

*Original Paper*

## Anglo-Nigerian Relations in the First Twenty-Five Years of Nigeria's Independence: A Critical Analysis

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Received: March 6, 2019

Accepted: April 14, 2019

Online Published: May 6, 2019

doi:10.22158/wjssr.v6n2p205

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/wjssr.v6n2p205>

### **Abstract**

*The paper evaluates various aspects of Anglo-Nigerian relations during 25 years of Nigeria's independence. The analysis is meant to put us in a better position to fully understand the nature and trends of the bilateral relations even after the first 25 years of Nigeria's independence. The analysis is supported by an avalanche of extant literature that abounds on Anglo-Nigerian relations since 1960 when Nigeria became politically independent.*

*The unraveling of the literature is illuminating. One, the trend of Anglo-Nigerian relations has remained largely unchanged even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Two, although there have been occasional outbursts of misunderstanding and disagreements between both countries, such disagreements have never been allowed to go to the extent of causing protracted diplomatic rupture between them. Three, the prospects of improved relations between the two countries remain ever bright. In the final analysis, it is recommended that Anglo-Nigerian relations should be improved, nurtured and strengthened for the mutual benefits of both countries.*

### **Keywords**

*Anglo-Nigerian relations, bilateral relations, western allies, the Commonwealth of Nations, non-aligned movement*

## 1. Introduction

Anglo-Nigerian relations constitute an important and interesting research area for Nigerian scholars of international relations. This is for the obvious reason that the British, after colonizing the country for about 60 years, left behind a legacy that has continued to influence many aspects of Nigerian national life. The fact that most of the Nigerian nationalists, who had their tutelage under British administrators, eventually took over power from the British; hence there was a great attempt to infuse the country with British political and social values.

Up till today, no other country has as much influence on Nigeria the way Britain does. Even though there have been instances of occasional misunderstandings and disagreements between the two countries over certain knotty issues, the fact remains that Britain is Nigeria's closest friend in Europe even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Britain has on several occasions shown sincere care for Nigeria over the latter's misfortunes in the past. Similarly, Nigeria has often supported Britain in her times of need. Both countries are each other's keeper.

In the corollary, Anglo-Nigerian relations cannot be treated with levity by either country. Thus, the main thrust and focus of the problem addressed in this paper is to critically analyze the Anglo-Nigerian relations in its total complexity, its nature, tenor and intricacies, during the first twenty-five years of Nigeria's independence. This is being done with a view to helping us further appreciate how the relations evolved and in the light of this take some lessons that will for future guidance of Nigeria in the conduct of her bilateral and multilateral relations.

## 2. The Historical Connection

Since 1960 when Britain granted political independence to Nigeria, "Anglo-Nigerian relations have been characterized by some elements of continuity and change" (Aluko, 1986, p. 274). Several factors account for the continuity in the sometimes strained and other times cordial relations between the two countries since Nigeria's political independence. These factors or elements are multidimensional: cultural, economic, military, membership of the Commonwealth and ideological orientation of the Nigerian ruling elite (Aluko, 1986, p. 275). All this came about as a result of 60 years of British colonial domination of what later came to be known as Nigeria.

In the area of cultural ties, Britain bequeathed to Nigeria the English Language which has remained the *lingua franca* in the country. Today, English is spoken in virtually every Nigerian home. Besides, Nigeria's educational system is modeled after that of the British. Since 1960 there have been exchanges of high calibre academics between the two countries. During the 1982/1983 academic year, for example, there were 70 Nigerian University teachers working in different institutions of higher learning in the United Kingdom and 75 British University teachers serving in different Nigerian Universities (Africa Research Bulletin, 1983). Up till today, "there has been a regular exchange of books, periodicals and

magazines between the two countries” (Aluko, 1986, p. 275). Sporting links form part of the nexus of the relations between the two countries. In August 1976, for example, Nigeria sent a group of dancers, musicians and choreographers of the Dance Theatre of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria to perform at Arts Festival in Aberdeen, Scotland (Aluko, 1986).

