

## Written evidence submitted by Chatham House Africa Programme (IRN0013)

### UK–Nigeria

*Elizabeth Donnelly and Alex Vines*

The Integrated Review and Africa

The UK's Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy (IR), published in March 2021, lays out the government's plans for a 'Global Britain', including its relations and engagement with the African continent. Specifically, the Integrated Review sets out the UK's intention to work in partnership with the African Union, and with named countries, Nigeria and South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia and Ghana, towards the shared goals of prosperity, democracy and security. Nigeria was specifically mentioned in the IR (South Africa too), as "regional powers with global reach through international fora, with which we share common values and commercial and development interests: together they account for 46% of GDP in sub-Saharan Africa and for 60% of its trade with the UK."

Economic and security commitments are particularly apparent, with the UK committing to continued economic engagement through the development of mutual partnerships, the building of resilient and productive economies, and through investment and financial offerings. The IR also prioritises increased security and counter-terrorism efforts in the Horn of Africa region, with the government committing to invest in regional stability by supporting intergovernmental and regional peacekeeping missions and delivering on the UK-Kenya Strategic Partnership.

However, the Review lacks a clear commitment to development, including poverty and disease reduction, as well as climate security. The Integrated Review did acknowledge that Africa will increasingly be left behind: by 2045, it is likely that around 85% of the poorest billion people will live in Africa. Yet, the government's aid strategy is yet to be published and at face value the Integrated Reviews reflects that the UK has a decreased commitment to international development.

In April Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab admitted to the Lords' international relations and defence committee that he is cutting the UK aid budget for girls' education globally by more than 40 per cent and reducing UK bilateral aid to Africa to a third of what it was two years ago. The Africa bilateral development programme is only £764 million in 2021. The Official Development Assistance (ODA) was £3 billion in 2019, making this a 69 to 75 per cent cut on 2019 (depending on whether any non-FCDO ODA will go to Africa). This means that fifty per cent of the UK's country bilateral ODA will be spent in Africa. The FCDO is yet to provide a full country by country breakdown of aid spending for the financial year 2021/22 but we have been told that the UK's aid programme to Nigeria would be cut by 58 percent. In Nigeria 5.1 million people are currently food insecure, a 34% increase on 2019 and have been identified as being most at risk of slipping into famine and commitments to women and girls have also been scaled back, female empowerment projects in Nigeria are to be closed, according to Women for Women International.

This explicit pivot policy to East Africa and the scale of associated aid cuts is puzzling given the size and importance of Nigeria to the UK. The UK's relationship with Nigeria is among its most significant and strategic in Africa. With Africa's largest population, of around 190 million people, and its largest economy by GDP, developments in Nigeria have consequences for its neighbourhood and for the UK. Known for its crude oil production, Nigeria has a wealth of other natural resources. It has a coastline of over 850 km and is important for maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea.

The UK's relationship with Nigeria criss-crosses political, security, trade and investment, migration, and development cooperation. As the consequence of climate change, energy transition and green growth will be prominent features of the relationship. Long-standing links due to colonial history, close cultural ties and diaspora and family connections keep the two countries close. The UK is in a unique position in terms of its relationship with Nigeria and the potential for influence. Nurturing this relationship and sensitively wielding this influence is increasingly important for the UK as it seeks to strengthen engagement across Africa, while Nigeria faces severe domestic security threats, economic difficulties and confronts challenges of further consolidating democracy.

### **Development and governance**

The FCDO (and DFID previously) has a crucial role to play in Nigeria, but corruption, mismanagement and ongoing governance challenges mean that it has not seen similar successes in reducing poverty and improving human development that it has experienced elsewhere. Poverty in Nigeria is sustained by a complex set of drivers. The Gates Foundation estimates that by 2050 more than 40 per cent of the world's extreme poor will live in Nigeria and the DRC. DFID Nigeria's planned budget for 2018/19 was £235 million. Spending was dominated by human development (43 per cent), economic development (19 per cent) and humanitarian programmes (15 per cent). If Nigeria's population is to double by 2050 as projected, improvements in the health and education systems now are urgent. Crucially, to ensure that its work and spending has a lasting impact, the UK must seek to unpick those incentives that prevent progress and foster decisions by powerful elites that run counter to reform and progress: concurrent efforts to reduce corruption and foster improved and more accountable systems of government are crucial to this. Nigeria has made significant progress in democratization over two decades. Its return to democracy in 1999 and its regularly held elections have created space for more responsive government to emerge, as well as for civil society and media capacity to strengthen and play a significant role in demanding, protecting and supporting improvements for citizens. The UK must ensure that the space for Nigerian media and civil society organizations to operate is protected, as there are signs that this is under threat.

