

**NIGERIAN-GERMAN RELATIONS
IN MODERN TIMES:
A REFLECTION**

Copyright © 2019 Society for International Relations Awareness (SIRA)

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or means as electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without the prior written permission of the publishers.

Printed by:
Pamadex Global Limited
Phone Number: +234-803-332-9393
E-mail: pamglobal@yahoo.com

ISBN: 978-978-369-3
First Published 2019
Published by

**FRIEDRICH
EBERT
STIFTUNG**



Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Nigeria

SOCIETY FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AWARENESS

CHAPTER FOUR

Nigerian-German Defence Cooperation 1999-2019: A Commentary

Prof. Istifanus S. Zabadi
Department of Political Science
Bingham University, New Karu,
Nasarawa State, Nigeria

Germany and Nigeria have maintained long and cordial relations over the years. At Nigeria's attainment of independence on October 1, 1960, West Germany (as it was then) engaged in a long-standing diplomatic relationship with Nigeria. The relationship between the two countries is wide ranging, covering economic, political, social, defence and security sectors. As is also the case with such bilateral relations, there are high and low points owing largely to changing circumstances in world affairs.

This commentary focuses on the defence cooperation between Germany and Nigeria as it has evolved over the years. This cooperation has endured different situations and has picked up again, particularly since Nigeria's return to democratic rule in May 1999 after decades of military dictatorship. The work also reviews the evolution of the new defence cooperation between the two countries. It equally seeks to uncover and explain the factors responsible for the increased cooperation. Finally, inferences are drawn as to what the future of this cooperation will be.

The Nature of Nigerian-German Defence Cooperation

Defence cooperation between Germany and Nigeria took off seriously with the establishment of the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) in 1964. West Germany assisted in the establishment NAF through a team of military personnel at command and lower levels. It's pioneer Commander was a German officer. The Germans laid the foundation for this junior service of the Armed Forces of Nigeria, to take off in terms of buildings, equipment and training.

However, what started off as a promising relationship was slowed down by the Nigerian civil war (1967 – 70). The Cold War politics of the period was responsible for this. With Britain and the United States refusing to supply arms to the Federal Government and France being actively in support of Biafra, it was difficult to expect the needed arms supply from the countries of Western bloc. As a result, Nigeria turned to the Soviet Union and its allies, including Egypt, especially in respect of NAF.

This situation changed after the civil war, as Nigeria could now import military equipment from the West. West Germany was again patronised to support NAF and also the Nigerian Navy with equipment and training. The beneficial effect of the cooperation between Germany and Nigeria is clearly seen in the development of NAF. The Technical Training Group (TTG) was built by the Germans to train technical manpower for NAF. This has now been transformed into an important institution of NAF, the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) in Kaduna. The AFIT is training high-level manpower for the service and the aviation industry. It is also involved in the research, design and manufacture of equipment and aerial vehicles, such as the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV).

The NAF had collaborated with Dornier Company to locally produce a trainer aircraft known as the Air Beetle. This product was launched with excitement and expectations of greater advances to follow. However, this initiative was killed by that malady, the "Nigerian factor", a euphemism for lack of discipline to maintain focus and sustain projects to conclusion and further success. This situation is the cancer that has killed such and other dreams in various facets of our national life.

Furthermore, some of the combat platforms that have been in service in NAF were supplied by Germany. The Alpha Jet and BO Helicopter are prime examples. The Alpha Jet served Nigeria well in the ECOMOG operations and now in the counter-insurgency operations in the North East of the country. The Nigerian Navy (NN) also acquired platforms and other equipment from Germany within this period.

The New Defence Cooperation

German engagement with Nigeria in defence and security was again disrupted by the sanctions imposed on Nigeria following the annulment of the presidential election of June 12, 1993, the European Union (EU) has imposed sanctions on Nigeria, and these were wide-ranging. Leading countries in Europe also mobilised their allies around

the world to do likewise. This was what led to the isolation of Nigeria from engagement with countries like Germany. The Nigerian media often referred to this period as one in which the country was a pariah in world affairs.

Germany participated fully in the observance of the sanctions against Nigeria, in line with her foreign policy. The primary objective of her foreign policy is to ensure global peace and security. This commitment is implemented through Germany's full integration into the structures of multilateral cooperation, which, in concrete terms, means:

Close partnership with France in the European Union (EU), firm roots in the community of values shaped by the transatlantic alliance with the USA, ...active and committed involvement in the United Nations (UN) and the Council of Europe as well as the strengthening of the European security structure through the OSCE.¹

It is, therefore, important to put this in the context of Germany's engagement with the world, including Nigeria.

However, with the return of Nigeria to democratic rule in 1999 and the subsequent lifting of sanctions, the two countries entered a new phase in their defence cooperation. German military cooperation with Nigeria is "owned" by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while the Ministry of Defence implements the programmes through the German Armed Forces. This engagement can be seen through many projects, which the German military are working with their Nigerian counterparts on. The tempo of activities picked up from 2015 and this is done through the German Technical Assistance (GTECH) largely non-lethal support. GTECH is a 4-yearly programme.