Perhaps, the strongest of the webs of relations between the two countries has been economic. Even when diplomatic relations between both countries sank to a low ebb, like it was over the ill-fated attempt at smuggling Alhaji Umaru Dikko from Britain in 1984, their economic ties have always remained largely intact. A cursory look at the trade indices between the two countries since 1960 when Nigeria became independent shows that on the average, the economic bond between the two countries has been growing from strength to strength over the years. For example:

*While the UK's share of Nigeria's trade has slipped from about 12 percent in 1961 to about 38 percents in 1975 and to about 25 percent in 1983, the UK has continued to remain the largest source of Nigerian imports (Aluko, 1986, pp. 275-276).*

Even when Britain and her western allies were initially nonchalant about, or dragging their feet on, giving concrete support to Nigeria when she was fighting a civil war; Nigeria under General Gowon did not sever her economic links with or radically divert her direction of trade from Britain. Although since 1975, the balance of trade between the two countries has in most times been in favour of Britain, Nigeria has never shown a negative attitude to Britain in that regard. Nigeria's worsening balance of trade with Britain is of course understandable. It is simply because Nigeria has since the euphoria of her oil boom of 1970s paid little attention to the production of her traditional cash crops such as groundnut, cotton, cocoa and timber which used to be the mainstay of the country's economy.

British investments in Nigeria have been enormous. However, British share of total foreign investments in the country has been on the decline since 1960. For instance, “the investments of the British Petroleum in Nigeria in 1979 before the nationalization amounted to \$2.3 billion” (Aluko, 1986, p. 276). It is noteworthy:

*that a substantial part of Nigerian foreign reserves are still kept in sterling. While in 1961 it was 100 percent in sterling balances, this was reduced to 53 percent in 1975 and to about 38 percent in 1983 (Aluko, 1986, p. 276).*

Indignant about the British government refusal to extradite General Gowon to Nigeria to face trial for his alleged involvement in the coup attempt of 13 February 1976 in which the then Nigerian military Head of State, General Murtala Mohammed, lost his life, Nigeria decided to sell part of her total sterling reserves in Britain. However, she was unable to sell up to even one-third of the reserves (Africa Confidential, 1976). The implication of all this is that the two countries are economically interdependent. This does not detract from the fact that Britain now imports less oil from Nigeria than before. For example, Britain's

importation of Nigerian crude oil fell drastically from 115 million barrels in 1974 to only 9 million barrels in 1983.

During her seminal years of independence, Nigeria had benefited substantially from British aid. During her first National Development Plan 1962-1968, for example, Nigeria had expected 50% of the finance from external sources, largely from Britain. But “during her Second National Development Plan 1970-1974, Nigeria expected only 19.4% from external sources” (Aluko, 1986, p. 276). In fact, as from 1975 British aid to Nigeria was being gradually replaced by technical assistance from Britain. The Gowon Administration had in 1974 discouraged unnecessary aid from Britain and other western donor countries (Aluko, 1981, p. 62), preferring to get and actually got technical assistance from Britain in such fields as medicine, agriculture, education, engineering and surveying. In all, “the cost of the British technical assistance was estimated at an annual average of £2 million between 1974 and 1977” (Aluko, 1981, p. 62). Apart from paying for the equipment supplied by the British, Nigeria under Gowon paid 15 percent of all the cost of the feasibility studies carried out by British experts. This amounted to burden-sharing and promotion of partnership with the British.

In the Second Republic, President Shehu Shagari during his State visit to Britain in 1981, requested for an increase in British investments in, and technical assistance to Nigeria, pledging that his government would be ready “to remain a meaningful partner in such ventures” (Aluko, 1986, p. 276). The Gowon administration’s policy of de-emphasizing the receipt of aid but instead seeking technical assistance from Britain and other western powers was adopted by the post-1975 Nigerian leaders. In all, these economic, financial and technical links have gone a long way in sustaining diplomatic relations between the two countries even when they have divergent views on major world or African issues.

