

US Energy Security and Nigerian Oil: From International to ‘Contingency Cooperation’?

Charles U. Ukeje¹ and Melissa Skorka²

¹Obafemi Awolowo University, Department of International Relations, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

²Oxford University, Global Governance and Diplomacy, Oxford, United Kingdom

charlesukeje@yahoo.com

Despite the quest for alternative sources of energy, global dependence on hydrocarbon oil has increased exponentially since the turn of the 20th Century; whereas the widening gap between demand and supply seems to portend a threat to security, broadly defined. At the same time, recent studies have shown a strong correlation between global energy security and international conflict; even if such a nexus have not been well articulated and understood, in part, because extant literature still dichotomises between internal factors such as government inefficiency, authoritarian political order and lack of economic development and external factors such as geopolitical pressure, economic crises and wars. In this paper, we examine the interaction *between* external and internal forces, focusing on the oil-security nexus in United States-Nigeria relations. The paper examines how US foreign energy policy towards Nigeria, in particular, and vis-à-vis key and emerging West African oil producers, has evolved over the decade especially since 9/11, and the far-reaching politico- security implications. The paper argues that what is developing is a new pattern of ‘contingency cooperation’ in which Washington is investing in a complexity of governance and security relationships that are prompting new relationships with strategic partners in Africa. In conclusion, the paper shows how such evolving security relationships, rather than stabilising governance and security in strategic oil-producing African nations is central to the exacerbation of conflict in oil-producing countries.