The "toolbox" employed by Germany in its relationship with Nigeria has five components namely, Military Advisors, Experts Exchange, Enable and Enhance Initiative, Equipment and Training programme, which, is in-country with personnel spending a few years on their assigned tasks. The

¹ FACTS ABOUT GERMANY 2018 edition pg.38

Experts exchange is an annual reciprocal arrangement, which sees military officers visiting the other's country to share their expertise. These visits are partly-funded by both countries. For example, a Nigerian officer going on this exchange visit will have to pay for travel to Germany and back. The officer will be given accommodation and feeding by the hosts. This means that any other costs are to be met by the affected officer. The sustainability of this arrangement will depend on good logistic support available to the officer. Germany has a better system and, therefore, able to meet their obligations, while Nigeria is not always able to do the same.

An area where things are not going well is in the training opportunities offered to Nigerian officers in Germany. These are regular German courses taught in German and require that Nigerian officers first learn German to be able to participate in the courses. It is not surprising that a number of officers who have attended such courses remain dismal. Thus, this language requirement has become a disincentive to the Nigerian side given our own lack of interest in learning foreign languages, such as French, Russian, Chinese and the like.

The Enable and Enhance Initiative entails the provisions of equipment on demand to the Nigerian military. External training is also given to personnel to enable them to operate and maintain such equipment. This program me has a life cycle of one year, largely to conform with the financial year of Germany. The major challenge to the Nigerian side making the most of this arrangement is the capacity of its bureaucracy to process their requests in good time to meet deadlines. The nature of the Nigerian system is such that such deadlines are regularly missed, and opportunities eluded the side most in need. It should also be mentioned that the Enable and Enhance Initiative has a civilian dimension, which involves enhancing the capacity of the Nigerian Police Force, the Nigerian Immigration Service and the Nigerian Customs Service.

The Equipment Aid Programme entails the provision of infrastructure, equipment and training. The German Technical Advisory Group (GTAG) is in charge of executing the programme working with Nigerian counterparts. The number of projects has increased over the years, starting with the establishment of a workshop in Abuja for the repair and maintenance of military vehicles. This has since been transformed into the Armed Forces Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (AFEME) Mechatronics School. This transformation includes the provision of engineering equipment to enhance the competence of the engineering personnel of the Armed Forces of Nigeria. The training provided in the school also includes train-the-trainer courses.

Other projects include capacity building of personnel in counter-insurgency operations (CIED) and training in the Nigerian Army Engineering College in Makurdi. This is very critical in improving the safety of Nigerian troops and reducing the numbers of IEDs used against troops in the fight against terrorists in the North East of Nigeria. In Kaduna, a rehabilitation clinic has been established at the 44 Reference Hospital of the Nigerian Army, to take care of the troops wounded in the counter-insurgency operations. In Jaji, the Germans are also providing medical training, radar ground surveillance training and the Radar Ground Surveillance School.

In the North East where counter-insurgency operations are still on, the German government provides for the medical treatment of wounded soldiers, amphibious capabilities in the Lake Chad, Counter-Improvised Explosive Device (CIED), ground surveillance and maintenance of vehicles. In the Niger Delta region, Germany is offering operational capabilities for the Nigerian Navy (NN) is Choke Point Strategy to deal with the security challenges in the maritime environment. Maintenance and repair capabilities are also being enhanced through this cooperation. The NN Engineering College in Sapele has been supported to carry out engine repair and maintenance training. The repairs of the engines used on NN

platforms are usually MTU engines and that are now done in Sapele.

This growing role of Germany in addressing the security challenge in Nigeria and, indeed, in the Gulf of Guinea (GOG) will need to be encouraged and maximised for its benefits. Germany is providing significant support for regional cooperation and maritime awareness in ECOWAS and GOG. Although the cooperation has so far seen the provision of non-lethal equipment to Nigeria, it is possible to move things a notch higher by getting Germany to supply lethal weapons to Nigeria. At this level, the political approval of the German government must be obtained before such arm supplies can take place and the process could take longer than one year, even with diligent attention to the requirements.

The Future of Nigerian-German Defence Cooperation

The level of engagement with Germany in defence looks set to expand and deepen but this will depend on some external and largely internal factors. Even the external factors will be in response to what happens in Nigeria. It is important to remember that Germany is a team player internationally. The country is committed to acting in consonance with the decisions of the multilateral institutions to which it belongs. These include the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Organisation for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In the event of any sanctions against Nigeria from any of these institutions, Germany will join such actions and this will put any cooperation programmes on hold.

Furthermore, Germany takes her relations with the United States (US) very seriously enough to coordinate action that may be orchestrated against Nigeria by the US. Germany is also committed to upholding values like human rights, democracy, peace and security. She would certainly coordinate action against any country seen to violate any of these values, including Nigeria, as was the case in 1993.

Even without external sanctions, Nigeria's internal government system tends to frustrate partners because it is inefficient. The institutions responsible for the implementation of the agreements do not coordinate, and correspondence takes very long to move from one point to the next, often because the senior officials are busy with other things. As a result, deadlines for actions to be taken are missed and the expected benefits lost. This is clearly reflected in the delays or failure to pay counterpart funds for projects with international contribution. In the case of the current cooperation with Germany, a lot of benefits are lost because the system is slow to respond in giving the documentation required. This is a national malady, reflected in the large number of agreements between Nigeria and other countries which are not implemented at this end. Therefore, the risk of this cooperation not going forward is high and the responsibility is for Nigeria to change things for the better.