many interpretations and  
105 misinterpretations. This situation has been compounded because there is yet no agreeable conceptual clarification  
106 of the term among its numerous users 44 ( H ) including policy makers and politicians. It is perhaps for this and  
107 other reasons that critics have argued that the NI is more or less what policy makers say it is at any point in  
108 time. ??Ojo and Sesay 2002; ??7). Three definitions of the concept will also illustrate this further.

109 Joseph Frankel (1973), has defined the NI from the aspirational, the operational and the polemic perspectives.  
110 According to Frankel, at the aspirational level, the concept refers to "the vision of the good life, to some ideal set  
111 of goals which the state would like to realize if this were possible ?." At the operational level, the NI is "the sum  
112 total of interest and policies actually pursued". Accordingly, at the polemic level the NI refers to "the use of the  
113 concept in political argument in real life, to explain, evaluate, rationalize, or criticize international behavior"? . H.  
114 Assisi Asobie (2002), has presented three contending paradigms within which the concept of NI may be defined.  
115 These are the Realist paradigm, ?the Behavioral or decision making approach and lastly, the Marxist political-  
116 economy approach. The Realist theoreticians, among who are Hans Morgenthau and George Kennan conceive  
117 NI in terms of national security. As noted by Asobie, "some of them (e.g Hans), maintain that the pursuit of  
118 NI demands that a statesman should focus on those essential, concrete (and where necessary selfish) objectives  
119 which national power dictates ?" Kenan qualifies this position further when he argues that a nation should try to  
120 conduct its foreign policy in accordance with both its concrete NI moderated by the moral or ethical principles  
121 inherent in the spirit of its civilization ??Asobie, 2002: 50-57). The behavioralist conceives NI to be what the  
122 decision makers decides it is. In their view, the NI is not fixed but constantly changing. The third paradigm  
123 which is also the political economy approach view the NI as more or less the interest of the dominant class in  
124 society. This class interest, Asobie has noted, may not be necessarily that goal which it claims to pursue; rather,  
125 it is that goal which is essentially for the continued reproduction of the dominant class. Tunde Adeniran (1983),  
126 asserted that When statesmen and bureaucrats are expected or are required to act in the national interest? they  
127 are being called upon to take action on issues that would improve the political situation, the economic and social  
128 well-being?. They are being urged to take action that will improve the lot of the people rather than pursue  
129 policies that would subject the people to domination by other countries ?.

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

## 134 5 III.

## 135 6 From Point of Theory

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

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

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164 class and cronies, members of the ruling party and so on. Their action only destabilizes the domestic economy  
 165 falling short of flexing power in the international arena as the world powers do.

166 Maintaining good neighborliness, world peace, observing international laws and conventions seem to rank  
 167 high in Nigeria's foreign policy agenda to the extent it could compromise its vital interest, as it did when it  
 168 surrendered the Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon in a landmark judgment by the Hague in 2002. This is in sharp  
 169 contrast to the actions of world powers that are strategic, pragmatic, and assertive on matters of their NI. The  
 170 US involvement in the Latin America and the interest of its multi-national corporations' operative there led to  
 171 the brutal overthrow of the regime of President Allende of Chile in 1973, and the deaths of about three thousand  
 172 persons. The regime of Allende was perceived to be unfriendly to the economic interest of the US ??Ojo &  
 173 Sasey 2002: 90) Economic prosperity of the US was a vital interest and in their realization of those interests any  
 174 state that was not with US was perceived to be against the US NI; such states, numerous in the third world  
 175 categorization were marked out and labelled as communist, and in the containment strategy of the bipolar world  
 176 system, these states suffered destabilization, neglect, and isolation. The consequences of these unfriendly and  
 177 irrational foreign policy behaviours from the weaker states were unpredictable. While some collaborated with  
 178 the forces of imperialism and maintained their orbit as patron states, others in the opposite were "rogue states"  
 179 who nursed bitter resentment towards US foreign policy. It is not surprising that most of the terrorist activities  
 180 are bitter expressions and "blowback" on the US foreign policies.