There have also been strong military ties between the two countries. Like the other aspects of Anglo-Nigerian relations, the military nexus between the two countries pre-dates the independence of Nigeria in 1960. In fact, there were speculations that Nigeria was compelled by Britain to sign the controversial Anglo-Nigerian pact in 1958 as a pre-condition for getting independence. Consequently, when it was due for renewal in 1962 it was abrogated following students’ protest. However, what later became the Nigerian Army metamorphosed from the Royal West African Frontier Force which was the brainchild of the British. Up to 1965, for example, the Nigerian army had a British as the General Officer Commanding. A substantial percentage of the Officer Corps of the Nigerian army today received training in various British military institutions, such as Sandhurst, Imperial Defence College now known as Royal College of Defence Study, etc. An agreement was made in 1975 with Britain to the effect that Britain would continue to provide competent British army officers to train Nigerian Army Officers at the Command and Staff College, Jaji. Although during the Nigerian Civil War, Britain shocked the federal authorities by refusing to supply arms to Nigeria at the early stages of the war she later began to do so but not before the Soviet Union had taken up the challenge. Till today “Britain has remained the major source

of arms supply to Nigeria” (Aluko, 1986, p. 277). Records show that between 1970 and 1975 the only major arms agreement Nigeria signed with any country was with Britain. During his state visit to Britain in 1981, President Shehu Shagari solicited continued military aid from Britain. Later, his government “reached an agreement to buy about 22 Jaguar combat Aircraft from the U. K. at nearly £250 million” (Aluko, 1986, p. 277). And in August 1984, the Buhari government in spite of the strained relations between the governments of the two countries as a result of the Dikko debacle, purchased 36 Vickers MK 3 MBT from UK at a cost of \$1 Million (Olusanya, 1986, p. 81).

Nigeria’s membership of the commonwealth is a major factor that has contributed to the continued cordial Anglo-Nigerian relations. It could be argued that in the first place, Nigeria joined the commonwealth immediately after her independence in 1960 mainly to remain as a partner in progress with the British even at multilateral level (Olusanya, 1986, p. 81). Ever since she joined the organization, Nigeria has not hesitated to do anything that will ensure the survival of the Organization. Early in 1966, for example, Nigeria under the Prime Minister Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa hosted the Prime Ministers’ meeting of the Commonwealth in Lagos to find solution to Ian Smiths intransigence in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Besides, Nigeria has taken advantage of her membership of the organization to enhance her leadership role in Africa. For example, as a member of the organization Nigeria played a prominent role “in the Lancaster Talks from late 1979 to early 1980 that paved way for the independence of Zimbabwe in April, 1980” (Aluko, 1986, p. 277). Apparently in the spirit of the Commonwealth solidarity, Nigeria supported the British cause in respect of the Falklands war in 1982. Successive Nigerian governments and leaders have given unflinching support to the Commonwealth thereby sustaining the healthy relations between Britain and Nigeria.

Despite the anti-British emotion that was whipped up by the Obasanjo government following the assassination of General Murtala Mohammed on February 13, 1976, the Obasanjo government in 1977 increased Nigeria’s annual budget contribution to the Commonwealth from £10,400 in 1973 to £36,000 in 1977. With that, Nigeria became the third largest contributor to the budget after the United Kingdom and Canada. Besides, Nigeria contributes regularly “to the Commonwealth foundation as well as the Commonwealth fund for Technical Assistance in London” (Aluko, 1986, p. 278).

While serving in various capacities in the Commonwealth, Nigeria has on a number of occasions used her positions to assist the United Kingdom in certain difficult situations. For example, to help ensure the security of the Sea Lanes along the Cape route for Britain, Nigeria agreed to serve as a member of the aborted Eight-nation Commonwealth countries appointed at the Singapore meeting of Heads of Commonwealth leaders in 1971. Similarly, Nigeria in October 1985 agreed to serve on the Commonwealth Contact Group on South Africa. All these point to the fact that Nigeria’s membership of the Commonwealth has helped sustain and promote both formal and informal interactions between her and the United Kingdom.