### **Corruption and asset recovery**

The FCDO is working to support Nigerian actors in monitoring the use of returned funds as part of its Anti-Corruption in Nigeria Programme. The UK has made important progress on anti-corruption since the

enactment of the 2002 Proceeds of Crime Act and the 2017 Criminal Finances Act. But the UK National Crime Agency (NCA) notes that billions of pounds continues to be laundered in or through the UK every year (not only from Nigeria). Unexplained wealth orders are an important tool in the anti-corruption effort – but the UK will have greater impact, globally, through achieving high-level prosecutions. This would send a much clearer message on the UK's stance and efforts on corruption. The federal government of Nigeria has focused on the recovery and return of stolen assets and the UK and Nigerian governments have a memorandum of understanding that commits both to ensuring that returned funds are not again used in corrupt practices and that returned assets will be used to benefit the poorest in society and to improve access to justice.

## **Security**

In 2018 the UK and Nigeria signed the first UK–Nigeria security and defence partnership. Largely focussed on equipment and training to combat Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa (ISWA) in Nigeria's North East, the agreement also sets out how the two countries will cooperate on strengthening policing, reducing piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, and tackling organized crime and corruption. The agreement also established an enhanced human rights dialogue to enable the security partnership and promises a regular forum for ministers to discuss cooperation on different challenges and priorities. Nigeria faces multiple security challenges, and some of these have implications for the UK's pivot to the Sahel as part of its new strategic approach to Africa. The decimation of the North East and the adaptability of Boko Haram and ISWA are much in evidence and will demand the focus and resources of Nigeria and its partners for years to come. Spiralling banditry in rural North Western Nigeria is causing people to migrate into southern Niger. Equally important are decades-long, but recently expanded, clashes between cattle-herders and settle farmers: rooted in mismanagement of rural land and resources and environmental degradation, these conflicts are increasingly and reductively described in ethnic and religious terms. In the absence of justice it is these clashes that can spiral and spring up in different locations and generate multiple worsening local violent conflicts across Nigeria, tearing at fragile social fabric and further straining already overstretched security agencies. Delivery, not just in security and defence issues, but in development and governance is undercut by corruption – and interests in protecting patronage systems. The UK government must ensure that through this defence partnership specific reforms in the security sector can be carried out to ensure better outcomes – and avoid treating consequences rather than causes and thereby perpetuating the status quo.

The UK government also in 2021 as co-chair with Senegal of the G7++FOGG have an opportunity to work with Nigeria on a more effective partnership on combatting armed robbery at sea and piracy which has seriously impacted maritime trade in the sub-region.

## **Trade and Investment**

There is significant scope to expand trade and investment relations. The UK–Nigeria Economic Development Forum was launched in 2018 to overcome barriers to trade and investment, and the next meeting will take place in March 2020. Much will depend on the success of the forum in improving the investment climate – and much of this rests on efforts in other areas. As Nigeria is a signatory of the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement, and as the landscape of trade changes across West Africa, the UK should work with Nigeria on regional trade and monetary policy negotiations; the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) stands to benefit as a whole from Nigeria’s constructive participation within it.

The UK must also be realistic about the limits of its influence in Nigeria, even with the strong bilateral relationship, romantic language in the IR of shared ‘common values and commercial and development interests,’ papers over significant differences and ambiguities. The UK government needs to be smart and selective in identifying and acting on opportunities. It must identify, support and champion particularly those actors within Nigeria who are seeking to protect and further Nigeria’s democratization, institution-building and inclusive economic growth.

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