181 IV. George W. Bush (2000-2007) and the Pursuit of the NI

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

190 In his analysis of the interconnections among politics, religion, public discourse, and the press, in US, David  
 191 Domke (2004), for instance, lambasted Bush's administration's disregard for democracy. Domke noted that Bush  
 192 had capitalized on September 11, 2001, (9/11) terrorist attacks, "to put forward its own blend of conservative  
 193 religion and politics", what Domke referred to as political fundamentalism. To Domke, the administration  
 194 political fundamentalism "Subverted many of the country's most precious democratic ideals". Communication  
 195 approaches "that merged a conservative religious world view and political ambition in pursuit of controlling public  
 196 discourse, pressurizing Congress (and the United Nations), to rubber stamp its policies, ? its actions as divinely  
 197 ordained, resulted in a dominance of a political agenda unparalleled in American history (Domke, x ) Indeed, the  
 198 world sympathized with the US after the 9/11 attacks and condemned terrorism outright, even as many were  
 199 concerned with establishing the root causes of these acts. Fighting terrorism therefore became a NI for Bush's  
 200 administration which preferred a military option to many other options that were advanced to confront terrorism.

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

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219 what is best for everyone?; how can its citizens be so open and generous but its foreign policy so domineering?;  
 220 and why is it shocked when the objects of its policies grumble or even strike back? (Hertsgaard 2002).

221 These and many more questions continue to task the imagination of admirers who wish Americans would  
 222 persuade America to balance its global behavior with its domestic principles. The US believes in the use of

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

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

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

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

258 It will be recalled that on September, 11, 2001, nineteen terrorist hijacked America's domestic airlines and used  
259 them to attack the world trade centre in Newyork and the Pentagon in Washington D.C. The attacks claimed  
260 over three thousand people. The Al Qaeda terrorist organization was fingered as responsible for the attacks.  
261 The Al Qaeda is believed to be led by Osama bin laden, a Saudi Arabian extraction, and son of a wealthy  
262 Arabian family, who fought against Soviet Union forces in Afghanistan. It is believed that bin laden directed  
263 9/11 from Afghanistan. The US appealed to the global community to war against terrorism and demanded that  
264 the Taliban government in Afghanistan surrender bin laden and other Al Qaeda leaders. When the Taliban  
265 government refused to hand-in bin laden, the US and allied forces invaded Afghanistan with the intent to  
266 destroying Al Qaeda network and overthrowing the Taliban government ??Berkin et al 2006:992). The war  
267 in Afghanistan attracted the sympathies of onlookers who urged the US to punish the guilty not the innocent  
268 women and children, many of who lost their lives in the air strikes by the US air force.

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

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

283 On Iraq, the charges on Saddam Hussein included the use of chemical and biological weapons against his  
284 enemies and citizens of his own country; possession of weapons of mass destruction and was also trying to obtain  
285 nuclear weapons; Saddam according to the allegations, represented a direct threat to American interest in the

286 Middle East, and that he had links to Al Qaeda. Saddam's case by US judgment, defied all other approaches but  
287 military option. By 2002, Congress agreed that president Bush should "take whatever measures were necessary  
288 and appropriate to eliminate the threat posed by Saddam Hussein and his Iraqi dictatorship". It was widely  
289 orchestrated that Saddam "had amassed huge stores of chemical and biological weapons and was seeking to  
290 become a nuclear power", all in violation of the Gulf war ceasefire agreement. An international coalition led by  
291 the US launched operation Iraqi freedom, a campaign that dislodged Saddam Hussein and his government from  
292 power ??Smith, 2005:402). The US purported to establish a democratic and prosperous Iraq.

293 By 2004, Americans were questioning the rationale for war especially when it became obvious that American  
294 intelligence exaggerated Iraqi capabilities. No weapons of mass destruction had been found in Iraq. Some  
295 Republicans, as noted by Frank Rich (2006) claimed that they supported war in Iraq only for the liberation of  
296 Iraq and not because Saddam had weapons of mass destruction. An analyst from the Middle East contended that  
297 US invasion of Iraq was actuated by oil, and to do with empire, getting control of Iraq's enormous oil resources.  
298 Accordingly, the US intends to control, undermine OPEC, take controlling access to oil for Japan, Germany and  
299 the rest of the world (Rourke 2008:293). Frank has however, argued that Bush's administration never had any  
300 nation building plan for Iraq. He contended that Iraq was not invaded for humanitarian reasons. The war on  
301 terror, as noted by Frank, was the path to victory for the November midterm election. Election victory and  
302 ideological reasons predating 9/11 were more plausible reasons for US invasion of Iraq ??Rich, 2006:215-216).  
303 The purported connection between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda and Saddam's imminent nuclear attack on  
304 the US were all saleable lies and cover ups according to Frank. The Iraqi war was an invented war; the same way  
305 weapons of mass destruction were an invention. The real war, Frank maintains, was Al Qaeda. Frank argues  
306 that in terms of radical Islam and terrorism, Saddam was "manifestly not the most imminent threat to America  
307 than Syria, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Iran". Equally debunked was the argument that primarily,  
308 rebuilding post Saddam Iraq as a shining example of liberal democracy with a domino effect in the Middle East  
309 was a humanitarian concern of the US. Frank maintains that Bush's administration had no such plans for Iraqi  
310 nation but regime change that would leave Iraq to "build their own democracy by spontaneous civic combustion  
311 like Eastern Europeans after the fall of the Soviet Union". ??Rich, 2006:212). Frank's analysis shows clearly how  
312 personal interest or ambitions of a Chief Executive can be adumbrated to the NI which naked pursuit causes  
313 international crises.