In the corollary, apart from official connection what Sir Geoffrey Howe, former British Secretary, has described as “informal Commonwealth” ties have since the sixties become profound among the Commonwealth member nations. These informal ties range from professional, business and educational links between member nations to voluntary organizations throughout the Commonwealth countries. The voluntary organizations and groups have regular meetings to exchange ideas, promote solidarity with Britain and the rest of the Commonwealth. It was in view of this that the Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, had on August 20, 1960 addressed Nigeria’s House of Representatives inter alia:

*While therefore benefiting from the free interchange of ideas and consultation between the members of the Commonwealth and from their experience within the framework of the United Nations, we shall, nevertheless have a free hand to select those policies which we consider to be most advantageous for Nigeria... (Balewa, 1960, pp. 505-506).*

Thus, the Commonwealth has been significant in nourishing Anglo-Nigerian relations over the years. Furthermore, on becoming independent Nigeria was as expected inclined to adopt the ideological orientation of the British. This has also helped a great deal to strengthen the political and economic ties between the two countries. Thus, it did not come as a surprise when on becoming independent; Nigeria immediately adopted the British model of parliamentary system of government. Concomitantly, Nigerians learnt to cherish such western values as the fundamental rights of citizens, free press and the rule of law. This was quite easy because the Nigerian leaders who took over the reigns of power from the departing colonial masters had at one time or the other been trained in Britain. Besides, Nigeria attained her independence on a platter of gold; it was not preceded by a bitter war of independence with the British. In addition, Nigeria, with her diverse traditions, religions, languages and historical backgrounds, is naturally predisposed to a mixed economy like Britain’s. This provides another avenue for shared hopes, interests, and aspirations between Nigeria and Britain. All the factors we have discussed above serve as a centripetal force in strengthening Anglo-Nigerian relations now and for the foreseeable future. It is worthy of note that the Mohammed-Obasanjo regime which was noted for its radicalism did not necessarily assume an Anti-British Policy. Despite the uneasy tension between Nigeria and Britain following Britain’s refusal to extradite General Gowon to Nigeria to answer charges of alleged involvement in the abortive coup of February 13, 1976 resulting in the assassination of General Murtala Mohammed, the Obasanjo Administration did not undermine the hitherto existing healthy Anglo-Nigerian relations. Conversely, it was the regime which in 1975 implemented the 1972 indigenization Decree, thereby allaying the Nigerian fears and suspicions of British domination of the Nigerian economy which had hitherto been a source of anti-British sentiment in Nigeria. Today Britain and Nigeria see themselves as equals in their dealings with each other. And so there is no basis to accuse Britain of neo-colonialism. It is for this reason that Aluko notes:

*Hardly any Nigerian commentator has accused Britain of neo-colonialism since 1975, except perhaps during February/Match 1976, and even then not seriously (Aluko 1981, p. 67).*

As soon as Gowon was overthrown, many political commentators fearing USA's and USSR's growing influence in the country demanded a drastic reduction in their diplomatic staff in the country. But "no such demand was made of the British High Commission which had a larger staff than the Soviet Mission in Lagos" (Aluko, 1980, p. 67). One salutary effect result of the cordial relations between Nigeria and Britain has been the ever-increasing number of Nigerian visitors to Britain. The Mohammed-Obasanjo regime embarked on certain social and political programmes which have further strengthened Anglo-Nigerian relations. The regime in 1976 established seven more Universities to the existing six. In addition, the regime in the same year initiated an ambitious Universal Free Primary Education "under which about 2.5 million children were enrolled in primary schools in the 1976/77 academic year" (Aluko, 1981, p. 67). The dire need for qualified people to fill the vacant teaching posts in these institutions prompted Nigeria to seek, first, the cooperation and assistance of the British, and later of other advanced countries. The creation of seven more States on 3 February 1976 by the Mohammed-Obasanjo regime compelled Nigeria to solicit the assistance of Britain and other commonwealth nations in the area of skilled manpower for the social and economic development of the newly created states in the Nigerian Federation.