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

315 If Americans understood that Iraq is not made up of 22 million Saddam Hussein, but 22 million people,  
316 of families, of children, of elderly parents, families with dreams and hopes and expectations for their children  
317 ? they would be horrified to realize that the current killing of innocent Iraqi civilians by the US air force is  
318 being done in their name ??Hertsgaard, 2002:88) As asserted by Halliday, Bush's administration was flagrantly  
319 violating international law and moral decency by maintaining economic sanctions that were punishing Iraq's  
320 general population and by bombing Iraq while patrolling the "no fly zone", established after the Persian Gulf  
321 War of 1991. America enforced sanctions on Iraq since 1991 caused the death of at least 350,000 Iraqi children and  
322 impoverished the middle class. By destabilizing Iraq and abandoning it to its devices, George W. Bush missed  
323 the golden opportunity of laundering his image and history would have noted the visionary American President  
324 whose invasion of Iraq triggered a concatenation of democratic reactions that replaced autocratic regimes in the  
325 Middle East; this was not to be.

326 America's harsh and aggressive tendencies "create endless enemies around the world". Its tendency to bully,  
327 warns Chalmers Johnson, in Hertsqaard (2002), will build up reservoir of resentment against all Americans -  
328 tourist, students and businessmen as well as members of the arm forces that can have lethal result. Chalmers  
329 titled his book "Blowback", a CIA term for how foreign policy can come back to hunt a country years after, in  
330 unforeseen ways, especially after cases of secret operations (Hertsgaard 2002:80). A 1997 report

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332 by the Pentagon Defense Science Board noted "Historical data show a strong correlation between US involvement  
333 in international situations and an increase in international attacks against the US" (Hertsgaard 2002: 80-81).  
334 The Iranian hostage crisis of 1979 is a clear example where the CIA overthrew the elected government of Iran  
335 and installed Shah Reza Pahlavi, to protect America's oil interest. The dictator was forced out of power in 1979.  
336 Iranian blowback was the attack on the US embassy in Tehran and the seizure of 54 hostages.

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

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

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

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

## 382 11 V. Aspects of Nigeria National Interest

383 Examined under President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria ??1999) ??2000) ??2001) ??2002) ??2003) ??2004)  
384 ??2005) ??2006) ??2007) The reemergence of Olusegun Obasanjo as Nigeria's democratically elected Head of  
385 State in 1999, opened a new chapter in Nigeria foreign policy literature. It will be recalled that the regimes of  
386 General Ibrahim Babangida which culminated into the annulment of June was a welcome opportunity to reverse  
387 the pariah status to which Nigeria became known. President Obasanjo warmed up to this and before long, some  
388 ray of hope sprang in the area of activating Nigeria's foreign relations. However, some aspects of Obasanjo's  
389 foreign policy concerns are difficult to comprehend and further confirm Obasanjo as antidemocratic.

390 This section does not pretend to review Obasanjo's domestic and foreign policies; it essentially aims to  
391 show that personal interest/ambition clad in the garb of NI can produce antithetical results to national unity  
392 and international stability. The unwholesome ceding away of the nation's territory, the Bakassi peninsular to  
393 Cameroon and his "unsuccessful and undignified" attempts to manipulate the Nigerian constitution to respond to  
394 his third term bid are not only strategic blunders but antithetical to the NI. At a period when nation states fight  
395 or warm up for eventual bellicosity to defend empty Islands in a geostrategic world, Obasanjo rather surrendered  
396 territory to a foreign country. Such idealistic policy postures can only be understood from a political economy  
397 approach i.e maintaining class relations with international capital. This approach also helps an understanding  
398 of the President's third term bid to hold on to the class structure and maintain his league with imperial capital.  
399 Instead of advancing the NI of Nigeria, this policy posture reinforces the countries' ties with imperialism and  
400 perpetuates the dependency status. The implications as shown above are clear; widening gap between the power  
401 holding rich class and the pauper working class; dominant influence of international capital; increase tension and  
402 ethnic crisis; phony democratic experiments without democracy dividends; frequent border crises; insurgency and  
403 so on. Although the president failed to achieve his third term agenda he succeeded in ceding away the Bakassi  
404 peninsular to Cameroon. The implication of Obasanjo's handling of the Bakassi matter have been documented  
405 elsewhere see ??Enor, 2011) The foreign policy objective of maintaining world peace has been argued in some  
406 quarters as a price which Nigeria must pay to achieve security in her own country ??Saliu: 2000: 45). Our  
407 examination of other foreign policies as shown in the previous section reveal clearly, that maintaining would  
408 peace does not rank high unless there was a threat to their security. Moreover, a nations territory fall within the  
409 vital or core interest of a nation's foreign policy which most nations have gone to war to defend.

## 13 CONCLUSION

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

412 Bakassi is one of those unfortunate accidents of History. It is one of our messy situations where a court ruling  
413 is not enough to settle ?. The culprits, the colonialist Germans, French and British, are today, curiously not at  
414 all concerned. They left the conundrum to the post-colonial countries (Aminu; ??005:64) It is rather unfortunate  
415 that our leaders inherited a conundrum from imperialist exploiters whose stock in trade among other tactics  
416 was divide and rule; they did nothing to ameliorate the situation fifty or more year after political independence  
417 because it favoured them. Clearly therefore, these ex-colonial masters still hold the levers of progress of their  
418 former colonial territories and now work closely with the leadership of those countries, some of who care to  
419 maintain the league with imperialism, to advance and maintain their interest in the orbit of capital. Economic,  
420 cultural and political imperialism have so brain washed and blind folded the African not to see the need for a  
421 pan-African unity beyond artificial territorial creations of imperial factotums; until this is realized neocolonialism  
422 will remain with us for a long time to come. The NI pursuit from parochial angles do not promote the welfare  
423 nor advance the aspirations of any nation as the third term agenda of president Obasanjo was purely a personal  
424 interest to perpetuate the dominance of that class in power at the expense of the Nigerian nation. Indeed, as  
425 Olu Adenji rightly noted, Foreign policy successes in which Nigerians are not directly beneficiaries are not likely  
426 to enjoy the support of the people. This is why Nigerian foreign policy needs a new direction to focus on the  
427 Nigerian.

428 Olu's assertion is underscored by Adebayo Adedeji (2005), who cautioned that Nigeria's national interest, in  
429 the post-cold war unipolar world, demands a focus upon? internalizing the culture of popular participation and  
430 democracy; of achieving socio-economic transformation and development; and of putting in place a system of  
431 governance that has ethically sustainable foundation that is accountable and transparent and that promotes the  
432 common good and solidarity "Until we can achieve this", according to Adebayo, "our ship of state would continue  
433 to flounder and wobble". Some aspects of president Obasanjo's pursuit of the NI draws comparison with Bush's  
434 political fundamentalism. His seeming claims to a divine mandate for his third term bid: "I believe that God  
435 is not a God of abandoned projects. If God has a project he will not abandon it" ??Adebajo.2008:7), can be  
436 likened to Bush's "explicitly religious language" in political discourses, on one hand, and the push for war in the  
437 Holy land of the Middle East on the other, which only serves to obfuscate a personal agenda, clad in the robes  
438 of the NI. Obasanjo's military campaigns in Odi and Gbeji in 2000, and his suggestion in 1989 that Nigeria,  
439 adopt a one party system clearly marks him as 50 ( H ) undemocratic. His willing collaboration with the forces  
440 of international capital to cede away the Bakassi peninsula distinguishes him as an example of "an incompetent  
441 leader who will sacrifice the national interests on the altar of a fictitious international morality" (Jinadu, 1979).

## 442 12 VI.

## 443 13 Conclusion

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

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