In addition, the implementation of some aspects of the five-year Development Plan 1975-1980 also involved the use of a good number of foreign experts, most of whom were British. During the period, several contract awards for road and harbour construction were given to British and other foreign companies. The contract awards for the construction of ten more berths in Lagos by August 1976 cost the Mohammed-Obasanjo regime about £170 million (New Nigerian, 1976). Consequent upon all these, it is in the interest of Nigeria to continue to maintain cordial relations with Britain.

Certain external factors have also compelled Nigeria to continue to maintain good relations with Britain. During the period of colonialism and racialism in Southern Africa in general, and the apartheid policy in South Africa in particular, Britain as from 1972 started taking concrete steps to help find solutions. Since Nigeria was in the forefront of the crusade to dismantle all cases of white supremacist regimes anywhere in Southern Africa, she was only too happy to have found in Britain a new ally in this onerous task. This provided another impetus for closer cooperation between the two countries. Much to the delight of Nigerians, Britain in 1972 acting on the Pearce commission rejected "any constitutional settlement with the Rhodesian government on the basis of the Home-smith Agreement of November 1971" (Aluko, 1981, p. 68). This action was interpreted in Nigeria and elsewhere as British show of respect for Nigeria's opinion and that of the other African countries that had been bitterly opposed to the Ian Smith so-called internal settlement (Africa Confidential, 1973). Britain went as far as tightening sanctions against

Smith-Rhodesia. In appreciation, the Federal Military government of Nigeria supported “Britain’s efforts against the rebel regime in Salisbury” (Aluko, 1981, p. 680). It was against this background that Nigeria agreed at the Kingston Summit of Commonwealth leaders in April/May 1975 to collaborate with the U. K. and other Commonwealth countries in trying to resolve the constitutional problem in Rhodesia by insisting on the principle of majority rule (Commonwealth Communiqué, 1975). Early in 1975, the Labour government of Britain terminated the Simonstown Agreement with South Africa. Although Nigeria was aware that there were economic links between Britain and South Africa, she at the same time understood that no British government could abruptly terminate these links without a severe political cost. Besides, the tottering British economy at that time would make it unwise for Britain to take far-reaching economic measures against the White supremacist regime in Southern Africa, particularly the Pretoria regime in South Africa. In the same vein, Nigeria could not all alone take drastic economic measures against foreign firms in Nigeria that also transacted business in South Africa without incurring heavy economic losses. The signing of the *Lome convention* in February 1975 put paid to any misunderstanding that might have existed between Nigeria and Britain over the admission of the latter into the EEC. All these have contributed immensely to the good relations that have flourished between Nigeria and Britain over the decades.

It is important to note too that Britain on her own part has always tried to maintain cordial relations with Nigeria. For example, it took Britain only three days to recognize the Mohammed regime in 1975, doing so regardless of the close personal ties that had existed between General Gowon who had just been ousted from power and the government and people of Britain. When General Murtala Mohammed, the Head of the new government was assassinated on February 13, 1976 Britain expressed deep sorrow for Nigeria. To demonstrate her concern to Nigeria in concrete terms, the British government recalled and dismissed from Foreign Service the then British High Commissioner in Nigeria, Sir Martin Le Quane for immediately and arrogantly asking the Nigerian government to pay for the damages to the British Commission by Nigerian student demonstrators who suspected British complicity in the abortive coup in which General Murtala Mohammed lost his life. The British action was naturally hailed in Nigeria. All this led to better understanding and cooperation between the two countries.

Of course, Britain appreciates Nigeria’s political and economic importance to her. Apart from South Africa, Nigeria is the most important African trading partner with her. The balance of trade between the two countries has most times been in favour of Britain. In 1976, for example, Britain’s trade surplus with Nigeria was as much as £458 million (West Africa, 1977). Since 1973, Nigeria has been the fourth largest supplier of crude oil to Britain providing an annual average of 12 Million barrels a year (West Africa, 1977).



Apart from appreciating Nigeria's economic importance to her, Britain recognizes and acknowledges the fact that Nigeria is a leading power in Africa. Like the other world powers, Britain knows that she needs the cooperation of Nigeria to be able to deal decisively with any African issue. No extra-Africa power can ignore this fact. Writing on this, Aluko contends:

*Moreover, because of Nigeria's potential as both an economic and military power, she wields a lot of influence in Black Africa which any extra African power-least of all Britain can ignore only at its peril. So we have a pattern of mutual interdependence between London and Lagos which both seem anxious to preserve (Aluko, 1981, p. 690).*

### **3. Areas of Conflicts in Anglo-Nigerian Relations**

Much as certain factors have contributed towards sustaining and promoting excellent Anglo-Nigerian relations, as we have discussed above, certain centrifugal forces have at one time or the other tended to mar these much cherished relations. Prominent among these forces had been the differences on Southern Africa, North-South dialogue, and the Dikko Affair.

On the Southern African issue, particularly the apartheid policy in South Africa, Sir Tafawa Balewa, Nigeria's Prime Minister during the First Republic had demonstrated Nigeria's anti-apartheid stance by initiating a move which in 1961 led to the expulsion of apartheid South Africa from the Commonwealth of Nations. This action came as a rude shock not only to South Africa but also to Britain which had been fraternizing with South Africa. Britain had counseled for a gradual process while Nigeria had always favoured an aggressive approach in dealing with the Southern African problem. This explains why Nigeria took it upon herself to provide financial and military aid to the Liberation Movements in Southern Africa. This difference once threatened Anglo-Nigerian relations. For,

*In 1978, the Barclays bank was taken over by the Nigerian government on the ground that the Chairman of the Barclays Bank International, London, spoke in defence of the apartheid system. In July, 1979, the BP assets in Nigeria were nationalized ostensibly because the BP had made available to Pretoria oil from North Sea from non embargoed oil. But the reason was to pressure the Thatcher government not to accord recognition to the Mozorewa government and not to lift Sanctions (Aluko, 1986, pp. 279-280).*

This action contributed considerably to the events that culminated in the granting of independence to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in 1980. What is important to us here, however, is that the action strained relations between the two countries until President Shehu Shagari paid a State visit to Britain in March 1981, and subsequently compensated Britain to the tune of #71 Million in crude oil (Umunna, 1981, p. 54). When Lord Carrington, then Britain's Foreign Minister paid a visit to Nigeria in 1981, the then

Nigeria's External Affairs Minister, Ishaya Audu warned that "a negative action might be taken against Britain for complicity so long as it failed to prove by words and deeds her abhorrence of apartheid" (Umunna, 1981, p. 51). But Carrington was defiant; he reacted by saying that "Britain does not believe and will not support the idea of sanctions or armed struggle as a way of solving the Namibian and South African problem" (Umunna, 1981, p. 52). In fact when the then United States delegate to the United Nations Human Rights Commission, Richard Schifter, hinted that the Reagan Administration would support South Africa in its suppression of black nationalists, and even equated the Nationalist Freedom Fighters of South Africa and Namibia with terrorists, Carrington acquiesced. In essence, while Nigeria was fighting to help liquidate apartheid in South Africa, Britain like the USA and NATO, was prevaricating in the bid to protect her political and economic interests in South Africa. However, Shagari's state visit to Britain helped relax tension between the two countries, thereby reviving the usual cordial relations between Nigeria and her former colonial master.

The North-South Dialogue has been an area of sharp disagreement between Nigeria and Britain. Nigeria has been actively involved in the negotiation for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) with a view to adequately addressing the economic plight of the peoples of the Third World. In pursuit of this, Nigeria has been playing an active role in UNCTAD and in the various conferences of the now moribund non-aligned movement aimed at getting a better deal with the developed North at the World market. Among other things, the Third World is demanding the transfer of resources and technology from the developed world to their own areas; an abolition of discriminatory import restrictions of the manufactured goods of the South; and justifiable prices for their primary products. In the struggle for a just world order, Nigeria had expected Britain to show sympathy for, and cooperation with, the poor South. But much to the chagrin of Nigeria, Britain had been nonchalant about Nigeria's economic plight and that of the developing nations of the South as a whole. As Aluko notes:

*The British government did not believe in the demand of the South. To them the re-structuring of the international economic system was a no-starter. To Mrs. Thatcher's government such demands were anathema (Aluko, 1986, p. 280).*

When she was asked in 1981 by President Shehu Shagari to assist Nigeria economically, Britain declined, saying that Nigeria should go for IMF loan with all the attendant stringent conditions. Britain also urged Nigeria to accept the rules laid down by the Paris Club in order to renegotiate her outstanding debts. The uncooperative attitude of the British in this regard has never gone down well with any Nigerian government.

The Dikko affair worsened matters between Nigeria and Britain. Alhaji Umaru Dikko who was the Federal Minister of Transport in the Shagari government, the head of the campaign team for the re-election of Shehu Shagari as President in 1983 as well as chairman of the Presidential Taskforce, managed to escape to London after the overthrow of the Shagari government on 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1983.

Prompted by the allegation of corrupt enrichment against Dikko and boastful outbursts by Dikko that he would soon lead a “jihad” against the Buhari government, the government apparently masterminded a plan with some Israelis to kidnap and smuggle Dikko back to Nigeria. The “Operation Smuggle home Umaru Dikko” actually started, but it soon proved abortive as the British police and intelligence unit were soon alerted. The police rushed to the Stanstead Airport where they saw and seized the crate in which Dikko who had been given an overdose of drug was lying helplessly. The kidnapped attempt caused furore in Britain, resulting in intense anti-Nigerian emotion in that country. Consequently, the British government sent out of Britain the two Nigerian diplomats found in the crate with Umaru Dikko. The Nigerian High Commissioner in London, General Hananiya was given 48 hours within which to leave Britain and go and consult with his government in Lagos.

Meanwhile, Major Yusuf, an NSO official, and the two Israelis who were apparently involved in the attempt to kidnap Umaru Dikko, were sent for trial at the Old Bailey in London. They all pleaded guilty and thereafter given prison sentences ranging from 10 to 14 years. The Buhari government which denied any involvement in the kidnap attempt did not take kindly to the British action. It was “fire for fire” as the Buhari government ordered “the then British High Commissioner in Lagos, Mr. Hamilton Whyte, and two of his diplomats to leave Nigeria within 48 hours” (Aluko, 1986, p. 281). And in what looked like retaliation, the Nigerian government tried, and sentenced two British aeronautical engineers “for servicing a private aircraft that was stolen in Lagos and flown to London, to 14 years imprisonment each early in October 1985...” (Aluko, 1986, p. 281). All these sent shock waves to Britain. The sentence was described by Sir Geoffrey as “shockingly severe and harsh” (Aluko, 1986, p. 281). The cumulative effect of these actions and reactions between the governments of Nigeria and Britain was that bilateral relations between both countries sank to a low ebb during the period.

#### **4. Concluding Remarks**

From the foregoing analysis, it is obvious that Anglo-Nigerian relations have, on the whole, remained stable over the decades, even though there have been a few cases of mild disorder occasioned by minor disagreements and short-lived conflict of interests. It is also clear that the two countries see themselves as partners in progress. Though they experienced occasional crises in their diplomatic relations, the two countries did not allow their economic cooperation to suffer. Both Nigeria and Britain understand that their bilateral relations are mutually beneficial.

Although economic exchanges between the two countries have so far been more beneficial to Britain, yet it only goes to show that Nigeria still has a lot to do to be able to measure up to the development efforts and productive capacity of her former colonial master. This is a great challenge to our national leaders who have the duty to facilitate the political and economic development of the country. The fact that Nigeria has adopted a lot of the British social and political values is more of a blessing than a curse.

No country, big or small, is self-sufficient in everything. So, Nigeria must attach a lot of importance to her bilateral and multilateral relations in order to be more relevant and more visible in the comity of nations.

In the light of the issues raised and discussed in the paper, it is pertinent to conclude that the future greatness of Nigeria depends largely on her ability to cultivate and sustain the friendship of other nations, especially Britain.

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